

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Department of Medicine, Austin Health
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Research Assistant in Epilepsy Genetics Research

POSITION NO	0063874
CLASSIFICATION	Research Assistant Level A
SALARY	\$83,468 - \$113,262 p.a.
SUPERANNUATION	Employer contribution of 17%
WORKING HOURS	Full-time (1.0 FTE)
BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT	Fixed-term position available for 12 months
OTHER BENEFITS	https://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers/staff-benefits
HOW TO APPLY	Online applications are preferred. Go to http://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers , select the relevant option ('Current Opportunities' or 'Jobs available to current staff'), then find the position by title or number.
CONTACT FOR ENQUIRIES ONLY	Rebekah Harris Tel +61 3 9035 7336 Email rebekah.harris@unimelb.edu.au <i>Please do not send your application to this contact</i>

For information about working for the University of Melbourne, visit our website:
about.unimelb.edu.au/careers

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

Position Summary

Located at the Melbourne Brain Centre in Heidelberg, the Epilepsy Research Centre performs world-leading clinical and genetic research into epilepsy. The Research Assistant will be responsible for the recruitment of participants, in-depth phone and face-to-face interviews about individual medical and seizure history and family history, and management of family pedigrees and research files. Data is entered into a centralised database, requiring a high degree of accuracy and care in the collation of study data. Other duties include co-ordination of research appointments and investigations, liaison with medical and scientific organisations, collecting patient samples (including collection of blood samples with training provided), applications for medical information, analysis of clinical data to categorise seizure and epilepsy types and interpretation of genomic data to identify genetic causes of epilepsy. The Research Assistant would also provide assistance with the writing of grants, ethics submissions, research manuscripts, and preparation of materials for presentation. With experience, the successful applicant will take a leading role in the coordination of local, national and international collaborative projects and in presenting data for publication or presentation.

A period of appropriate training and supervision will be provided for this position. Once trained, the successful applicant is expected to work autonomously, managing their own priorities and projects with minimal supervision. This role requires a high degree of responsibility, self-motivation and organisation. This position is part of a large, highly cohesive epilepsy research and clinical team, and the successful applicant will be expected to be able to function well as a team member. This position would suit an applicant interested in science, health science, nursing or public health, who is enthusiastic about genetics and passionate about making a difference to the lives of people with significant medical disorders.

This position reports to Laureate Professor Sam Berkovic and Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer, world-renowned leaders in genetic epilepsy research.

1. Key Responsibilities

1.1 RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

- ▶ Carry out research focused on identifying genetic causes of epilepsy and seizures
- ▶ Attend private and hospital outpatient clinics to recruit and engage with study participants
- ▶ Recruit and obtain consent from participants and family members in person and by telephone
- ▶ Coordinate research appointments, interviews and study assessments
- ▶ Conduct face-to-face and telephone interviews with participants and family members about their seizure history and family trees
- ▶ Perform blood sampling, coordinate pathology specimen collection and transport of specimens
- ▶ Maintain clinical and genetic data in a study specific research database
- ▶ Review clinical and genetic data to ascertain preliminary clinical classification
- ▶ Coordinate assigned local, national and international collaborative projects
- ▶ Collate and analyse clinical and genetic data to investigate specific hypotheses
- ▶ Contribute to the writing of grant applications, ethics submissions and peer-reviewed papers
- ▶ Prepare and, with experience, present scientific data for oral or poster communication

1.2 LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

- ▶ Contribute to team and project meetings through participation in discussions on related research publications and the presentation of research data for discussion
- ▶ Collaborate with members of the research team and key stakeholders as required
- ▶ Undertake other duties commensurate with the position as requested by your supervisor
- ▶ Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) and Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) responsibilities as outlined in section 4

2. Selection Criteria

2.1 ESSENTIAL

- ▶ A tertiary degree in biological/medical science with an interest in genetics
- ▶ Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to build rapport with adults and children, across a diverse range of community and cultural groups
- ▶ Demonstrated ability to use tact and discretion in communicating around issues of health
- ▶ Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- ▶ Demonstrated capacity to undertake high quality written analysis, such as literature reviews
- ▶ Ability to work individually and as part of a large team
- ▶ Demonstrated ability to collect and collate information accurately and reliably with meticulous attention to detail

- ▶ Proficient computer skills – word processing, databases, use of the internet and graphics
- ▶ Demonstrated organisational and time management skills to meet deadlines in a fast paced and dynamic environment

2.2 DESIRABLE

- ▶ Qualification or experience in genetics, epilepsy or counselling
- ▶ Previous experience in a medical or science field
- ▶ Previous experience with research grant applications and manuscript writing
- ▶ Background in blood sampling

2.3 SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Higher school certificate result and university transcripts to be included in application
- ▶ Capacity to undertake blood collection tasks (after appropriate training) and willingness to have routine vaccinations as relevant to this task
- ▶ Valid Drivers Licence required

2.4 OTHER JOB RELATED INFORMATION

- ▶ This position requires the incumbent to hold a current and valid Working with Children Check
- ▶ Occasional work out of ordinary hours, travel, etc.

3. Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing a workplace free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. The University makes decisions on employment, promotion, and reward on the basis of merit.

The University is committed to all aspects of equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and to providing all staff, students, contractors, honorary appointees, volunteers and visitors with a safe, respectful and rewarding environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification and victimisation. This commitment is set out in the Advancing Melbourne strategy that addresses diversity and inclusion, equal employment opportunity, discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and appropriate workplace behaviour. All staff are required to comply with all University policies.

The University values diversity because we recognise that the differences in our people's age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, physical ability and background bring richness to our work environment. Consequently, the People Strategy sets out the strategic aim to drive diversity and inclusion across the University to create an environment where the compounding benefits of a diverse workforce are recognised as vital in our continuous desire to strive for excellence and reach the targets of Advancing Melbourne.

4. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

All staff are required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other personnel who may be affected by their conduct.

OHS responsibilities applicable to positions are published at:

<https://safety.unimelb.edu.au/people/community/responsibilities-of-personnel>

These include general staff responsibilities and those additional responsibilities that apply for Managers and Supervisors and other Personnel.

5. Other Information

5.1 EPILEPSY RESEARCH CENTRE

<http://www.epilepsyresearch.org.au/>

The Epilepsy Genetics Group at the Epilepsy Research Centre has been studying the inheritance of seizures in individuals, families and twins for over 25 years. The group comprises a large clinical epilepsy research team, including neurologists, research fellows, PhD students, specialist nurses, neuropsychologists research assistants and administrative staff, working in concert with the Epilepsy Molecular Genetics Laboratory and bioinformatics team. Together with collaborators at the Florey Institute, University of Adelaide, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and colleagues around the world, they are international leaders in the genetics of epilepsy. So far more than 20,000 people have participated in their research studies. By identifying genes and understanding the basic molecular mechanisms of the inherited epilepsies, a deeper understanding into the disorder can be gained, with implications for diagnosis and the development of more effective, precision medicine therapies.

Together with molecular genetics colleagues, they identified the first epilepsy gene (a nicotinic receptor subunit *CHRNA4*) in 1995 and since then, have continued to be the international leaders in gene discovery for epilepsy. Over the last 20 years, there has been a virtual explosion in the number of genes linked with epilepsy, with more than 400 genes associated with seizures. However, despite these findings, there is still much more to discover. The genetic cause is still unknown in the majority of people with common types of epilepsy and about 50% of people with the severe developmental and epileptic encephalopathies (DEEs). Many genes that have been identified so far either cause the DEEs, or are rare causes of the more common types of epilepsy. In addition, the common genetic epilepsies are believed to be caused by a number of genes acting together, making it much harder to identify each individual gene. The Epilepsy Research Centre continue their research efforts to uncover more genetic causes of epilepsy, to describe the phenotypic spectrum and natural history of each genetic epilepsy, to understand how these causes disrupt the normal function of the brain to cause seizures and to develop precision medicine therapies to improve the lives of people with genetic epilepsy.

The research group is situated at the Melbourne Brain Centre building at the Austin campus of Austin Health, Heidelberg.

5.2 DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

<https://medicine.unimelb.edu.au/school-structure/medicine>

The Department of Medicine is a large and diverse department in the Melbourne Medical School that undertakes research, postgraduate and undergraduate teaching within the University of Melbourne teaching hospitals. The Department of Medicine provides high quality academic services across a broad range of clinical, educational and research activities at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, St Vincent's Hospital, Austin Health, Western Health and Northern Health. In addition, there is a strong focus on clinical trials research as well as innovative interfaces between tertiary healthcare and cutting-edge research.

The objectives of the Department of Medicine are to provide clinical and research leadership from the interface of basic science and clinical medicine across the medical disciplines, to teach undergraduate and postgraduate students, to perform high quality research, and to provide leadership in national medical and scientific bodies. The Department has students enrolled in Bachelor of Science (Honours), Master of Biomedical Science, Master of Medicine, Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Philosophy students. The Department also regularly hosts students for research training on exchange from other Australian and International Universities.

Staff of the Department include clinical academics, research fellows, research assistants, administrative personnel across the various teaching hospitals. As of December 2023, the Department has 193 fixed term and continuing staff (headcount). The Department is also grateful for its 468 honorary staff who contribute to and help to successfully deliver the teaching and research activities of the Department. The Department is committed to establishing and maintaining a workplace culture consistent with the Faculty values of Respect, Accountability, Compassion, Collaboration and Teamwork, and Integrity.

5.3 THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY & HEALTH SCIENCES

The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences is a diverse faculty renowned for its research excellence, teaching, training, and policy leadership across the breadth of medical, biomedical and health science fields.

Led by the Dean, Professor Jane Gunn, the faculty is Australia's overall leader in clinical, pre-clinical and health sciences, and sits at the heart of a flourishing ecosystem of globally recognised health and biomedical organisations across Victoria. Partnerships are key to our continued success in education, research and enhancing the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Our staff and students benefit from longstanding relationships with many of the country's leading health research institutes. The faculty is home to the Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity and Nossal Institute for Global Health, and has strong partnerships with WEHI, the Florey Institute, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the Centre for Eye Research Australia, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, National Ageing Research Institute, St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, Bionics Institute, Burnet Institute, the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, and Phoenix Australia.

We are based in Parkville, with a thriving rural health campus in Shepparton. Many of our faculty members are embedded with clinical partners across Greater Melbourne and regional Victoria. We have longstanding and productive education and research partnerships with our affiliated health services including: Austin Health, Northern Health, Western Health, Mercy Health,

Epworth HealthCare, Dental Health Services Victoria, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital, the Royal Women's Hospital, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Orygen Youth Mental Health, Goulburn Valley Health, Northeast Health Wangaratta, Grampians Health Ballarat and Bendigo Health.

[Explore your area of interest on our interactive map.](#)

The faculty comprises six schools and 41 departments, centres and institutes. It employs more than 2,750 FTE staff members and has a large and committed community of honorary members. It educates around 11,000 students each year, offers over 140 courses, and is a significant research contributor to the University of Melbourne.

Approximately 1900 graduate research students conduct research supervised by over 1800 academic and honorary staff across the faculty's schools and affiliated health services and research institutes each year.

We are the custodial faculty for the Bachelor of Biomedicine and the Bachelor of Oral Health. We offer a suite of professional entry masters level graduate programs, including the Doctor of Medicine (MD), the Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), and the Doctor of Physiotherapy (DPT). We also offer other graduate level programs such as the Master of Public Health, Master of Primary Health Care, Master of Social Work, Master of Clinical Audiology, Master of Speech Pathology, Master of Clinical Optometry, and many more in nursing, social work, health sciences and psychology.

5.4 THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Established in 1853, the University of Melbourne is a leading international university with a tradition of excellence in teaching and research. The main campus in Parkville is recognised as the hub of Australia's premier knowledge precinct comprising eight hospitals, many leading research institutes and a wide-range of knowledge-based industries. With outstanding performance in international rankings, the University is at the forefront of higher education in the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

The University employs people of outstanding calibre and offers a unique environment where staff are valued and rewarded.

Further information about working at The University of Melbourne is available at <http://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers>

5.5 ADVANCING MELBOURNE

The University's strategic direction is grounded in its purpose. While its expression may change, our purpose is enduring: to benefit society through the transformative impact of education and research. Together, the vision and purpose inform the focus and scale of our aspirations for the coming decade.

Advancing Melbourne reflects the University's commitment to its people, its place, and its partners. Our aspiration for 2030 is to be known as a world-leading and globally connected Australian university, with our students at the heart of everything we do.

- ▶ We will offer students a distinctive and outstanding education and experience, preparing them for success as leaders, change agents and global citizens.
- ▶ We will be recognised locally and globally for our leadership on matters of national and global importance, through outstanding research and scholarship and a commitment to collaboration.
- ▶ We will be empowered by our sense of place and connections with communities. We will take opportunities to advance both the University and the City of Melbourne in close collaboration and synergy.
- ▶ We will deliver this through building a brilliant, diverse and vibrant University community, with strong connections to those we serve.

The means for achieving these goals include the development of the University of Melbourne's academic and professional staff and the capabilities needed to support a modern, world-class university. Those means require a commitment to ongoing financial sustainability and an ambitious infrastructure program which will reshape the campus and our contribution to the communities we engage with. This strategy, and the priorities proposed, is centred around five intersecting themes; place, community, education, discovery and global.

5.6 GOVERNANCE

The Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer of the University and responsible to Council for the good management of the University.

Comprehensive information about the University of Melbourne and its governance structure is available at <https://about.unimelb.edu.au/strategy/governance>