UTR2.36 - MICHELL (GWENDOLYN HASTINGS) BEQUEST

Background –

A. In August 1953 Mrs Gwendolyn Hastings (‘donor’) made an inter vivos gift of £50,000 to the University of Adelaide for the establishment of a Chair and Department of Experimental Medicine within the School of Medicine. Dr Stuart Hetzel, who had been Mrs Hastings’ medical practitioner for many years, wrote to the University on her behalf advising of the proposed gift. The donor’s wish was that income be directed for research into experimental medicine by way of salaries, equipment and running expenses, but not in the construction of buildings or laboratories.

B. The donor requested that at least one area of experimental work should be “along the lines of the so-called psychosomatic approach to certain medical problems”. The hope was that the research unit would not only be concerned with research projects but contribute to medical education in a holistic manner, by seeing illnesses in the context of everyday stresses, strains and life’s emotions.

C. The gift was used by the University to create the Gwen Michell Foundation for Medical Research (“the Foundation”). This course was adopted by Council on 6 November 1953.

D. The Foundation was to be controlled by a Board of Trustees, with a minimum of three members, one of whom would be nominated by the Faculty of Medicine and one member originally nominated by the donor. The original trustees were Professor Mitchell and Dr Helen Mayo, both nominated by Council, Professor Robson, nominated by the Faculty of Medicine, and Dr Stuart Hetzel, nominated by the donor.

E. The funds of the Foundation were to be used for the purposes of:

   a. Assisting in founding a Chair and Department of Experimental Medicine with at least one project of the Department being along the lines of the psychosomatic approach to medical problems

   b. Supporting a Research Scholar whose activities would lie along the lines of experimental medicine.

F. While the Foundation was charged with the ultimate objective of supporting the establishment of a Chair and a Department of Experimental Medicine, the inter vivos gift was not sufficiently large to achieve that objective from the outset, and thus the creation of the Research Scholar position in the interim. Dr Basil Hetzel was the first Michell Research Scholar.

G. Gwendolyn Hastings died on 20 May 1955 and under the terms of her Will dated 3 May 1955, bequeathed in her will a pecuniary legacy of £50,000 plus the residue of her estate to the University of Adelaide (‘bequest’) to be administered in the following manner:-
‘WHEREAS it is my desire that a Department of Experimental Medicine be set up within the Medical School of the University of Adelaide particularly for the purpose of conducting research in the field of experimental medicine by the psycho-somatic approach and that a chair of Experimental Medicine be established in the said School AND WHEREAS I have already made a payment of a sum of FIFTY THOUSAND POUNDS (£50,000) to the said University of Adelaide for that purpose I GIVE to the said UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE further sum of FIFTY THOUSAND POUNDS (£50,000) free of all duties to aid Research in Experimental Medicine …….’

H. Income from the Will and the Foundation was blended over the years.

I. In 2011 the Faculty of Medicine re-considered and approved a broad definition of experimental medicine in its contemporary context:–

Experimental medicine is basic research, applied research, or translational research conducted to assess, add to or apply the body of knowledge in the field of medicine. Experimental research can be divided into two general categories: the evaluation of new diagnostic/prognostic methods and treatments for both safety and efficacy in what are termed clinical trials, and all other research that contributes to the development of new diagnostic/prognostic methods and treatments. The latter is termed preclinical research if its goal is specifically to elaborate knowledge for the development of new diagnostic/prognostic methods of therapeutic strategies. This includes basic research in humans and non human species, at the molecular, cellular and whole body systems levels, through in vitro, in silico and in vivo studies, to generate new knowledge and substantiate existing knowledge that underpins medicine and component discipline areas in the broadest sense. A new paradigm in biomedical research is being termed translational research, which focuses on iterative feedback loops between the basic and clinical research domains to accelerate knowledge translation from the bedside to the bench, and back again.

J. New trustees of the Foundation were appointed by University Council around 2011. Council appointed Professor Richard Russell AM as Chair, Professor Alastair Burt, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Professor Richard Ruffin, Emeritus Professor of Medicine as trustees. Simon Venus (Piper Alderman - external solicitor) was also appointed as an additional trustee. The newly-appointed trustees will review the expenditure of the Foundation to be satisfied that commitments are kept within the available income distributed from the Composite Fund and are applied solely for the purposes intended.

K. The University accepted the bequest upon the trusts specified by the donor and the bequest therefore became the capital subject to those trusts (‘capital sum’).
Investment of the fund

1. The Fund has been actively managed and monitored over many years. The fund has grown from the original two gifts of £50,000 each (plus the residue of the estate) to $3.3M. This sum sits within the University’s composite fund and earns interest. The income from the fund is to be used for experimental medicine. The income distributed is applied to partially fund salaries of medical consultants whose specialty is linked to experimental medicine.

Obligations

2. In administering the fund, the University must adhere to the terms specified and is obliged:-

   (a) to invest the capital sum according to the directions of the donor; and

   (b) to apply the income towards experimental medicine.

Administration

3. Income to be applied towards experimental medicine.