# Video Transcript

## 2023-24 Premier Awards for Health and Medical Research Dr Laura Ross

### Dr Laura Ross

My name is Dr Laura Ross. I’m a Rheumatologist at St Vincent’s Hospital and a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Text: 2023-24 Premier’s Awards for Health and Medical Research. Dr Laura Ross, Clinical Researcher Award.

Text: Why did you become a health or medical researcher?

Vision: View of St Vincent’s Hospital building and main entrance showing Dr Laura Ross entering the building.

### Dr Laura Ross

I completed part of my rheumatology specialty training at St Vincent’s Hospital, which manages the largest cohort of scleroderma patients in Australia, and is also one of the major sites for the Australian Scleroderma Cohort Study, which is one of the largest and most comprehensive longitudinal studies of scleroderma anywhere in the world.

Scleroderma is a complex multisystem autoimmune disease that has no cure and very few effective treatments, so it was through learning about this condition during my training, managing inpatients and learning directly from my patients that I realised I wanted to contribute to helping find some effective treatment solutions for the management of scleroderma.

Text: What problem is your project addressing?

### Dr Laura Ross

I spend a lot of my research time thinking about outcome measures, and when we’re talking about outcome measures in clinical research, what we’re referring to and how we measure and assess disease in clinical trials, which is how we test new therapies for management of diseases.

Vision: View of Laura working on computer and walking through hospital.

So what I have done is develop what’s called an activity index, which is a method of assessing scleroderma in the clinical trial context to be able to test the efficacy of new treatments that will potentially become available for patients with scleroderma.

Text: What have the project results been?

### Dr Laura Ross

So this project has really been the results of an effort over a number of years, and it’s the results of an international collaborative effort.

Vision: View of Laura speaking with other colleagues at the hospital.

### Dr Laura Ross

I have collaborated with more than 30 international scleroderma experts and patient research partners to develop an activity index that can measure disease status across nine organ systems in the body.

Vision: View of computer.

## Dr Laura Ross

We have done initial testing of our activity index in both the Australian scleroderma cohort studies and also in patients from Canada who a enrolled in the Canadian scleroderma cohort study.

Vision: View of computer.

### Dr Laura Ross

And what we’ve been able to see is that patients with higher disease activity as measured by our activity index experience poorer outcomes, so what we’re hoping is that once this activity index is implemented in randomised control trials it can be used to measure the efficacy of these novel therapeutics in patients with scleroderma.

Text: How could this project make a difference to people’s lives?

### Dr Laura Ross

What we’re hoping is that once it’s implemented in randomised control trials it will help facilitate the development and the testing of new therapeutics for patients with scleroderma, so it will hopefully help deliver efficacious treatments to patients with scleroderma to actually improve their lives.

Text: 2023-24 Premier’s Awards for Health and Medical Research. Celebrating the achievements of Victoria’s early career health and medical researchers.

Text: Victoria State Government. Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne.