Each month ACN asks a team member to provide a profile of themself that takes us behind the scene on what are the influences that encouraged their career choices.

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Q&A with Carla Gerbo

Carla Gerbo is the Manager of the Australian Centre for Nanomedicine (ACN) based at the University of New South Wales. ACN was established in April 2011 with links to UNSW Faculties of Medicine, Engineering and Science, plus the Children’s Cancer Institute Australia, and the Centre for Advanced Macromolecular Design (CAMD).

Carla is a foundation Director of Australia’s peak nanotechnology organisation, the Australian Nanotechnology Alliance (ANA) which is an industry-led, research supported alliance comprising organisations that underpin Australia’s current and future economic growth in diverse industry sectors. From 2008 to late 2010 she was the Chief Executive of this organisation which grew the relationships between the industry, research and government stakeholder groups.

Between mid 2008 and the end of 2010 Carla was the National Co-ordinator of Future Materials, a research institution-based network, that connects researchers and industry in the field of advanced materials technology. It provides an independent service for industry creating a one stop shop for materials technology. The common thread between Carla’s roles is the development of strategic alliances between research organisations, and industry focus. Through utilising open innovation principles the focus is economic development utilising new and advanced materials.

Prior to her roles with the ANA and Future Materials, Carla ran her own business development consultancy tailored to emerging technology companies. In her earlier career she worked for 15 years as a senior business economist working for a major peak industry body.

What was your inspiration to get involved in NanoMedicine?

As you can tell from the introduction to this Q&A I don’t have a science background. Back in the early 2000’s I read an article in The Economist talking about nanotechnology. I had never heard this word before but the article captured my imagination and I wondered if there were Australian scientists working in this field. I asked around and was introduced to some scientists at The University of Queensland who were frustrated that nanotechnology wasn’t receiving the profile it deserved. From there we formed...
the Australian Nanotechnology Alliance and have seen nanotechnology become more profiled and more understood not only by Government decision makers, but industry and the general community.

Two years ago I was asked to help establish the Australian Centre for NanoMedicine which has been a great challenge.

**What inspires you about ACN?**
The people inspire me. I’m privileged to work with world leaders and I love the ACN model of working on specific diseases with teams of people with diverse skills based on the faculty they are based in – medicine, engineering or science. It’s such a unique model which is delivering tremendous results. The second thing I love is the visible translation of science into economics (I was an economist in my first career). With each step we, and other scientists working in medicine, achieve it means people can get back to their normal lives faster.

**At which upcoming conferences are you presenting in 2013?**
While I’m not presenting at any conferences, planning is under way for the ACN hosted 4th International NanoMedicine Conference in July. This is a fantastic conference with great opportunities to network.

**How do you spend your spare time?**
Travel and experimenting with a regions food. I love travelling especially around the old Savoia region that now overlaps France and Italy. I think the cuisine of this region is the world’s best be it Lyonnaise bouchons or visiting the traditional white truffle markets in Asti. I try and cook this type of cuisine, but my best efforts don’t come close to the *cucina povera* (cooking of the poor) of this region.

**Which profession would you choose if you were not a scientist?**
My first degree was in Economics, but growing up I was interested in archaeology or anthropology. They remain of interest, but I often dream of living in a French/Italian village leading gastronomical tours – perhaps I watch too many episodes of “Escape to the Country”.