



Funding research to cure spinal cord injury

Chairman's Report

**AGM Report -
FYE 31 March 2022**

As Chairman of The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Research Trust, it is my pleasure to present the Annual Accounts for financial year end 31 March 2022.

Our vision is a world free from spinal cord injury paralysis and the role of CatWalk is to fund exceptional research to achieve this purpose. Focusing on outcomes for those living with spinal cord injury, the CatWalk Board of Trustees prudently follow the independent advice of our scientific advisory experts to carefully channel our supporters' donations into the most promising research available.

I am delighted to report that between 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022, The CatWalk Trust granted the highest sum of funding allocations in any single year since our formation in 2005, and thanks to the generosity of our donors, \$1,516,379 was paid out to critical, world-class spinal cord injury research.

Research funding covered a number of promising areas of scientific exploration including:

- Applying sustained electrical fields to the damaged cord to determine overall efficacy when incorporated into a bioelectronic implant to direct axonal regeneration after SCI – the second year of a three-year project by Associate Professor Darren Svirskis.
- Gene therapy studies and cell transplantation to promote stronger connections for recovery – the conclusion of a three-year project by Connor Clemett.
- Investigating whether the precursor cells of highly specialised neural cells can be used for cell transplantation to promote natural repair and improve electrical pathways – a two-year Postdoctoral study by Dr Amy Chapman.
- Neuroprotection through a series of functional studies to see if the distribution of calcium binding buffers are altered in the injured spinal cord and therefore if they create neurodegeneration – the first year of a two-year study by Dr Sheryl Tan.
- Sponsorship of the Brain Bee Challenge - a high school competition encouraging students in Year 11 to learn about the brain and its functions, the latest advances in neuroscience research, and career pathways.
- The eWALK trial - application of non-invasive neurostimulation to the spine to wake up neural pathways - an international clinical trial being run out of Neuroscience Australia, Sydney.
- Our continuing support of the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility to maintain ongoing research programmes to develop novel treatments and to attract new ideas through local and international biomedical and clinical collaborations – under the Directorship of Dr. Simon O'Carroll.

Unfortunately, the enduring effects of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the Trust's fundraising throughout the year. The cancellation of three major fundraisers coupled with unpredictable bear market conditions which were detrimental to our investment portfolio, resulted in the Trust's accounts showing an accounting loss of (\$966,613) on total revenue of **\$867,624.**

Our thanks go to the following donors and supporters who continue to fund spinal cord injury research.

- Treadlite, Magnum Industries, Barenbrug and Farm Source – all of these businesses generously donated a portion of product sales.
- Bell Gully and Findex again provided pro-bono legal and accounting services respectively. Their services in-kind save the CatWalk Trust thousands of dollars, all of which go straight back into research projects.

The Lindsay Foundation, the Thompson Family Foundation, Dorothy Cutts, Scarlet Trust, and the Jones Foundation; all of whom contribute so meaningfully throughout the year.

Acknowledgement must go to the CatWalk Board of Trustees. Thanks to their strategic oversight and judicious governance, CatWalk's precious funds are managed with the utmost integrity and pragmatism. I am extremely proud that, despite complications in the fundraising environment, the Trust remains in a robust financial position, ready and waiting to fund the next phase of outstanding spinal cord injury research.

Thank you also to the CatWalk team – Chris, Donna and Meg - for their hard work and sincere passion. Thank you to our Founder, Patrons, and Ambassadors for their dedication.

But most importantly, I would like to thank our donors. We cannot make a difference without you. Thank you for your help in funding and helping to find a cure for spinal cord injury.




David Pretorius
Chairman



BELL GULLY





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Charities Commission Registration: CC27170