Since its inception, the foundation has broadened its areas of research to include various conditions such as brain tumours, stroke, concussion, spinal cord injury, Parkinson’s disease, subarachnoid haemorrhage and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

The NRF shares a long relationship with the University of Adelaide, gifting donations amounting to more than $5.3 million to fund important neurosurgical research and equipment. It brings together clinicians, engineers and scientists to support a multidisciplinary approach to improve diagnosis and treatment.

This unique combination of expertise has led to significant advances in knowledge, such as the discovery by team pathologist Dr Peter Blumbergs that mild blows to the head can damage the brain. This breakthrough resulted in a world-wide groundswell of interest in brain damage in sporting injuries such as Australian Rules Football.

The development of this multidisciplinary team and its ability to attract neurosurgical trainees to Adelaide is a proud achievement for Dr Brian North, who has been president of the foundation since 2004. “We are combining practical and scientific skills for neurosurgeon-scientists. It is a big ask for someone trained in the practical skills of operating on the brain to also have highly developed scientific skills in the laboratory. Combining the two is quite an achievement,” said Brian.

Brian has been the driving force behind securing many of the donations for the foundation, notably establishing the $800,000 Abbie Simpson Clinical Fellowship to support clinical neurosurgical research, fundraising for equipment at University of Adelaide, Flinders University and the Women’s and Children’s Hospital, and formalising the neurosurgical training program in 2009.

After 11 years, Brian stepped down as president. His successor is Professor Robert Vink, an Adjunct Professor at the University of Adelaide and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Health Sciences at the University of South Australia. Bob says the foundation has identified a gap in research into paediatrics and will fund research at the University in this area.

“One of the deficiencies in neurological research in Adelaide concerns paediatrics and we would like to build that up so the foundation will be making a gift that focuses on paediatric neurosurgical research this year.”

The NRF Paediatric Neurosurgical Research Trust Fund will gift $1 million to the University to fund research in paediatrics and aims to promote collaborative paediatric neurosurgical research with other national and international research groups. The NRF had the foresight to set up an administrative support fund which means that every cent of all donations given to the foundation goes straight to research.

“There are a lot of charities that take a high percentage for overheads and administration—but we don’t. We are in the fortunate position of having sufficient investments that enable us to ensure every funding dollar goes into research,” said Bob.

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MICHELLE, LIVING WITH MOYAMOYA DISEASE

An extremely fit tennis player who was studying Physiotherapy, Michelle suddenly had left-sided weakness, tingling and constant headaches. Her doctors referred her for an MRI and CT scan. The prompt referral may have saved her life. - Michelle was diagnosed with moyamoya disease. Extremely rare, moyamoya disease is a progressive thickening and blockage of the arteries supplying the brain. Left untreated, moyamoya disease can cause strokes (infarct or hemorrhage) possibly leading to loss of brain function, and is usually fatal if not treated.

PAM, LIVING WITH HYDROCEPHALUS

Pam recently retired at 64 years of age after a 42-year teaching career. Initially diagnosed in her early years and primary school teacher then later she also qualified as a special education and English as a second language teacher.

When Pam was six years old (1957) she was diagnosed with benign juvenile hydrocephalus (a build-up of cerebral spinal fluid in the brain). If Pam’s hydrocephalus was left untreated it would lead to unsteadiness of walking and gradual loss of brain function, and is usually fatal if not treated. Pam underwent successful surgery undertaken by Mr Trevor Dinning in 1957 to implant a ventriculo-spinal shunt. Through immense time, effort, and determination, and with supportive parents, Pam mostly succeeded in achieving her career and personal goals.

TAYLAH, ANEURYSM SURVIVOR

Cerebral aneurysms occur when the wall of an artery within the brain is weakened. Usually unruptured aneurysms have no symptoms at all – but they can be a ticking time bomb. When an aneurysm ruptures it usually bleeds into the brain. Symptoms include severe headaches and vomiting, seizure, blurred vision and dizziness. Ruptured aneurysms are often fatal.

Those who survive face long recovery times and may never fully recover. Taylah had the worst headache of her life. She was projectile vomiting and sensitive to light. Unfortunately, doctors took days to diagnose her with an aneurysm – precious time she could not afford to lose.

Neurosurgery to treat her aneurysm saved Taylah’s life. Taylah has been fortunate to have a full recovery.
The NRF wishes to acknowledge the following In Memoriam donations received from families and friends in memory of their loved ones this year.

In memoriam gifts are donations made in lieu of sending flowers, or in memory of a loved friend, relative, or colleague. They are a positive and thoughtful way to honour the memory of a loved one. Family members are notified of all donors and gifts are receipted and acknowledged promptly.

Your funeral director may assist you in ordering our envelopes, or contact the NRF on (08) 8371 0771 and we will deliver in memoriam envelopes and information about the NRF.

Christopher Adams
Madalyn Beckett
Richard Buttery
Henryk Dutkowski
John Edward Gilbert
Keith Ernest Johnson
Alan Raymond Mead
Eve Nowakowski
Grant Paech
Margaret Tate

The man who made South Australia famous for its jam, Grant Lester Paech of Beerenberg, passed away following a lengthy struggle with neurological illness. His family business, based at the 100ha Beerenberg fields, kitchen and farmgate shop in Hahndorf and now internationally famous not only for jams, condiments and sauces, is overseen by his children, Robert, Anthony, and Sally Paech. The Paech family welcomed donations to the Neurosurgical Research Foundation in lieu of flowers.

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In December of 2014 Critter saw his GP after about a month of headaches and occasional nausea. He was sent for scans. What they found indicated a grade three anaplastic astrocytoma; a brain tumour. From the day of his diagnosis Critter was positive and remained confident that he would beat the odds for survivors of malignant brain tumours. His slogan was “Strong Enough to Live.”

Following surgery in mid-January, Critter underwent radiotherapy and chemotherapy. He went back to work part-time. Sadly Critter's health deteriorated and he was hospitalised several times with seizures. In October he began to experience severe headaches. Scans showed radiation necrosis and potentially another tumour. On Thursday 19 November, following a biopsy, Critter died in hospital of a heart attack. It was less than eleven months since initial diagnosis.

He was passionate and driven, and wanted his story to inspire and help others. He left far too early; his work had just begun. Now it’s our task to ensure that his legacy is followed through by continuing to be positive and support research into this dreadful disease. Critter and his family encourage everyone to donate to brain cancer research and are organising a special Independence Day: Resurgence movie premiere fundraiser. He is missed greatly, daily. He was and remains a magnificent young man.

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JOIN NRF TEAM NEURO IN THE BAY-CITY FUN RUN SUNDAY 20TH MARCH

Walk or run 3, 6 or 12km to raise funds for neurosurgical research. Join the team by purchasing a t-shirt or go the extra mile and recruit sponsors to raise additional funds.

Start your training and fundraising today!
Register: Go to www.citybay.org.au and join NRF Team Neuro.
Fundraise online: Register at www.everydayhero.com for NeuroSurgical Research Foundation and follow the prompts.

CRITTER’S STORY

Strong Enough to Live

Chris Adams “Critter” was in the prime of his life. He played footy; he visited the gym four times a week; he had a full time job and had many plans for after he completed his degree in a few months’ time. He was an enormously gregarious young man with a kind heart and a huge sense of loyalty.

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CHRIS “CRITTER” ADAMS INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE PREMIERE FUNDRAISER

Thursday 23rd June

Join Critter’s family and friends at the premiere of this most anticipated movie release: Independence Day: Resurgence. The premiere will be held at Palace Nova Eastend Cinemas on the 23rd of June from 7:00pm to 10:00 pm. Tickets are $30 and include red carpet entrance and a short reception, with drink on arrival. All proceeds to the NeuroSurgical Research Foundation.

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