

HUNGERFORD AWARD CITATION FOR 2025

Dr Carolyn O'Brien

The T.G. Hungerford Award was established on the retirement of Dr Tom Hungerford OBE who contributed significantly to the veterinary profession. The Hungerford Award honours the tradition of recognising excellence in continuing veterinary education.

❖ So splendid is their performance; they adorn the awards for excellence now conferred upon them.

T.G. Hungerford OBE

Dr Carolyn O'Brien is a worthy recipient of the Hungerford Award for 2025 for her commitment to continuing veterinary education and her dedication to advancing feline medicine.

Dr O'Brien has transformed clinical practice and research in feline medicine. After graduating from the University of Melbourne in 1994, Dr O'Brien worked in general practice in Australia and the UK, developing a special interest in feline medicine. In 2000, she began a competitive feline medicine residency at the University of Sydney, marking the start of her career in feline health. Her professional development was underscored by her Membership and Fellowship status with the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists (ANZCVS) in Feline Medicine, establishing her as a leader in the field.

Dr O'Brien's academic journey is impressive. She earned a master's degree focused on the diagnosis and treatment of canine and feline cryptococcosis, a significant fungal infection. Recently, she completed a PhD at the University of Melbourne, where her research into mycobacteria in cats and Australian wildlife shed light on zoonotic infections and feline leprosy. Her work has advanced the understanding of feline mycobacterial infections, particularly those caused by *Mycobacterium* species, impacting veterinary and public health.

Dr O'Brien's scholarly output is prolific. With nearly 1,900 citations and an h-index of 24, her work is widely recognised. Her 2010 publication, 'A Major Role for Mammals in the Ecology of *Mycobacterium ulcerans*' published in *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*, has over 230 citations, highlighting the role of wildlife in zoonotic disease spread. This research has advanced the understanding of *M. ulcerans*, responsible for Buruli ulcer, affecting both humans and animals.

Her retrospective study on cryptococcosis, published in *Medical Mycology* (2004) with over 160 citations, remains a comprehensive analysis of the condition in Australia. This study has guided therapeutic approaches and influenced clinical protocols. Additionally, her work on therapy outcomes for cats and dogs with cryptococcosis, published in the *Australian Veterinary Journal* (2006), has over 100 citations and serves as a reference for practitioners.

Dr O'Brien has made strides in understanding mycobacterial infections in cats and dogs, with her 2013 paper in *Veterinary Dermatology* cited over 70 times. Her contributions have enhanced diagnostic and therapeutic strategies and underscored the zoonotic potential of these infections. She is also the first to describe melioidosis in cats.

Dr O'Brien's impact extends beyond publications. As the current Director and Feline Medicine Specialist at Melbourne Cat Vets, she provides expert care for feline patients and serves as an educator. She and her team have treated over 100 cats with FIP in the last two years, achieving an impressive success rate. For over 12 years, she has led the Centre for Veterinary Education's Feline Medicine Distance Education program, inspiring the careers of many veterinarians.

This has created a strong relationship between the Centre for Veterinary Education (CVE) and International Cat Care. Dr O'Brien excels at simplifying complex clinical concepts into accessible content for veterinarians and students. She is also an engaging speaker at national and international events.

The Feline Medicine Distance Education program is one of the most successful continuing education programs provided by the CVE. Although initially developed by Dr Rob Labuc, it was extended by Dr O'Brien in collaboration with Dr Andy Sparkes from International Cat Care, with input from others. It involves up to eight tutors and attracts participants from Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia. It is a primary program for those preparing for the Membership of the ANZCVS in Medicine of Cats. Dr O'Brien has also been a keynote speaker at several feline conferences and initiated a journal club and case discussion forum for clinicians in Melbourne.

Her clinical interests span infectious diseases, cardiology, dermatology, feline behavior, and neurology. Dr O'Brien has contributed to understanding feline mycobacterial infections, and her research on zoonotic pathogens shapes the field. Her publications influence veterinary standards of care globally and foster collaboration between veterinarians and public health officials. Her leadership in feline medicine has advanced knowledge in critical areas like feline infectious peritonitis.

Dr O'Brien's dedication to the profession, excellence in research and practice, and commitment to continuing education make her an exemplary recipient of the Hungerford Award for 2025. Her work has significantly influenced feline medicine and contributed to public health efforts through studies of zoonotic diseases. Dr Carolyn O'Brien is a distinguished scholar, compassionate clinician, and passionate educator whose contributions deserve this prestigious honour.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

—
**Centre for
Veterinary
Education**

THE 2025 T.G. HUNGERFORD AWARD

Presented to

Dr Carolyn O'Brien

For her profound and multifaceted contribution to continuing veterinary education, dedication to advancing feline medicine and research on zoonotic pathogens that has shaped the field globally.

/// So splendid is their performance; they adorn the awards for excellence now conferred upon them.

—Tom Hungerford OBE

Associate Professor Kate Patterson
Director
Centre for Veterinary Education

Dated this Nineteenth day of February, Two thousand and twenty five

