



Physiotherapy  
Research  
Foundation

# THE VALUE OF THE PHYSIOTHERAPY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Measuring the value of research grants  
awarded over the last 30 years.

# ABOUT THE PRF

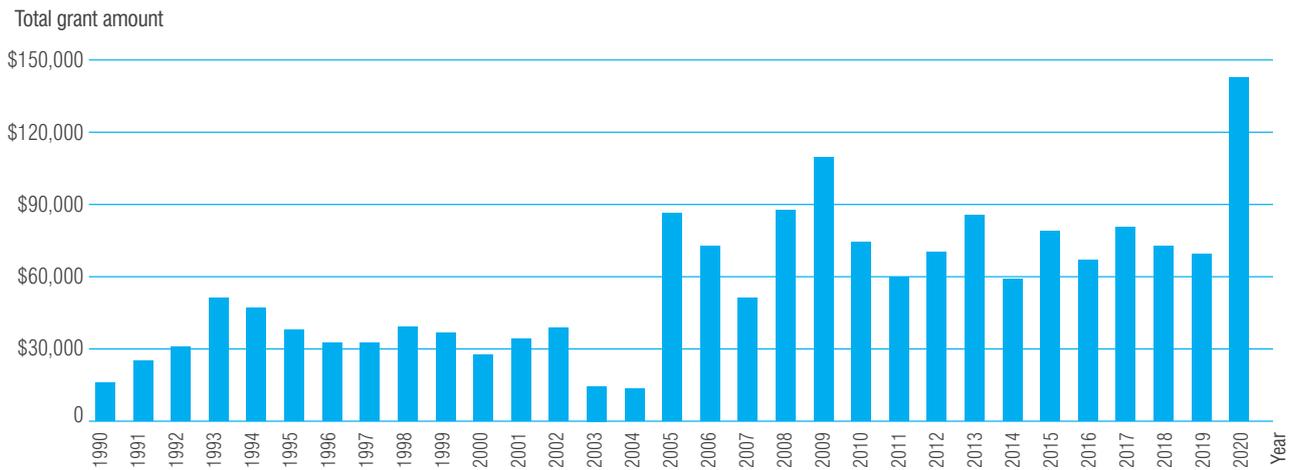
The Physiotherapy Research Foundation (PRF) was established in 1988 as a charitable trust from the profits of the 1988 conference held by the World Confederation for Physical Therapy in Sydney. The absence of a research foundation in Australia dedicated solely to physiotherapy, in addition to a desire to foster physiotherapy research, brought about the PRF concept.

### THE PRF'S MISSION IS:

To support the physiotherapy profession by promoting, encouraging and facilitating research that builds capability in order to advance physiotherapy knowledge and practice.

The first grant was awarded in 1990. As of the end of 2020, approximately 241 grants have been issued to the value of \$1.744 million. This represents an average value of \$7,239 per grant.

### ANNUAL GRANT AMOUNT 1990 - 2020



# THE IMPACT OF THE PRF

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In 2020, the PRF engaged Survey Matters to review and gain insight into the value delivered by PRF grants. It is becoming increasingly important to demonstrate the impact of research grants to current and future supporters of PRF.

Broadly, the objectives of the project were to:

- understand to what extent PRF investment has enabled further funding
- understand the role that the PRF has played in the training, development and retention of researchers
- understand the contribution of PRF research to clinical practice
- demonstrate the value of the PRF to current and future donors.

The following surveys were distributed in November 2020;

- Grant recipients
  - 185 surveys, 60% response rate (110 respondents)
  - five grant recipients participated in an in depth interview to develop case studies
  - of the grants issued by the PRF, 185 have been included. These grants represent 86% of all grants issued by the PRF, at a total value of \$1.362 million (average \$7,362 per grant).
- APA members
  - there were 446 responses (1.8% response rate)
  - surveyed about their awareness and the value provided by the PRF to the profession.

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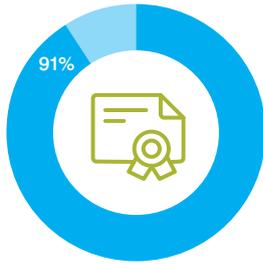
## Summary of findings

KEY FINDINGS INDICATE THAT THE PRF:

- 1.** Has built research capacity and developed the careers of researchers.
- 2.** Contributed to the evidence base of the profession.
- 3.** Informed policy, clinical practice and education.
- 4.** Enabled further research funding – \$47.5 million, of which \$8.6 million would not have been available without the support of the PRF. This suggests that for every \$1 invested by the PRF, an additional \$6.35 of further funding has been generated.



## 01: THE PRF DEVELOPS RESEARCHERS



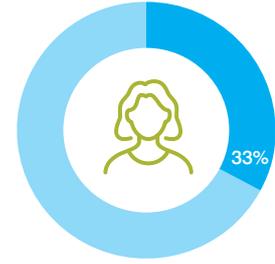
**91%**

91% have gone on to pursue a career in research.



**57%**

57% of PRF grant recipients reported it was the **first grant** they had ever received, from any source.



**33%**

33% indicated that their research would **not** have proceeded without PRF funding.

Respondents stressed that the value of PRF grants were key for early career researchers, as it allowed them to gain experience that they could apply in future grant applications. Overall, the funding kick-started their research career, and provided them with the credentials to pursue an academic or applied research career.



**“I am a leader in the field of exercise and lung cancer and this research topic in general (not specifically this PRF grant alone) is now part of education to physio students about the role of exercise in lung cancer management.”**

CATHERINE GRANGER, TAGGED GRANT - 2008

## 02: THE PRF HAS ENABLED FURTHER RESEARCH FUNDING



**\$47.5 mil**

**\$47.5 million** of further research funding.



**\$8.6 mil**

\$8,646,370 in further funding would **not** have been available without the initial PRF grant.



**\$1 : \$6.35**

For every \$1 invested by the PRF, an additional **\$6.35 of further funding** has been generated.

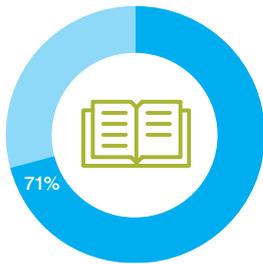
Respondents reported that a further \$47.5 million of additional funding from 65 separate funding sources had been awarded to PRF grant recipients. The funding bodies include the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), multiple universities, Arthritis Australia, National Heart Foundation, National Stroke Foundation, National Breast Council Foundation and Parkinson's NSW. Additionally, international funding was reported by several respondents.



**“Demonstrating that you can use a budget wisely and keep to appropriate timelines and communicate appropriately with a smaller budget, is how you work towards getting those larger grants as well.”**

ROBYN BRENNEN, SEEDING GRANT, 2018

### 03: THE PRF HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE EVIDENCE BASE OF THE PROFESSION



**71%**  
PRF funded research had been **published** in a peer-reviewed journal.



**134**  
134 **peer reviewed publications** were generated by PRF recipients.

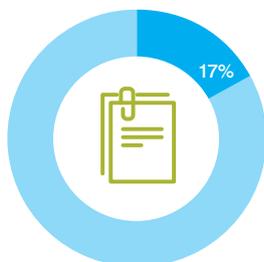


**8,853**  
Overall, PRF funded research papers have been cited **8,853 times**.

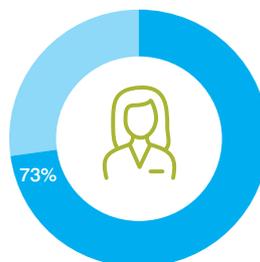
Research helps to build an evidence-base for the profession and PRF recipients have contributed to that knowledge. Research-based interventions are what distinguish physiotherapy from other allied health professions and raise the credibility of physiotherapy. 1.46 peer reviewed research papers were produced for every completed PRF research grant awarded.

“My research funded by the PRF has been cited by other authors, as they continue to research factors contributing the motor and cognitive impairment in people with Parkinson’s disease, and to test the impact of interventions to address these impairments.”  
SEEDING GRANT

### 04: PRF FUNDING HAS INFORMED POLICY, CLINICAL PRACTICE AND EDUCATION



**17%**  
17% of PRF funded research has had an impact on **policy**.



**73%**  
73% of PRF funded research had **influenced** clinical practice.



**51%**  
51% of PRF funded research is used in **teaching or training** methods.

PRF funded research has had an impact on the policy or decision making of government and health authorities, including National Continence Management Strategy, the Victorian Allied Health Research Framework, falls management for adults in DHSS care settings and residents of aged care facilities, children in digital society and NDIS funding of cycling participation.

PRF funded research has also influenced clinical practice, examples include the Clinical Guidelines for Stroke Management, Guidelines for Musculoskeletal Physiotherapists and Australian Clinical Practice Guidelines for Respiratory Care.

Several respondents mentioned that their research is incorporated into the syllabus of university programs and that the outcomes of the PRF funded research are now routinely taught to undergraduate or postgraduate physiotherapy students.

“It is in the stroke guidelines... (and) provides clear evidence for task and context-specific training in stroke rehabilitation.”  
PROFESSOR CATHERINE DEAN, SEEDING GRANT, 2000

## CONCLUSION

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This review has demonstrated the many benefits of the PRF research grant funding program, both for grant recipients and the physiotherapy profession, as well as the wider community.

Many grant recipients have gone on to distinguished academic careers, generated funding for their research from other sources and become world-leading experts in their chosen field. Research outputs have impacted many different areas of clinical physiotherapy and influenced practice around the world. Many hope to have an impact in future.

While the value of grants provided by PRF are small compared to larger medical research funding bodies, and in many cases, the impacts of research conducted by PRF grant recipients are not directly attributable to the initial project, many respondents remarked on the value these grants provided in supporting early career researchers.

There is strong support for the PRF to focus grants on new researchers, as it provides them with the research track record necessary to access larger grants. Given the competitive nature of medical research funding, this offers an important way for the PRF to support physiotherapy research not being funded by other bodies.

**For every \$1 invested by the PRF, an additional \$6.35 of further funding has been generated.**

For more information and to read the full report [click here](#).





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[australian.physio/PRF](http://australian.physio/PRF)

