

## Dr Christian Verdicchio

CEO, Heart Support Australia, Head of Corporate Affairs & Strategy, Advara HeartCare, Clinician-researcher & Clinical Senior Lecturer, University of Sydney & 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.<sup>1-3</sup>

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.

"It is unbelievable to think that in a country like Australia, with such a globally respected healthcare system, we in fact wait on average nearly five years for the newest life-saving medical therapies to become available, while many other countries already have access.

"These delays have a significant impact on patient outcomes and can even force patients to consider travelling abroad for potentially lifesaving surgery or therapies," said Dr Verdicchio.

"Australian patients spend a lot of money each year on private health insurance, believing that they will have access to the best technology and procedures when needed. Ironically, that is often not the case, which raises the question: why take up private health insurance?

"There needs to be a system that is not only more efficient but also innovative, capable of meeting the rapidly changing demands of the healthcare sector and the constant stream of new breakthroughs," said Dr Verdicchio.

"The HTA Review outlined 51 recommendations, and we hope to see all of these implemented in full and as soon as possible. These recommendations have been widely welcomed by key stakeholders across the sector," said Dr Verdicchio.

"I think Australians would accept some short-term pain in the health system if it meant getting it right for future generations to come."

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

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3. Heart Foundation. What is atrial fibrillation? [Available from: <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/atrial-fibrillation>].