

Exploring the unexpected: a tribute to Professor Richard Scolyer AO

Reading time:

Eleanor Milne

Date created: 06/10/2026

Professor Richard Scolyer AO will be remembered as one of Australia's greatest clinician-scientists. Named Australian of the Year in 2024, he was recognised not only for transforming melanoma care through groundbreaking research, but also for his generosity, humility and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others. Even after his diagnosis with grade 4 glioblastoma, he remained dedicated to advancing medical knowledge and creating hope for future patients. His passing is a profound loss to medicine, but his legacy will continue to shape generations of clinicians, researchers and patients around the world.

Professor Scolyer's greatest lesson wasn't that he had all the answers – it was that he never stopped asking questions. Throughout his career, he challenged accepted thinking, embraced collaboration and remained open to unexpected discoveries, even when they contradicted long-held assumptions.

It was this curiosity that helped transform advanced melanoma from what was once considered a fatal diagnosis into a disease where long-term remission is now possible for many patients.¹

An unexpected discovery changed the future of cancer care

For decades, researchers believed that the brain's protective blood-brain barrier would prevent large immunotherapy molecules from reaching aggressive brain tumours. Analysis of tumour tissue following Professor Scolyer's experimental neoadjuvant immunotherapy treatment challenged that long-held assumption.²

Researchers found that the immunotherapy had not only crossed the blood-brain barrier but also triggered a powerful immune response within the tumour, thereby opening new avenues for treating glioblastoma.²

This breakthrough was more than a remarkable scientific finding – it reflected Professor Scolyer's approach to medicine. He believed progress comes from curiosity, collaboration and being prepared to rethink accepted ideas.

His legacy reminds us that every medical breakthrough begins with a question, a willingness to follow the evidence wherever it leads and the courage to embrace the unexpected.

If you'd like to honour Professor Scolyer's legacy, you can contribute to the [Richard Scolyer Pathology Fellowship](#), which was established by Melanoma Institute Australia and aims to carry forward his extraordinary commitment to the next generation of melanoma pathologists.

References

Blank CU, Lucas MW, Scolyer RA, et al. Neoadjuvant Nivolumab and Ipilimumab in Resectable Stage III Melanoma. *N Engl J Med* 2024; 391:1696-1708.

Long GV et al. Neoadjuvant triplet immune checkpoint blockade in newly diagnosed glioblastoma. *Nature Medicine* 2025;31:1557-1566.

Medical Indemnity Protection Society ABN 64 007 067 281 | AFSL 301912

All information on this page is of a general nature only and is not intended to be relied upon as, nor to be a substitute for, specific legal or other professional advice. No responsibility for the loss occasioned to any person acting on or refraining from action as a result of any material published can or will be accepted by MIPS. You should seek legal or other professional advice before relying on any content, and practise proper clinical decision making with regard to the individual circumstances.

Information is only current at the date initially published.

If in doubt, contact our claims and 24-hour medico-legal advice and support team on 1300 698 573.

You should consider the appropriateness of the information and read the [Member Handbook Combined PDS and FSG](#) before making a decision on whether to join MIPS.
