

Snow Vision Accelerator

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Snow Family's \$50M partnership with University to transform glaucoma treatment

The Snow Vision Accelerator: A Groundbreaking Initiative for Glaucoma Research

17/02/2025: The Snow Medical Research Foundation (Snow Medical) is launching the *Snow Vision Accelerator* in partnership with the University of Sydney, with a landmark \$50 million commitment from the Snow Family over 10 years, to fight glaucoma, the world's leading cause of irreversible blindness.

This is the largest single philanthropic investment in vision science in Australia.

The *Snow Vision Accelerator* will build on the work of world-renowned ophthalmologist Jonathan Crowston and bring together leading Australian and International research groups to develop innovative treatments that enhance the ability of optic nerve cells to withstand injury and survive, addressing a pressing unmet need for effective therapies.

Glaucoma affects 80 million people globally, with 4.5 million completely blind in both eyes. Often referred to as the "sneak thief of sight," the disease progresses silently until significant vision is lost. Current treatments focus solely on lowering eye pressure, leaving age-related vulnerabilities and optic nerve resilience largely unaddressed. The Snow Vision Accelerator is poised to change this.

"This transformative investment in ophthalmology in Australia, and one of the largest worldwide, is designed in partnership with the University of Sydney to revolutionise how we treat glaucoma and prevent blindness for millions of people worldwide," Tom Snow, Chair of the Snow Medical Research Foundation said. "Our family backs high-risk, high-reward science that addresses the most pressing global health challenges.

"This builds on Terry Snow's vision to deliver real-world solutions at an accelerated pace by backing world-class researchers here in Australia. This is about doing philanthropy differently – by giving the long-term stability and resources to the best teams needed to translate research to the bedside. It is a commitment to excellence, global collaboration, urgency and intellectual vitality," Mr Snow said.

"On behalf of the University of Sydney, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Snow family and Snow Medical Research Foundation for enabling this innovative research and commercialisation," Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Mark Scott said.

"Built on the outstanding research skills and knowledge of the world-renowned ophthalmologist Professor Jonathan Crowston and his team at the University, this partnership in the Snow Vision



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Accelerator shares our deep commitment to outstanding scientific endeavour and to making a tangible difference to the millions of people affected by glaucoma. Together we'll work to create a future free from its tenacious grip."

Professor Jonathan Crowston, leading the program from the University of Sydney, emphasised the significance of this program.

"This Accelerator will address a critical gap in glaucoma research, targeting the age-related vulnerabilities of the optic nerve. With this funding, we can explore transformative therapies that aim to prevent vision loss by stopping the disease from progressing," Professor Jonathan Crowston said.

"This Program is game-changing because it addresses the unmet need for drugs that increase nerve resilience, a field where such treatments currently do not exist. Its unique scale and focus integrate teams across biological research, data science, drug development, and clinical trials, all working towards a common product-oriented goal."

Glaucoma Australia President, Maree O'Brien, added, "As the national peak body providing support and education to those affected by glaucoma through our SiGHTWiSE patient support program, we hear first-hand the anxiety and distress of possible vision loss that many of our patient community face when diagnosed and throughout their treatment.

"This new program represents an historic investment into glaucoma treatment and blindness prevention, thanks to the Snow family and the University of Sydney."

In addition to advancing drug development, the program aims to build Australia's reputation as a global leader in eye research and to attract additional funding from government, philanthropy, and the private sector. A collaboration with Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences will strengthen the translation of discoveries into clinical applications.

Professor Jean Yang, an applied statistician and Director of the Sydney Precision Data Science Centre, who will play a lead role in data analytics for the program said, "The Snow Vision Accelerator will generate a deep sea of new, complex data, promising a revolution in vision research and new data science challenges to pursue."

"There are not a lot of data scientists currently working in vision research. We'll access a wide range of data, including from aging studies and clinical research, to create new insights into the progress and mechanism of glaucoma, with the potential to be applied to other vision research."

Professor Ian Constable AO, renowned ophthalmologist, and key advisor for the Vision Accelerator said he was thrilled with the new program.



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“This partnership between the University of Sydney and the Snow Medical Research Foundation is an innovative model for philanthropy that will drive tangible outcomes for people experiencing glaucoma. We see a future with both outstanding scientific breakthroughs and efficient clinical translation,” Professor Constable said.

The program will begin in July 2025.

"The *Snow Vision Accelerator* is more than a research initiative; it's a commitment to better health outcomes and to creating new and more affordable treatments. By prioritising excellence, fostering talent, pursuing equity, and building world-class infrastructure, this program underscores the transformative power of philanthropy and science working together," Mr Snow concluded.

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About the Snow Medical Research Foundation

Established in 2019, The Snow Medical Research Foundation (Snow Medical) is the creation of Canberra's Snow family and is a vision of the late businessman and philanthropist, Terry Snow AM.

Snow Medical is committed to fast-tracking medical research discoveries by supporting high-risk, high-reward science that addresses global health challenges.

To date, Snow Medical has committed over \$260 million through its Snow Fellowship program, the Snow Centre for Immune Health collaboration with the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, BEAT Covid, and the Snow Vision Accelerator collaboration with the University of Sydney.

Find out more at snowmedical.org.au

About the University of Sydney

In creating the first university in Australia in 1850, the University of Sydney's founders recognised the power of education to inspire positive change. We hold that belief just as strongly today.

We are one of the world's leading, comprehensive research and teaching universities, and offer an exceptional range of disciplines – more than 400 areas of study.

We're currently ranked 18th in the global QS World University Rankings and 11th in the world for sustainability – the University of Sydney is also consistently placed among the top universities in the world.

