

President's Report

***"How I hate to remember,
for it means the day is past"***

As I pen my final ASMR President's Report, Ben Harper's sombre attitude towards reflection stirs in my mind. The role of ASMR President is like a rollercoaster ride: there are ups and downs, it's unpredictable but always exciting, and there are times when you wonder whether you'll make it all the way. And, of course, once the ride is finished, there are mixed feelings of relief that it's over but also of disappointment that it's come to an end.

Reflecting on this incredible experience over the past 12 months brings back many fond memories, particularly the excitement of touring the nation as part of ASMR Medical Research Week® and meeting so many of you in different parts of the country. The work you do, the commitment you show, the passion you convey and the sacrifices you make in trying to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of others is inspirational; it's what drives us at ASMR to pour our blood, sweat and tears into advocating on your behalf. We believe in the cause without reservation, and will always fight for a sustainable, vibrant, diverse and equitable health and medical research sector.

The year 2017 has been punctuated by a number of major developments in the health and medical research space. Firstly, a ministerial reshuffle in the Federal Government in January brought a change in leadership to the Health portfolio. This allowed the ASMR to refresh its relationship with the relevant ministers and the Department of Health and share our vision for a more sustainable and predictable investment model. We stand by our evidence-based model of benchmarking NHMRC investment against total health system expenditure, raising current investment to 3% of the health spend over a 10 year period. When the ASMR proposed this model 10 years ago it was dismissed as a pipe dream, yet through our advocacy efforts in the intervening period it is now frequently invoked by other thought leaders as not just a viable option, but a necessary one.

A second major development in 2017 has been the announcement of the first disbursements from the long-awaited Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). Since the inception of the MRFF, the ASMR has strongly



Dr Daniel Johnstone

advocated the responsible use of this valuable resource. While not wanting to sound like a broken record, the ASMR believes it is imperative that all monies disbursed from the MRFF are contestable; the best way to ensure this, we argue, is to implement a transparent process involving an open call for applications and independent expert review of proposals. Certainly, this has been the position we've put to the Minister for Health, and it's been pleasing to see that our recommendations have been heard and partly adopted: at least three of the first-round MRFF initiatives (relating to clinician fellowships, clinical trials and registries capacity, and antimicrobial resistance), amounting to nearly \$27 million in funding, will now be administered through NHMRC processes.

While this is a small win in the short term, the MRFF legislation allows considerable ministerial discretion in how monies are disbursed. To safeguard the integrity of this Fund into the future, we now need to advocate legislative change to ensure that MRFF disbursements, as they grow over the coming years, continue to be deployed responsibly and in the best interests of all Australians.

Finally, the restructure of the NHMRC Grants Program has been a major talking point throughout 2017. The new structure has been set, and the focus now switches to revising and optimising peer review processes for the new structure (see update on page 3). This is no mean feat! The NHMRC is currently in the midst of a national consultation tour and invites written submissions to the consultation, due December 4. I encourage you all to

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attend a forum and submit your ideas. The outcomes of the consultation will have long-lasting implications for how grant applications are reviewed within the NHMRC system, so it is important to take the opportunity to have your say.

With so many developments in the health and medical research sector over the past year, we look towards what will no doubt be an interesting 2018. But before we close the book on 2017, we still have one major ASMR event afoot. The ASMR National Scientific Conference, to be held 14–15 November at the Charles Perkins Centre in Sydney, has me very excited! This year we've designed an innovative program that integrates scientific sessions with unique and extensive professional development workshops. These workshops will employ a "live theatre" format, with expert narrators guiding the audience through the enigmatic process of academic promotion from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor and illuminating the inner workings of an NHMRC Grant Review Panel, providing insights into how to prepare your grant applications to maximise the likelihood of success. We are also excited to award the inaugural ASMR Peter Doherty Leading Light Award to the top-ranked mid-career researcher applicant. We are very grateful that Professor Doherty will present the award in person, before getting behind the microphone for an in-depth and probing one-on-one live interview with Norman Swan. It will be fascinating to hear about his amazing journey from humble vet surgeon to Nobel Laureate and Australian Living Treasure.

Looking towards the future, I'm excited about the direction the ASMR is heading. The ASMR has always been a pioneering organisation — a trailblazer for advocacy — and while health and medical research advocacy will always be our core business, I'm proud that we've shown the fortitude to start treading new ground. In the broader context of our society, we acknowledge that health and medical research achieves little if performed in isolation. To realise its full benefits and maximise translation, the research sector needs to work closely and collaboratively with other health-related sectors. This reality has driven our initial efforts, over the past two years, to facilitate a pathway towards better integration of the Australian healthcare

system. Led by the indefatigable Dr Sarah Meachem, this visionary 10-year initiative has continued to gain momentum, with our first face-to-face forum, which will bring together a range of key healthcare stakeholders, scheduled for April 2018.

Beyond the healthcare system, we also need to acknowledge the profound influence of social and economic factors on population health. The discovery and translation of new treatments for disease needs to be coupled with evidence-based social policies that improve health and wellbeing at the population level by enhancing health equity. It was illuminating to hear these arguments articulated by the 2017 ASMR Medallist, Professor Richard Wilkinson, who highlighted income inequality as a major driver of a number of health and social problems. Awarding Professor Wilkinson the ASMR Medal was just the first step in our long-term vision for a campaign that advocates the long-standing ASMR principles of equity, diversity and inclusion at a population level.

In closing, it has been an absolute honour to serve as President of an organisation that has been at the forefront of health, science and research advocacy for the past 56 years. My deepest thanks go to everyone who makes a valuable contribution to the sustained function of this important society: the Directors of the Board, members of the Advisory Group and members of the State and Regional Committees, who selflessly volunteer their precious time to help the ASMR achieve its advocacy objectives; Cath West and Priscilla Diment in the Executive Office, who always go above and beyond their job descriptions to ensure the ASMR runs smoothly and without whom the Society could not function in the effective manner that it does; and our devoted membership, whose support and contributions are essential for sustaining our advocacy on behalf of the entire health and medical research sector.

As one chapter closes, another one begins, and I look forward to continuing to serve on the ASMR Board under the innovative and visionary leadership of Dr Roger Yazbek. I'm confident that 2018 will be an even bigger and bolder year than 2017.

Dr Daniel Johnstone

Calendar of Events

Upcoming conferences

■ Annual Scientific Meetings of The Australia and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science and The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand

23 – 27 March 2018

Adelaide Convention Centre

■ New Directions in Leukaemia Research 2018 Meeting

25 – 28 March 2018

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

An update on NHMRC's new grant program

Since my last update in the [April 2017 ASMR newsletter](#), considerable progress has been made on the NHMRC new grant program. The new grant program was launched by the Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, at Parliament House on 25 May 2017. You can view the announcement [here](#).

Following the announcement, the focus has turned to the technical details of the new grant program. A dedicated task force within NHMRC has been working closely with NHMRC's Research Committee and other Principal Committees to finalise many aspects of the new grant program. This work continues; I presented a significant update in a webinar on 18 August 2017, focussing on the Investigator Grant scheme, which represents the biggest change from the existing grant program, but also including information on the other schemes, eligibility and transitional arrangements. The webinar video, transcript and slides are available [here](#).

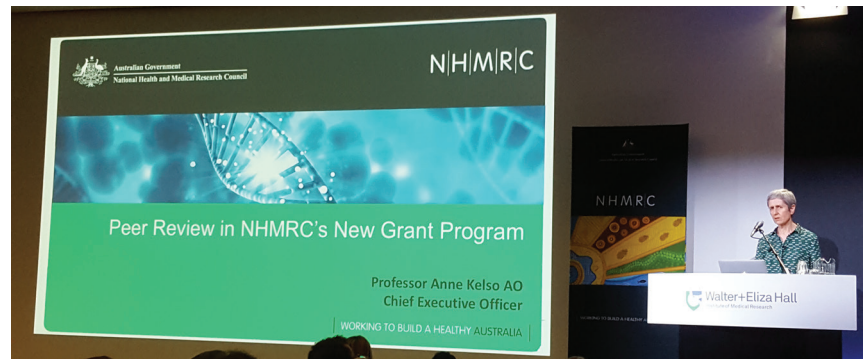
During the transition to the new 'steady state' — that is when all NHMRC grants are those awarded under the new grant program — it is essential that there is minimal disadvantage (or selective advantage) to any researcher based on current grants held, grants applied for, their area of research or any other factor. In addition, the rules that govern the transition period must be simple both to understand and to administer. The transitional arrangements for the first round of the new grant program (due to open in late 2018 to early 2019) are detailed [here](#). This includes a table and online tool to assist in determining your eligibility to apply for grants under the new grant program based on the grants you will hold on 1 January 2020.

NHMRC will continue to work with Research Committee and the other NHMRC Principal Committees to finalise the details of the new grant program, which will be published on the future.nhmrc.gov.au website. The following figure outlines the timeline for this work leading up to the first round opening in late 2018 to early 2019.

Peer review

Peer review was explicitly excluded from the structural review of NHMRC's grant program undertaken last year. However, now the structure of the new grant program has been determined and the technical details are mostly finalised, it is time to consider the peer review processes that will support the objectives of the new grant program.

To develop the peer review processes for the new grant program the input of the health and medical research sector will be essential. A consultation paper on peer review is now open on the [NHMRC consultation portal](#) that seeks input on peer review processes and parameters.



Professor Anne Kelso AO

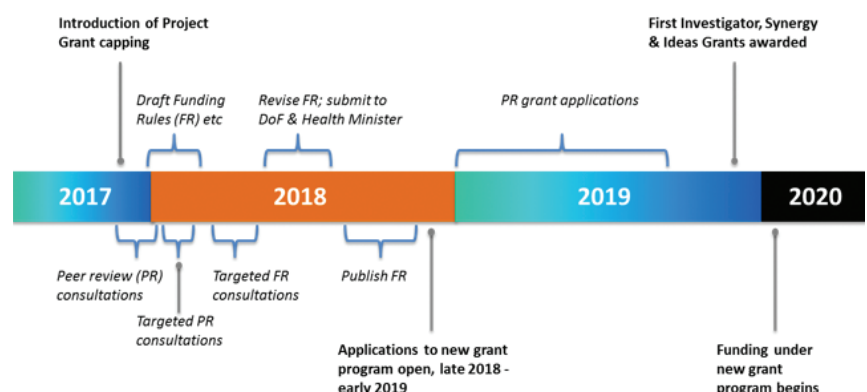
In addition, NHMRC is holding a series of public fora around Australia to provide the health and medical research sector an opportunity to have their say on peer review for the new grant program. At the time of writing, public fora have been held in Sydney and Adelaide, and I would like to thank everyone who attended for their insightful comments and positive discussions. We look forward to hearing from many others at the remaining meetings. Register to attend [here](#).

Input from both the online consultation and public fora will be used to develop models of peer review for the Investigator, Synergy and Ideas Grant schemes. These models will then be refined and finalised with input from a group representing a cross-section of the health and medical research sector.

I have high expectations that the approach outlined above will result in peer review that supports the objectives of the new grant program, is rigorous, minimises the burden for applicants and peer reviewers and continues to meet [NHMRC's Principles of Peer Review](#).

We will continue to update the new grant program website at future.nhmrc.gov.au with further developments, and I hope to see you at one of the upcoming public fora. I also hope you will have your say on peer review via the [online consultation](#).

Professor Anne Kelso AO, CEO, National Health and Medical Research Council.



From pipetting to public health policy — pursuing the benefits of genomics on human health



Dr Kristen Nowak

I've always hoped for a career helping people, and fortunately I have been able to combine this with my admiration and intrigue in genetics. I distinctly remember the fascination of my first introduction to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) by my year 10 biology teacher, Mrs Brandenburg. Her lessons were particularly memorable because she described her own family and how many of her siblings unfortunately had an early lethal genetic disease.

I completed a Bachelor of Science (Biotechnology) before doing an Honours year in molecular biology. I then volunteered for work experience as I looked for employment and Prof Nigel Laing from the University of Western Australia kindly allowed me to be involved with his projects. Work experience led to a 2-day per week job as a research assistant, and finally a full-time job with Prof Laing. A couple of years later I enrolled to do a PhD through Murdoch University as I was enjoying the research so much. My PhD studies consolidated my love of genetics and the ability that medical genetics has to greatly assist patients and families. Wishing to make a positive impact on families with genetic disease, especially those with rare diseases, became a passion.

After my PhD studies a NHMRC CJ Martin Fellowship facilitated me working with Prof Dame Kay Davies at Oxford University. It was an amazing experience to be in the fascinating academic and historic milieu that Oxford provided. The Fellowship returned me to Perth

to what is now known as the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research. During my Fellowship, I expanded my research repertoire from genetics and functional genomics, to developing animal models of disease and evaluating potential disease therapies. I applied this combination of skills to various overlapping projects during my ARC Future Fellowship, which I undertook whilst being a mother to two young children.

My mentors encouraged me to be an enthusiastic science and medical research citizen, to be involved with various committees, activities, and public and political engagement. In addition to being a WA ASMR Committee member, I was an ASMR Director for six years, five of those as Executive Director. I held a number of interesting and fulfilling roles during that time, including Media Convenor, Mentoring Convenor, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, ASMR State Convenor, and National Scientific Conference Convenor. I learnt many skills and much knowledge whilst on the ASMR Board, met many inspiring people, and had my horizons greatly expanded to a range of important activities beyond the laboratory.

The valuable lessons I learnt from my participation with the ASMR and other voluntary roles, along with my scientific research background in medical genetics and rare diseases strongly enabled my recent career move. I am now the Manager of Screening Policy within the Office of Population Health Genomics, within the Public and Aboriginal Division at the Western Australian Department of Health. This role combines many of my interests and abilities, whilst exposing me to new opportunities to learn and contribute further. I am enthusiastic about harnessing the advances in genetics and genomics and further facilitating their application into the healthcare system for prevention and better treatment of disease.

At the beginning of the recent National Science Week, I spoke to school students and briefly recounted my memory of my year 10 biology teacher so crucially influencing my career. Who should come up to me out of the audience at the end — Mrs Brandenburg! I had not seen her for almost a quarter century, and it was wonderful to be able to acknowledge and thank her for her contribution to sowing the seed of my desire to apply genetics to improve human health.

**Dr Kristen Nowak,
Manager of Screening Policy,
Office of Population Health Genomics,
Western Australian Department of Health**

Kristen Nowak and
her year 10 Biology teacher,
Mrs Brandenburg



Towards a National Strategy on Climate, Health, and Well-being for Australia

Since early 2016, the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA), a national coalition of health organisations, has been working with a broad cross section of health stakeholders to identify their concerns and priorities for addressing the health impacts of climate change in Australia, with the goal of developing a Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia.

This article provides an overview of the process and the pathway to the development of this historic policy document, the first of its kind in the world, to share with members of the Australian Society for Medical Research — a key supporting organisation in this effort.

Consultation with health stakeholders commenced in June 2016, when CAHA distributed its [Discussion Paper: Towards a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia](#).

This paper reviewed the health impacts of climate change in Australia. It also examined current national climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, especially the extent to which they acknowledge and respond to the impacts of climate change on human health and the health sector.

Finally, the key elements of a National Strategy for Climate, Health and Well-being were proposed.

In August 2016, a nine day [Climate, Health & Well-being Online Discussion Forum](#) was held to provide health stakeholders with another opportunity to respond to the ideas raised in the [Discussion Paper](#) and to share their ideas regarding the key themes and priorities for a future national policy framework.

Participants in the Online Forum included clinicians, senior health leaders, policy experts, researchers and academics. Click here for a [Report from the Climate, Health and Well-being Online Discussion Forum](#).

In September 2016, CAHA released a [Preliminary Report](#) of responses to the Discussion Paper via the online survey. This survey also evaluated respondents' knowledge and awareness regarding the health impacts of climate change, views on current national climate policy, and support for a National Strategy.

There was overwhelming support for the approach, with over 98% of respondents supporting a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia!

A [Health Leaders Roundtable](#) in Canberra in October 2016 provided an opportunity for leaders from major health sector stakeholders to meet with politicians

from the federal government, the opposition and the Greens, and to discuss the key elements for a national strategy. ASMR President Daniel Johnstone attended this meeting.

The [Final Consultation Report](#) was released in May 2017. It echoes the above findings that health professionals and leaders support a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being. It also demonstrates their high level of climate literacy and willingness to provide support to government and political parties in the development and implementation of a national strategy.

Release of the Framework for a National Strategy

Based on the feedback from health stakeholders, the [Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being for Australia](#) was developed, and launched at Parliament House in Canberra in June 2017 at an event co-hosted by Minister Ken Wyatt, Shadow Minister Catherine King and Greens leader Richard Di Natale.

The Framework provides a roadmap to support the Commonwealth Government in taking a leadership role in protecting the health and well-being of Australian communities from climate change, and in fulfilling its international obligations under the Paris Agreement.

What's next?

The collaborating organisations will continue to work with parliamentarians and policymakers to see the National Strategy adopted and implemented.

So far, there are encouraging signs. The federal opposition (ALP) has committed to the development of a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Well-being if elected to government.

CAHA is encouraging all supporters to make contact or meet with their Member of Parliament to share their concerns about the impact of climate change on health, and to ask them to support the implementation of the National Strategy.

Contact CAHA if you would like support and advice re getting in touch with your local representative in parliament — visit <http://www.ourclimate-ourhealth.org.au/petition>. Find out more and get involved on the campaign website: ourclimate-ourhealth.org.au.

Fiona Armstrong,
Founder and Executive Director of
the Climate and Health Alliance



Ken Wyatt at Roundtable,
October 2016



Using social media to promote your research



Dr Daniel Quintana

Owing to the surging volume of published research¹ and media content², it's becoming harder for scientists to get their research noticed using traditional media channels. An effective way to cut through the noise is for scientists to share their research on social media, as this is where people are increasingly directing their attention. While not traditionally seen as a vehicle for dissemination, there are several benefits to using social media for research promotion.

Considering that scientific research is largely supported by government funding, scientists have an obligation to share their work with the taxpaying public. Moreover, science outreach can help ensure continued public support. Social media is an excellent platform for science outreach, as stories can quickly spread to wide audiences. Traditional media channels tend to be a one-way communication, in which the conversation ends as soon as the story is broadcast. Conversely, social media platforms can facilitate continuing two-way conversations about research. Social media can also be used to share work with other researchers, and to find interesting papers and discussions that would otherwise be missed.

Facebook is generally the most suitable platform for public outreach given its enormous user base. However, Twitter is the most popular social network for scientific activities³. Twitter has shaken off its tag as a platform to broadcast what you ate for lunch, and has become a powerful tool for scientists to stay informed about the latest research and to connect with other researchers. As many can attest to, collaborations and research ideas can often be traced back to serendipitous conversations around the communal coffee machine. Similarly, Twitter can be considered as a collection of "coffee machine conversations", of which anyone can eavesdrop and contribute. Twitter can also be leveraged to build research networks, which can potentially yield future employment.

An emerging benefit of social media is how it can be used to rapidly assess research impact, which is often used by granting agencies to guide funding decisions. Typically, researchers have to wait years for potential citations to accrue to assess the impact of work. However, social media interest can be used as a proxy to assess research impact almost immediately after publication. In fact, we recently demonstrated that increased sharing of research articles on Twitter is associated with increased future citations⁴.

For those new to social media, a number of guides for scientists are available online⁵. While there are several ways in which researchers can share their work, all social media platforms use either text, images, or audio (or a combination of these mediums). Researchers should play to their strengths and use the medium that they're most comfortable with, via the platforms their audiences are spending most of their time. A common objection to social media use for scientists is that it's time consuming. However, given the potential upsides, this is arguably time well spent. Almost 90% of scientists already use social media for personal communication³, so most are comfortable navigating these platforms. Of course, without restraint social media use can become an easy excuse to neglect your research, so it's important to weigh up the costs and benefits of social media activities. If too much time is spent cultivating social media profiles, then scientists will have less research to share.

Despite numerous benefits, scientists are currently underusing social media for their work. As the public's attention is quickly shifting from traditional to social media, it is critical that scientists are not left behind.

**Dr Daniel Quintana,
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A decade of the **ASMR** Career Mentor linkage program!

For 10 years, ASMR has provided a critical resource for mid-career researchers looking to access career mentoring.

ASMR developed its web-based **Career Mentor Linkage Program** in 2007, in response to the alarming results of a survey of delegates attending the **ASMR Professional Development Program** for mid-career medical researchers which revealed that greater than one third of the delegates did not have a career

mentor. Mentoring is considered vitally important for career development, but this element of support has not been widely available in the sector. What has made this program truly unique is that it provides ASMR members the opportunity to be matched to a career mentor, free of charge. The web-based approach is innovative as it allows the mentee to choose an appropriate mentor with ease following browsing the bios of each mentor online.

Previous participants in the ASMR Career Mentor Linkage Program reflect on what the program has meant to them:

Mentee:

Professor Rachel Gibson
Dean: Academic; Division of Health Sciences, University of South Australia

I was in a bit of a “career rut” when my boss suggested that I find a mentor. Having no idea where to find a mentor, I approached a colleague who connected me to the ASMR Career Mentor Linkage Program. Through this Program, I was matched with an amazing mentor, who offered very practical, straightforward advice. Although it was often hard work, my mentor offered amazing suggestions, but as a mentee I had to be willing to put in the hard work and make these suggestions a reality. My experience with this program was nothing but positive. My career went from strength to strength and my mentor was there to support me every step of the way. Without a doubt this was the best career advice I have received and I would strongly advise mid-career researchers to seek out a mentor.

Mentor:

Professor Pat Buckley
Dean of Graduate Studies, University of South Australia

Mentoring features large in my professional life. I formalise mentoring arrangements annually for researchers as part of leading researcher development at the University of South Australia. I sit on a national expert advisory panel for the Industry Mentoring Network in STEM program (IMNIS). I mentor researchers myself, albeit in a role often more akin to the accidental mentor.

Across this range of experiences, I have come to appreciate the privilege, the responsibility and the value of mentoring. The privilege of working with smart minds, the responsibility of steering mindfully and constructively, and the value — to all parties — of amplifying the scientific enterprise.



Assoc. Professor Joanne Bowen

The ASMR career mentor linkage program was the first of its kind for mid-career health and medical research scientists in Australia and is now being re-launched. There has never been a more competitive environment in the sector and the role of the mentor is more important than ever. Through this program, ASMR exemplifies its unwavering commitment to promote and foster suitable career opportunities for persons engaged in medical research. The 2017 ASMR National Scientific Conference, November 14 to 15, has an exceptionally

strong focus on career development and is the perfect opportunity to showcase this resource. We invite all mid-career researchers who are members of ASMR to link with a mentor through this program and reap the career benefits starting today (<https://asmr.org.au/mentoring-program/>).

Associate Professor Joanne Bowen, ASMR Director — Professional Development

56th ASMR National Scientific Conference

November 14th–15th, 2017 — Charles Perkins Centre, Sydney

“Science and Survival — Equipping you with the tools to further your research career”

Collaboration, Connection and Inspiration

This year’s cutting edge and interactive program will help you develop a professional persona to stand out in an increasingly crowded competitive environment and gain the winning edge. At this uniquely tailored event, you will learn fundamental skills needed to advance your career and stand out from the crowd.

This year’s cutting edge and interactive program will help you develop a professional persona to stand out in an increasingly competitive environment to advance your career and gain the winning edge.

You can still register now!

Featuring two specialist workshops:

“Mock Grant Review Panel — Lifting the GRP Curtain”

Led by **Associate Professor Judy Black**,
NHMRC Fellow and NHMRC committee member for the past 30 years.

During this live panel session attendees
will get fundamental insights into:

1. The machinations of peer review
2. The unique art of panellist communication
3. Becoming a constructive peer reviewer, not a destructive peer
assessor

“The Politics of Promotion”

Led by **Associate Professor Patsie Polly**,
passionate research leader and higher education innovator.

This unique session will provide an in-depth view of the
academic promotion process and attendees will learn:

1. Political acumen
2. Strategic networking
3. Focussed communication skills
4. Selfless self-promotion

Scientific Program

Led by the distinguished Edwards and Firkin Orations and the plenary session, the outstanding scientific program will showcase exciting new developments in multi-disciplinary science and how it is underpinning translational health outcomes:

Edwards Oration by Professor Chennupati Jagadish, Distinguished Professor and Head of Semiconductor Optoelectronics and Nanotechnology, Professor Chennupati Jagadish is one of the world’s pre-eminent physicists. He was awarded Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 2016 and has been recognised over his career as an extraordinary mentor to the next generation of scientists.

Firkin Oration by Dr Bon-Kyoung Koo, a world leader in stem cell biology and organoid culture technology. Dr Bon-Kyoung Koo first came to the Cambridge Stem Cell Institute in 2013 as one of the youngest principal investigators in this world-renowned Institute.

Plenary session by Professor Elizabeth Elliott, Professor in Paediatrics and Consultant Paediatrician. Professor Elizabeth Elliott has dedicated her life toward improving health and quality of life for children in Australia.

Opportunities are still available for poster presentations. Showcase your latest research findings in a relaxed and friendly environment, identify new collaborative opportunities and build your professional networks.

Inside the Scientists Studio — An interview with Peter Doherty

For the first time, the ASMR will host **“Inside the Scientist’s Studio”**. Over the course of a one hour conversation with Australian award-winning journalist and broadcaster, Dr Norman Swan, attendees will be given a compelling insight into the mind of Australian Nobel Laureate, Professor

Peter Doherty. Peter Doherty will discuss his personal and professional journey, describing how he commenced and developed his career in science, the challenges he overcame along the way and life after the Nobel Prize.

For more information and to book, follow the link! asmr.org.au/asmr-nsc/regabs/

Dr Lucy Murtha

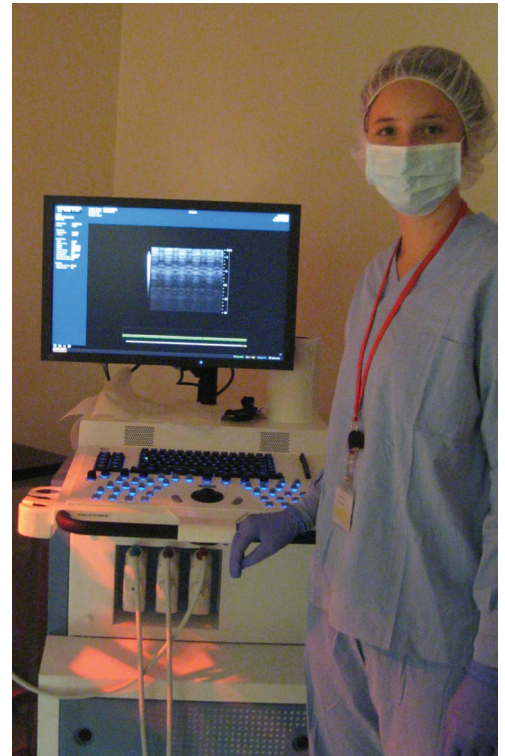
2016 Recipient of the ASMR Research Award (International)

Cardiovascular disease is the single leading cause of death in the developed world. On average, one Australian dies as a result of cardiovascular disease every 12 minutes. Following a cardiovascular event (e.g. heart attack) the heart undergoes significant physical changes, including an increase in scar tissue (cardiac fibrosis), changes in size and shape (ventricular remodelling), and a decreased functional capacity. Whilst these changes are intended to stabilise the heart in the short-term, the long-term consequence is inevitable progression to heart failure or death. Despite advances in medical therapy, mortality from heart failure remains unacceptably high. The purpose of my research is to investigate the role of molecular factors responsible for cardiac fibrosis and remodelling, with the aim of identifying novel therapeutic targets. In order to develop a complete understanding of the role that cardiac fibrosis plays in heart remodelling and disease, it is imperative that we visualise the heart and its function in real-time using echocardiography. Furthermore, to successfully translate any potential treatments into the clinic, it is necessary to replicate experiments in large animal models of cardiac disease.

Thanks to the generous support of the ASMR Research Award (International), I was able to spend four weeks at the Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Cardiovasculares (Spanish National Centre for Cardiovascular Research — CNIC) in Madrid, Spain to develop skills in murine echocardiography and large animal models of cardiac disease from experts in the field. The CNIC is a world-leading international research centre and places high value on the training of early career researchers. The provision of this award allowed me to be trained by a world leading expert in experimental cardiology research, Professor Lara Pezzi, and establish a strong

international collaboration. Professor Lara Pezzi is the coordinator and a principal researcher of the Marie Curie International Training Network and is particularly interested in the molecular mechanisms that regulate cardiac development and heart disease.

The skills that I developed in murine echocardiography and large animal models of cardiac disease at the CNIC are not only paramount to the success of our current research, but will be of great importance for all cardiology research in our region as I can now transfer my new found skills-set to other researchers at the University of Newcastle and Hunter Medical Research Institute. The provision of this award allowed me to further develop essential cardiology skills and build an international collaboration, linking the University of Newcastle with one of the world's leading cardiovascular research institutes, the CNIC. This award helped me to capitalise on the extensive resources and knowledge base of one of the world's leading cardiovascular research centres and will place me in the ideal position to establish myself as an independent cardiovascular researcher. Overall the experience was highly productive, and I would like to thank the ASMR for the amazing opportunity. I would also like to thank Professor Lara Pezzi and his team for all their help, support and patience, and to the CNIC for hosting me.



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