



## President's Report

*Professor Peter R Schofield, July 2002*

### ASMR Election of Directors

#### Two Year Term

November 2002  
to  
November 2004

#### 5 Vacancies

Nominees to the Board of Directors of ASMR must be prepared to accept portfolio responsibilities, attend three board meetings per year and the National Scientific Conference.

Please refer to the enclosed Nomination Form or download from [www.asmr.org.au/about](http://www.asmr.org.au/about)

**Being an ASMR Director is a rewarding experience and valuable contribution to health and medical research in Australia**

**ASMR Medical Research Week** <sup>(R)</sup> has once again been a major highlight in the calendar of health and medical researchers. The tireless efforts of so many people were critical to making this week a success and I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who assisted and our sponsors, including the Department of Health and Ageing, AMRAD, Merck Sharp & Dohme who made the week possible. In particular, thanks go to our Medallist, Prof Leon Rosenberg, who gave a clear and cogent message outlining the exceptional returns that result from investment in health and medical research. Thanks also go to the Minister for Ageing, Hon Kevin Andrews, who presented the Health Minister's Medal to Dr David Celemajer and to AMGEN for the sponsorship of their Award which was won by Dr Robyn Guymer.

ASMR strives to bring the message of the benefits of health and medical research to the public during Medical Research Week and this year we achieved outstanding media coverage of all of our events. We continue to develop the public EXPOs, debates and public lectures, careers days for school students and other events such as pub science.

#### **National Research Priorities**

The recently announced National Research Priorities exercise is of vital concern to all health and medical researchers. The government has stated it will select the priority areas later this year but it will not allocate additional funds for these priority areas - funds for priority areas will come from existing government research funding, including the NHMRC.

The value of health and medical research, and its contribution to the health and economic well-being of the nation, has been firmly recognised as a key national priority by the Government's

implementation of the Wills Review. The review clearly recognised that investigator-initiated peer-reviewed fundamental research is the foundation of the current success in this sector. Our new case study series, launched during Medical Research Week, has provided additional data to support the value of this investment. Prof Rosenberg demonstrated to audiences around the country the exceptional returns - 3 to 1 cost savings and 100 to 1 for the worth of life - that justify, and indeed make health a mandatory priority area.



*Peter Schofield*

On your behalf we have already made a detailed submission (see Website: [www.asmr.org.au/news/submissions/Priorities.rtf](http://www.asmr.org.au/news/submissions/Priorities.rtf)). For example, in selecting more specific priority actions, the nature of the problem being addressed, the capacity to make an impact and the strategic value of the area must be properly considered. The adoption and implementation of National Research Priorities must be based on proper and rigorous evaluation. Specific actions take time to produce results - be it recruit talented researchers into new priority areas, or to undertake multi-year research projects. Ramp up of support, proper evaluation after a reasonable time to assess outputs and impacts - not evaluation at the end of the 3 year research phase - and ramp down of support are all needed.

The ASMR supports the concept of research priorities as was elaborated in the Wills Review. Consistent with this view, we support the current government's proposal that it select the broad national priorities, which allow general research

directions to be determined. However, specific selection (by a process of rigorous peer review) of the most appropriate areas for research priority programs must be left to the expertise of selected agencies or funding bodies. Key to this process is the adoption of a national research priorities strategy should deliver a 5-10 year national vision, not a series of electoral cycle linked agendas.

ASMR believes the focus for priority areas must be the prevention of life threatening diseases, reduction in the impact of the major burdens of disease, and the development of biotechnology, pharmaceutical and public health programs. I urge each of you to nominate improvement to the nations health and well being as a national priority area; a priority area that can deliver exceptional returns for the nation.

## Biotechnology

With the recent award of the Biotechnology Centre of

Excellence, we congratulate Prof Alan Trounson and the members of the stem cell research team on their success and wish them the very best. The ASMR applauds this government initiative but we all know that biotechnology is much more than stem cells, no matter how high the quality of the research team. Australia has the capacity to support more research and development in biotechnology. Based on recent experience in the US, each extra dollar invested by government in the public sector has led to \$1.50 being invested by the private sector. Development of a biotechnology industry is an area where health and medical research can contribute significantly.

## Congress

The Australian Health and Medical Research Congress to be held in Melbourne in November will be the first of its kind. It promises an outstanding coalescence of health and medical researchers from over 25 participating scientific societies. With other 40 international speakers and dozens of local

speakers it will be a highlight of the Australian research calendar. Registrations are now open and abstracts are due in August. I look forward to seeing you at the Congress.

*The ASMR stands for public, political and scientific advocacy. Having just completed ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup>, being in the midst of the federal government's National Research Priorities exercise and with the Australian Health and Medical Research Congress registration and abstract submission deadlines rapidly approaching, I would once again like to that all those members who contribute so valuably to the success of the ASMR.*

Professor Peter R Schofield  
President  
July, 2002

## Events

### ComBio 2002

September 29 - October 3  
[www.asbmb.org.au/  
combio2002](http://www.asbmb.org.au/combio2002)

### Australian Health & Medical Research Congress

Melbourne, November 25 - 29  
[www.ahmrcongress2002.conf.au](http://www.ahmrcongress2002.conf.au)  
Email: [congress@asnevents.net.au](mailto:congress@asnevents.net.au)

### Third Asia Pacific Symposium on Neural Regeneration

3rd-5th December 2002  
Sheraton, Perth  
A/Professor Sarah Dunlop:  
[sarah@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:sarah@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

## *The 41st ASMR National Scientific Conference*

*will be held this year as part of the  
Australian Health and Medical Research Congress 2002.*

*The theme for the ASMR National Scientific Conference is  
"The Molecular Basis of Human Disease"*

## *Performance Indicators*

ASMR is collecting examples of current and recent NHMRC funded research projects which have led to significant outcomes in either basic, clinical or public health or in terms of IP and commercial development (to support the current increased investment in HMR and to develop a case for increased HMR funding). We also aim to develop more detailed cost-benefit analyses of the economic, health and social benefits of health and medical research

*Send your information to: [asmr@world.net](mailto:asmr@world.net)*

On 1 April 2002 a number of significant amendments to the Australian Patent Legislation came into force. While many of these changes are largely procedural in nature and may not have an obvious impact on most local users of the Australian Patent System, there are a number of more fundamental and quite significant changes to Australian Patent Law. Those that I propose to briefly discuss in this article include the change to the prior art base for novelty, the adoption of a more stringent test for inventive step and the extension of novelty saving provisions for certain prior disclosures. I will briefly discuss these three issues in turn.

## Prior art base

Under the Australian Patent Legislation prior to 1 April 2002

Australia adopted a standard of newness for new patent applications generally referred to as “relative novelty”. What this meant was that when examined patent applications were compared against all publications any where in the world that had taken place prior to the priority date of the application as well being compared to uses of similar technology that had taken place in Australia before the priority date.

Under the amended legislation Australia has adopted a standard of what is generally referred to “absolute novelty”. What this means is that all patent applications filed on or after 1 April 2002 will be compared against both publications and uses that have taken place anywhere in the world before the priority date of

the new patent application. Importantly, any divisional applications, that is applications derived out of an application that was existing before 1 April 2002, that are filed on or after 1 April 2002 will be subject to the new absolute novelty standard.

## Inventive Step

Under the amended legislation the test for inventiveness of a new patent application will be made somewhat more stringent. To try and explain the difficult concept of inventive step as simply as possible the notion of an inventive step is usually linked to the idea of obviousness. That is, if a person skilled in a particular area of technology would have considered, as at the priority date of a new patent application, that the subject matter of the application was simply an obvious extension of what was already known in the technology area, then the application is considered to lack an inventive step. Under the previous legislation in order to conduct this obviousness test it was possible only for a patent application being considered to be compared against disclosures in a single document when combined with common general knowledge in the art (that is the sort of knowledge that would be known to all skilled persons, such as information included in standard text books).

The amended legislation that will apply to all applications filed on or after 1 April 2002 introduces the concept of mosaicing. What this means is that in conducting the obviousness test it will be possible under certain circumstances for the disclosures in two or more documents to be combined along with the common general knowledge before considering whether the invention under

**The Australian Health and Medical Research Congress  
Melbourne Convention Centre  
25th-29th November 2002  
[www.ahmrcongress2002.conf.au](http://www.ahmrcongress2002.conf.au)**

The Australian Health and Medical Research Congress combines interests from 25 different societies and has something for everyone. Registrations and abstract submissions are now being received (see website).

### Key dates:

**Monday 12th August** Abstract submission deadline and Earlybird registration  
**Friday 13th September** Abstract submission deadline for Honours students (posters only)

### Invited Plenary speakers are:

- *Michel Bouvier*, University of Montreal, Canada  
“Oligomeric Assembly of G Protein-coupled Receptors: Roles in Trafficking and Signalling”.
- *Ele Ferrannini*, CNR Institute of Clinical Physiology, Italy  
“Obesity-Related Hypertension: The Challenges”.
- *Gema Fruhbeck*, Clinical University of Navarra, Spain.  
“The adipocyte: rediscovering a pivotal node in endocrine and energy metabolism control”.
- *Ed Harlow*, Department of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology Harvard Medical School. Boston MA, USA.  
“DNA tumour viruses and cancer”.
- *Bertil Hille*, University of Washington, USA  
“How do G-Protein coupled receptors rule the mind?”

*Dr Bronwyn Kingwell*  
AH&MRC Convenor  
ASMR Director



# ASMR Medical Research Week <sup>(R)</sup> 2002

## ASMR Medical Research Week <sup>(R)</sup> 2002 Bigger and Better than ever!...

- Expos
- Public Lectures and Debates
- Career days
- Scientific meeting
- Pub Science
- ASMR Medallist 2002
- National prizes and awards
- State prizes and awards



*The Press taking an interest in the ACT Expo*

*The week attracted strong media attention featuring newspaper articles, radio interviews and television stories.*



*An engrossing experiment at the NSW Expo*

The success of ASMR Medical Research Week <sup>(R)</sup> would not be possible without the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers in our local branch committees.

The Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research



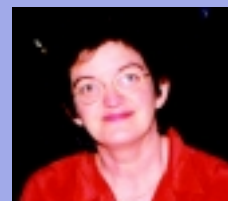
Dr David Celermajer (left) receives the Award from Hon. Kevin Andrews, Minister for Ageing, at the Melbourne Dinner



Jean Kittson, MC of the Dinners in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane



High School Students enjoying the presentations at the NSW Careers Seminar



Dr Robyn Guymer  
winner of the  
AMGEN Medical Researcher Award

# ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> 2002



Pub Science in Queensland, held in conjunction with ABC Radio and the Queensland Department of Innovation and Information Economy proved a popular series of lighthearted forums on topical issues concerning medical research. The debates featured prominent medical scientists.



*An appreciative Queensland audience*

Pub Science in Queensland, took science to communities in -

- **Mt Isa**
- **Mackay**
- **Townsville**
- **Toowoomba**
- **Brisbane**



*From left, A/Prof Andrew Sinclair, Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, Professor Leon Rosenberg and Dr Moira Clay at the Melbourne Dinner*



*Part of the Expo in South Australia*



*Getting ready for a massage at the ACT Expo*

*The Board of Directors of  
The Australian Society for Medical Research  
thank*

*Professor Leon Rosenberg,  
ASMR Medallist 2002, for his participation in  
ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup>, his unfailing  
good humour throughout a gruelling tour and  
his important messages based on the theme of  
“What is life worth”.*



*NSW Public Lecture Speakers, from left  
Professor Keith Lester, Ms Kathryn Dinh, Dr  
Anabel Duncan, Professor Kim Mulholland and  
Ms Jennie Brockie*

The Board of Directors of The Australian Society for Medical Research wish to thank the major national sponsor of ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup>, The Department of Health and Ageing, national sponsors AMGEN and The Royal College of General Practitioners and all state sponsors.

# Professor Leon Rosenberg, ASMR Medallist 2002

*ASMR is pleased to present an extract from the address by Professor Leon Rosenberg to the National Press Club (Telstra Address), on June 5th, 2002.*

“..... my career has taken a number of twists and turns, but it does contain a single common theme: involvement with health and medical research. I feel like I am a very lucky man to have been an investigator engaged in basic and clinical research, to have a chair of an academic department, to have been a dean of a research intensive school of medicine, to have been the chief scientific officer of a large company and to have been the president of a research advocacy initiative of a major foundation. Each of those experiences has reinforced my lifelong belief that medical research is instrumental to improvements in health. And what we sometimes forget to say, that it is extraordinarily exciting and fun.

The Nobel laureate Max Perutz said it as well as anyone, quote, ‘*Making a discovery is such a wonderful thing. It’s like falling in love and getting to the top of a mountain all in one.*’

Now, for those of you with a less romantic inclination you might prefer the words of a President of the US, Franklin Roosevelt, who said: ‘*We cannot be a strong nation unless we are a healthy nation.*’ Those of us who have grown up as medical scientists generally feel comfortable talking about the medical contributions of research. The basic scientific discoveries in genetics, cell and molecular biology, neuroscience and immunology for example. Or the organ systems that we’ve explored through physiology and pharmacology and imaging scientists. Where the patients we’ve studied and the volunteers who have stepped forward to help us do clinical trials, or the medicines that have been developed as a result of insights obtained from basic science, or the infectious diseases whose death tolls have been so dramatically reduced in the 20th Century it is like an honour roll of accomplishment. The dramatic reductions in deaths due to influenza, tuberculosis, syphilis, diphtheria, pertussis, measles, poliomyelitis and, best of all, smallpox which has been eradicated worldwide.

And, finally, we like to remind ourselves of the lives that have been saved and extended. It is important that we not forget that life expectancy has increased by close to a decade in the past 30 years. A remarkable 12% increase that cannot be attributed to improvements in sanitation and public health measures which increased longevity during the first two-thirds of the 20th Century.

The recent gains in life expectancy are a direct result of investments in medical research.



*Leon Rosenberg*

To me there is another treasured aspect of the field and that is its global nature. It is carried out by people in many countries for people in many countries. Australia has a rich heritage in medical research, as do many other developed lands. I know the names of your national heroes: Florey, Burnett, Doherty, Metcalfe, Marshall, Stanley and others. And you know the names of my heroes too. However vigorously scientists around the world compete - and we do compete vigorously - we applaud the accomplishments of those who reach the summit of Perutz’s metaphoric mountain as well as most of the rest of us who simply don’t get quite that high.

But today I’m going to leave my comfort zone and talk about something else that is equally important to the future of medical research. No, I don’t mean genomics or proteomics. No, I don’t mean reproductive or therapeutic cloning. No, I don’t mean bioethics and the protection of human subjects, however important each of those topics might have been.

I’m here to talk about money. Money as it pertains to medical research. And so the real title of my remarks today might have been ‘*Exceptional Economic Returns on Medical Research Investments.*’

During the next few minutes I’ll try to do the following things: first, describe the US financial investment in medical research. Second, provide some estimates of the economic return on that investment. Third, extrapolate some of these findings to Australia. And, fourth, consider the global implications of medical research investment and productivity.

I start with the US not because I’m a national chauvinist, or because I’m an ardent follower of George W. Bush. I start with the US because it is US medical research that I know. And because the economic issues have been most elaborated and studied there.....”

**A complete transcript of the Telstra Address is available from:**

[www.asmr.org.au/media](http://www.asmr.org.au/media)

consideration is obvious. The intention of this change is to ensure that the standard of inventiveness adopted under Australian Law corresponds more closely to that adopted by our trading partners, and particularly by the United States and Europe.

## Grace Period

*One of the most controversial aspects of the new patent legislation is that it has extended the circumstances under which disclosure of an invention before filing a patent application may not prejudice the subsequent grant of valid patent rights. While on the surface this amendment would appear to be of great importance in minimising the circumstances where naive inventors may prejudice their prospects of obtaining a patent by the desire to publish their invention at an early stage, it is important that inventors understand the ramifications of this change.*

One of the reasons that the extension of novelty saving

provisions is controversial is that it was in fact introduced into the new legislation within the enacting regulations, rather than within the Patents Amendment Act itself, and as such this aspect of the new law did not attract much in the way of attention in the parliament. This is disappointing because although the new legislation may be of benefit to Australian inventors in relation to their Australian patent application it is likely to present a serious problem in relation to obtaining patent rights in many overseas jurisdictions, notably Europe and Japan.

The way the new grace period will work is that under the new law where an inventor discloses details of an invention after 1 April 2002, the inventor will have a period of 12 months from the date of this disclosure during which time to file an Australian patent application. If the Australian application is filed within this 12 month period the inventor's own disclosure of the invention cannot be compared against the application for the purposes of testing novelty and inventiveness. Although a similar grace period is enshrined in United States Patent Law, Japan (which has only limited grace period provisions) and Europe are two notable jurisdictions where similar

provisions do not currently exist, therefore, if an Australian inventor intended to rely upon the new grace period by publishing prior to filing of a patent application the inventor's rights to obtain patent protection in Europe would irretrievably be lost and would very likely be lost in Japan.

Another potential concern is that the information published by the inventors is subsequently referenced in another publication or added to by other individuals in a separate publication, these and further publications may deprive a subsequently filed patent application of novelty or inventiveness.

With these potential pitfalls in mind, we strongly recommend that inventors should only rely upon the new grace period provisions in exceptional circumstances. Even if relying on the new grace period provisions inventors should in any case file a patent application as soon after the publication as is possible. The conventional wisdom still remains, namely that if you intend to protect your work using the patent system you should always file a patent application before making any public disclosure of the invention.

Mark Roberts  
Patent Attorney/Partner

**\$5000.00**

## ASMR Research Award 2002

This Award will support a postgraduate student member nearing completion of their studies or a recently graduated postdoctoral ASMR member to undertake research in laboratories outside their home city.

The Award specifically excludes support for conference attendance.

Applications close at 5:00pm on Friday 30th September, 2002

Full details from  
[www.asmr.org.au/resfund/intro.html](http://www.asmr.org.au/resfund/intro.html)

## Medibank Private Award Winner Vanessa Murphy

Mothers & Babies Research Centre and Hunter Medical Research Institute,  
University of Newcastle



Vanessa presents her Poster at the Society for Gynecologic Investigation,  
Annual Conference in Los Angeles (March 2002)

## Awards and Prizes - ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> 2002

### National Prize Winners

Dr David Celermajer  
*Commonwealth Health  
Minister's Award for  
Excellence in Health and  
Medical Research*

Dr Robyn Guymmer  
*AMGEN Medical Researcher  
Award*

### New South Wales

Anthony Don - *University of  
Sydney Medal for Excellence  
in Medical Research*

Janette Burgess - *Johnson &  
Johnson Research  
Postdoctoral Prize*

Michelle O'Han - *Bio-Rad  
Technical Prize*

Elisabeth Smith - *Eli Lilly  
student prize for best oral  
presentation*

Vanessa Murphy - *Roche  
Diagnostics Australia Student  
Prize - poster presentation*

### Queensland

*Premier's Awards*  
Professor John McGrath *Senior  
Postdoctoral Award*

Ms Danielle Stanisic  
*Postgraduate Student Award*

Dr Michael Batzloff - *Finalist*

Dr. David J. Torpy - *Finalist*

*Senior Postdoctoral Award*

Mr Peter Woolf and

Ms Christine Biondi

*Finalists - Postgraduate  
Student Award*

*Postgraduate Student*

*Conference Awards*

James Crane

*Best Oral Presentation*

Laura Willems

*Best Poster Presentation*

John Fraser

*Highly Commended Oral  
Presentation*

Anthony Parker

*Highly Commended Poster  
Presentation*

### South Australia

Lisa Butler

*New Investigator Award for  
Best Oral presentation*

Hiroaki Tani and

Ken Lang

*New Investigator Award for  
Best Poster*

Dane Horton

*Ross Wishart Award for  
Excellence*

### Victoria

*Premier's Awards*

Astrid Ruefli

*Premier's Awards  
Winner*

Rebecca O'Donnell

Jared Purton and

Mark Rogers

*Commendations*

### Western Australia

Belinda Knight

Deborah Sloboda

Carolyn King

Amelia Scaffadi

Andrew Taylor

*Symposium Presentations*



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