



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



15th November 2015

Prof Ian Bennett
Section of Academic Surgery
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Dear Prof Bennett,

I am writing to express my gratitude for the award of the inaugural RACS Senior Lecturer Fellowship. It is now mid-way through the two years of grant funding and at the recent Academic Surgical Meeting in Sydney, I was reflecting upon the immense contribution this grant has made to my academic progression.

The Senior Lecturer Fellowship has given me the freedom to develop pilot data in my research topic "*Outcomes and epidemiology of older patients having vascular surgery in NSW*". As you are aware, younger researchers often struggle to be eligible for larger grants due to the lack of early funding when we are developing early pilot data. The grant has achieved the goal of providing 'seed funding' and research team is now in a position to apply for larger ongoing grants, obtaining further funding that will hopefully contribute to maintaining my university position longer term. The fellowship has meant a period of financial stability whilst I establish my academic career.

The Senior Lecturer Fellowship has assisted with integrating me in the teaching and research functions of my university. A large teaching load is often unsupported for mid-career clinical academics, as grant money is primarily linked to research. The fellowship has provided financial freedom for me to be involved with clinical anatomy teaching, the Graduate Medical Program and Masters of Surgery Program of the University of Sydney. The requirement for my institution to provide a reciprocal part of the funding for this grant is in part responsible for this greater integration- its a win-win investment. Involvement with the university processes of performance appraisal and teaching requirements has been a rewarding process of personal development and mentorship.

Finally, the award of RACS Senior Lecturer Fellowship has brought many new mentors and colleagues in academic surgery. I have benefited from the advice and support of established clinical academic surgeons, have been able to meaningfully contribute to the Section of Academic Surgery, and hopefully have encouraged younger surgeons and trainees that a career in academic surgery is both rewarding and possible.

I would like to thank the College of Surgeons and the Section of Academic Surgery for this brilliant opportunity and support. I encourage all aspiring clinical academics to consider applying for this scholarship.

Kind Regards,

Dr Sarah Aitken
Vascular Surgeon | Concord Repatriation General Hospital
Clinical Academic | University of Sydney