

Dr Christian Verdicchio

CEO, Heart Support Australia, Clinician-researcher & Clinical Senior Lecturer,
University of Sydney and University of Adelaide, **ADELAIDE**

Dr Christian Verdicchio is a clinician-researcher, and Chief Executive Officer of Heart Support Australia – Australia's largest peer support network for Australians affected by heart disease, which facilitates the transition from hospital to home.

As CEO of Heart Support Australia, Dr Verdicchio oversees all operational activities of the organisation, whilst leading the advocacy strategy on behalf of the patient voice, and driving the organisation's healthcare policy initiatives both in Australia and internationally.

With a particular interest in atrial fibrillation (AF) – the most common sustained arrhythmia in the community, linked to reduced quality of life, stroke, heart failure, and premature mortality – Dr Verdicchio is committed to improving long-term support for Australians following a cardiac event.¹⁻³

Previously, Dr Verdicchio worked as the Corporate Allied Health and Cardiac Rehabilitation Manager at Macquarie Health, Sydney. There, he developed and led private cardiac rehabilitation programmes across 12 hospitals in Sydney and Melbourne, respectively.

Dr Verdicchio has two Bachelor's degrees in applied science: Health and Human Movement, and Health Sciences (Honours), and a Graduate Diploma in Clinical Exercise Science. He also has a PhD in Medicine from the University of Adelaide, for which he was awarded the Dean's Commendation for Doctoral Thesis Excellence for his PhD, 'Exercise in Atrial Fibrillation'.

Armed with extensive knowledge in cardiovascular disease and sports cardiology, Dr Verdicchio continues to hold academic appointments as a Clinical Senior Lecturer at both the University of Adelaide and the University of Sydney.

He is currently the Australian Young Ambassador for the European Society of Cardiology's European Association of Preventive Cardiology (EAPC) arm, and an Executive Member of the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand's (CSANZ) Allied Health, Science and Technology Council.

Dr Verdicchio has spoken at leading cardiology conferences worldwide, including, but not limited to, the European Heart Rhythm Society, and the Asia-Pacific Heart Rhythm Society.

He was selected as a finalist in the Young Investigator Award and Early Career Researcher category at the Exercise and Sports Science (ESSA) Research to Practice and the ESC Preventive Cardiology congresses between 2018 - 2021.



Dr Verdicchio has extensive experience in board and governance positions, including his role as President for Com.It.Es South Australia, for which he was the world's youngest to be elected. Furthermore, he was a founder of the new Adelaide Italian Festival in 2019, and continues to serve as an active board member.

In his role as CEO of Heart Support Australia, and possessing extensive knowledge in cardiology, governance, and corporate management, as well as long-standing experience as a clinician, Dr Verdicchio understands the importance of providing long-term support to those living with heart diseases, and the need for innovative, accessible treatment options.

"Atrial fibrillation (AF) affects one in three Australians above the age of 50,⁴ and is the leading cause of cardiac related hospitalisations in the country for some time now.⁵

"AF is also a leading cause of stroke, especially if left undetected,^{6,7} so this is a serious issue which people need to be aware of, and be open to having early discussions with their GP or specialist about whether they are at risk of developing it, or may already have AF without knowing it," said Dr Verdicchio.

"If you are over the age of 50, have a family history, or have any risk factors we know are strongly linked to causing AF, such as being obese, physical inactivity, sleep apnoea, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes,^{6,8} then please go and have a discussion with your GP or cardiologist.

"If you are at risk of AF, or you are living with AF, then it is important to take your prescribed medications and commence your risk factor modification, as we now know AF is very much a lifestyle disease,⁹ with significant improvements seen within the heart through weight loss and improving one's risk factors, resulting in a reduction in AF burden and symptoms, and a complete reversal of disease progression,"¹⁰ Dr Verdicchio said.

"Knowing your risk factors and taking your medication is key to either preventing or treating AF."¹¹

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To coordinate an interview with Dr Christian Verdicchio, please contact:

Kirsten Bruce and Mel Kheradi VIVA! Communications

M 0401 717 566 | 0421 551 257

T 02 9968 3741

E kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au | mel@vivacommunications.com.au

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