

Professional Development Program

Mind the Gap — The Mid-career Research Gap!


ASMR has a strong commitment to supporting health and medical research careers. More than 200 researchers were trained as part of ASMR's new initiative to provide executive-style management training designed for medical researchers entering a critical stage of their career, 5–12 years postdoctoral. The workshops were held in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane at the end of August. Our program was designed to fill what is currently a major gap in professional career training for Australian health and medical researchers. The talks were delivered by highly successful medical research scientists and tailored specifically to issues faced by Australian researchers, such as obtaining funding, attracting and managing students, support staff, and translating results to clinical and commercial outcomes. One delegate encapsulated the sentiment of many of the participants by saying that **"I learnt things that I never would have known if I did not attend this program"**.

One of the surprising findings of the program was that approximately one third of the participants indicated that they did not have a mentor. This is a concern since mentoring is an important aspect of career development. For this reason ASMR is developing a program to provide an opportunity for members and participants of the program to be matched with a career mentor.

"Great to spend a day thinking about the big picture — thank you!"

Dr Moira Clay was deemed a 'fantastic' facilitator, threading the various topics together and keeping discussions relevant and on track. Moira lifted everyone to new heights by making them play an interactive game — with the winner taking home an ipod shuffle. Session speakers and topics covered provoked vibrant discussion although the organisers are concerned that delegates will be camping on some of the speakers doors as one delegate commented the speakers were "Excellent and very positive and enthusiastic. We all wanted to go work for them!"

The ASMR declared the Professional Development Program an enormous success with the overwhelming majority of delegates ranking the day as excellent. This success will be built upon for subsequent programs... stay tuned for sessions to be covered in 2008.

ASMR's Professional Development Program was made possible by a grant from the Ramaciotti Foundation facilitated by Perpetual Foundation. 

Dr Sarah Meachem
Director,
Australian Society for Medical Research



Researchers participating in the ASMR Professional Development Program

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**Newsletter Editor-in-Chief,
Dr Gilda Tachedjian**

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Mentoring — Soft Science or Critical Pathway?



**Dr Moira Clay, Associate Director,
Children's Cancer Institute Australia**

**“Science is...
a community,
with its own
customs, its own
social contact.
Members of that
community pride
themselves on
their abstract
languages and
their tribal
customs.
Their tribal
behaviour is
acquired largely
by intellectual
and cultural
osmosis from
their mentors
and their peers,
rather than
textbooks”**
— Carl Djerassi,
Inventor of “The Pill”
and author of
Cantor's Dilemma

Many years ago, I was approached about a job in the pharmaceutical industry. The job was definitely tempting. There was scope for development, it was in an area I knew, there was international travel involved and the package was attractive! I remained ambivalent. I dropped in to see my PhD supervisor, a person I respect and trust, and ran the scenario past him. Knowing me as well as he does and with the benefit of years of collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry — he advised me that this wouldn't be the way to go for me. There were many reasons behind this, suffice to say that I did not take the job and have remained (very happily) in the not-for-profit sector. It was the second best decision I ever made. He had previously given me advice on the best decision I ever made, namely to move from research to research management.

My PhD supervisor remains one of my mentors.


Mentoring is a science in itself; some would argue it is a ‘soft science’ not worthy of investment as a career development strategy. It has been extensively researched for over thirty years and a great deal is known about its many facets. Paradoxically, we can't agree on what a mentor is. Some say that your supervisor is your mentor; others think of a mentor as an ‘older friend with much more experience’, someone from outside their direct work area or even organisation. It is clear there is no one best definition. The most fundamental issue is the nature of the relationship between the mentor and mentoree. This takes many forms, has dynamic quality and alters in varying degrees over time.

Recently, I facilitated the ASMR Professional Development Program targeted at mid-career researchers. The most notable feedback from participants was the need for access to mentors. What is clear to me is that this need applies at all levels in the research sector. Medical research nowadays is challenging and there are many issues for individuals to deal with – funding, career path, people management, compliance, scientific integrity,

commercialisation to name a few. It is clear that having access to a wise and trusted colleague/friend to provide advice, guidance and perspective is critical. The devil's advocate in me says ‘critical to what?’ Is it critical for people getting a fellowship or achieving the high impact publication? Potentially yes. Can this be measured? Probably not.

Mentoring is a mutual learning relationship between two people requiring trust and commitment. It involves listening, questioning, challenge and support. The impact of this is largely intangible. It is around the learner (both mentor and mentoree) taking their place as a fully-functioning member of Australia's research sector and being positioned to achieve excellence in their chosen field.

How can researchers access mentors? I have chosen the pathway of informal mentoring relationships. Some research organisations are pro-actively establishing formal mentoring programs. These are programs that ‘match’ researchers with mentors requiring an organisational commitment of personnel time (ideally from human resource or research strategy areas) and funding. Such programs should include mechanisms to deal with ‘matches’ that don't work. Expectations of mentors and mentoree should be clearly stated and an evaluation strategy developed to assess satisfaction of participants and attainment of career goals. ASMR is also establishing a mentoring program for researchers Australia-wide who cannot otherwise access a mentor.

Whatever pathway you choose to access a mentoring relationship, it will be critical to your career development. 

**Dr Moira Clay
Associate Director
Children's Cancer Institute Australia**

Recommended Reading

Lee A., Dennis C and Campbell P. (2007) Nature's guide for mentors. *Nature* 447: 791–797 (<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v447/n7146/full/447791a.html>)

Careers Basics Booklet

(http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/tools_resources/careers_basics_booklet)

NIH Fellows Handbook, Mentoring (<http://www.training.nih.gov/handbook/mentor.html>)

Making the Right Moves. A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty. Burroughs Wellcome Fund, Howard Hughes Medical Institute (http://www.hhmi.org/resources/labmanagement/downloads/moves2_ch5.pdf)

President's Report

In order to respond to current and emerging health issues we need a well defined approach to ensure sustainable future funding for health and medical research (HMR). We need to position ourselves strategically to ensure the value of HMR is clear to the public, politicians and policy makers. The upcoming election provides a valuable opportunity to engage politicians and articulate the benefits of HMR. A responsible approach to requests for funding increases with amounts clearly justified and aligned with strategic initiatives, health issues and outcomes will be crucial. Unsubstantiated funding requests risk diluting efforts to ensure a sustainable and robust HMR into the future. To this end, the ASMR is partnering with health economists to model future economic needs and benefits of continued investment in HMR.

The early announcement of funding outcomes by the Prime Minister John Howard and Minister Tony Abbott for the NHMRC and Minister Julie Bishop for ARC funding was welcomed by ASMR and the HMR community. There had been concerns that the impending election might delay the announcement of funding results. Late announcements can cause considerable difficulties to researchers needing to make employment and career decisions. The 2007 round sees the phasing in of increases to the NHMRC start to take effect and this is reflected in the increases in the number of successful applications funded, approximately 27% for the 2008 round, compared to 21% for the 2007 round. Results of the NHMRC Career Development Awards, Training Fellowships and Scholarships were still pending at the time of going to press awaiting final ratification from the relevant NHMRC committees. The ASMR has been in contact with the NHMRC regarding potential delays in the release of the results due to the election. The NHMRC is aware of the issues for applicants and is doing everything possible to expedite the process.



Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris,
ASMR President

ASMR congratulates the first 11 recipients of the highly prestigious Australia Fellowships (rounds 1 and 2). Awardees, Professors Sam Berkovic, Hilton, Vaux and Cowman are long standing ASMR members and along with other recipients of these awards are great ambassadors of research excellence in this country.

The inaugural ASMR Professional Development Program was run in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney in August 2007, attracting over 200 attendees. The highly successful one-day workshops were specifically aimed at mid-career medical researchers 5–12 years postdoctoral. A stellar line up of speakers and discussants in each city, the outstanding facilitation skills of Dr Moira Clay, and organization expertise of the convenor, Dr Sarah Meachem, ensured the success of the program. We gratefully acknowledge grant funding from the Ramaciotti Foundation facilitated by Perpetual Foundation and ASN Events for logistical support. Special thanks to Peter Eastwood, Mark Hullet, Levon Khachigian and members of the ASMR Board for valuable input into the program. The ASMR is committed to ongoing support of HMR careers and will again be running the program in 2008. 

Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris,
President,
Australian Society for Medical Research

THE ASMR Member Directory

The ASMR Member Directory is an initiative to promote communication and collaboration between health and medical researchers in Australia.

The Directory is a web-based search engine which includes individuals' position(s) and professional contact details, degrees, membership of other societies, website and four keywords/phrases (research interests).

Members are able to update their information via password access to the Directory. It is openly available to the public, searchable by surname and by research interest.

ASMR members have received a consent form for listing in the Directory. Information will not be listed online without signature of acceptance on the form. This document can also be downloaded from <http://www.asmr.org.au/about/membership.html>

We look forward to receiving your forms.



Professor Warwick Anderson AM,
NHMRC Chief Executive Officer

Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research

The recent high profile case of research fraud, by the Korean stem cell researcher Hwang Woo-Suk, has again placed the issue of research misconduct front and central internationally.

Research misconduct harms scientific research. It misuses scarce research funds, it has the potential to harm patients, and it harms the reputation of all research.

NHMRC has put the maintenance of public trust in research as one of its objectives in this triennial strategic plan. A key part of this is our recent publication of the new *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (the Code), jointly with the Australian Research Council (ARC) and Universities Australia.

The Code aims to achieve two outcomes. Part A is a comprehensive guide for all public sector research on how to achieve high standards and foster a research culture of honesty and integrity. Guidance is provided on how to manage research data and materials, how to publish and disseminate research findings, including proper attribution of authorship, how to contribute to peer review, how to manage conflicts of interest, and on many other aspects of the conduct of research. Each section defines the responsibilities of institutions and of individual researchers.

Part B of the Code provides a framework for research institutions for investigating allegations of research misconduct. Key aspects include the identification of who is responsible for actions and decisions and a requirement that an independent external enquiry must be established for cases in which initial inquiries indicate that serious misconduct may have occurred. Institutions are required to inform the NHMRC or ARC and to establish an external, independent panel. This panel must not contain members who are employed by or affiliated with the research institution, or "otherwise be subject to a reasonable perception of bias". The panel should not have people on it with direct field expertise, but should instead obtain such expertise by calling witnesses. Those accused, and those accusing, must be treated fairly throughout.


In considering the new Code, the Joint NHMRC/ARC/Universities Australia committee took into account all of the many submissions from two rounds of public consultation, held specific talks with many researchers, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), university representatives, held a workshop with international speakers, and paid attention to a number of publications such as:

- Martinson BC, Anderson MS and de Vries R (2005) Scientists behaving badly. *Nature* 435: 737–738
- Van der Weyden MB (2004) Managing Allegations of scientific misconduct and fraud: lessons from the "Hall Affair", *MJA* 2004; 180 (4): 149-151
- Horace Freeland Judson (2004) *The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science*.

We also carefully considered the report of the "Brennan Committee", an independent external inquiry established in June 2002 by the UNSW to investigate allegations against a senior researcher. Following the release of the findings of the Brennan Committee, NHMRC formally terminated the grant in October 2003 (funding had previously been suspended by UNSW) because the researcher had "stated material or significant falsehood... with intent to deceive" in a 2001 grant application. The Brennan Committee is a good model for an independent panel under the new Code.

As of 2006, the NHMRC Deed of Agreement with universities and research institutes allows for the NHMRC to exclude an individual who has engaged in research misconduct for up to three years.

There is strong support from a number of Australian academics and researchers for the establishment of a national, independent system of investigation of research misconduct. The NHMRC will be undertaking work to see how feasible and effective these proposed national independent arrangements might be within Australian constitutional, legislative and administrative arrangements. In the meantime, the new Code provides researchers and institutions with guidelines to establish effective ways of handling allegations of research misconduct. The NHMRC and the ARC expect that institutions in receipt of public research funds will progressively include the Code's framework for handling research misconduct in relevant instruments regulating employment conditions.

The NHMRC will be seeking information from institutions, on an ongoing basis, to measure the effectiveness of the Code. 

**Professor Warwick Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
National Health and Medical
Research Council**

The Australian Code For the Responsible Conduct of Research can be downloaded from the following website:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r39syn.htm>

Annual General Meeting

The Australian Society for Medical Research

Carrington Hotel, Katoomba NSW. From 10 to 11 am, Monday 12th November, 2007

Agenda

Item 1. Welcome and Apologies

Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris.

Item 2. Confirmation of Minutes

Wednesday 29th November, 2006,
Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris.

Item 3. President's Report

Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris.

Item 4. Treasurer's Report

Dr Mark Hulett

Item 5. ASMR Research Fund

Dr Mark Hulett

- i) Announcement of Research Award Winners, 2006*
- ii) Research Award Winner (Domestic) 2006, Elissa Sutcliffe*

Item 6. Subcommittee Reports

- a) Research Careers, *Dr Sarah Meachem*
 - i) Workforce Survey, *Dr Sarah Meachem*
 - ii) Continuing Professional Development, *Dr Sarah Meachem*
- b) Membership, *Associate Professor J Alejandro Lopez*
- c) Newsletter, *Dr Gilda Tachedjian*
- d) ASMR MRW Week®, *Associate Professor Peter Eastwood*
- e) Media, *Dr Emma Parkinson-Lawrence*
- f) State Reports, *Dr Emma Parkinson Lawrence*
- g) NSC 2007, *Dr Alaina Ammit*
- h) AHMRC 2008, *Dr Alison Butt*
- i) NSC 2008, *Associate Professor J Alejandro Lopez*

Item 7. Other Business

Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris.

Item 8. Directors and Office Bearers, 2008

Dr Mark Hulett

Winner of ASMR Letters to The Editor 2007

ASMR congratulates Dr Elizabeth Grgagic from the Burnet Institute for her contribution to the *Letters to the Editor* in the March 2007 edition of the ASMR Newsletter entitled "Link Research Funding to GDP". Dr Grgagic receives \$100 for her contribution.

Election of the Board of ASMR Directors

— Term Commencing November 2007

Dr Andrew Brown (NSW)

Dr Alison Butt (NSW) — re-elected

Dr Paul Dawson (QLD)

Dr Martin Delatycki (VIC) — re-elected

Dr Mark Hulett (ACT) — re-elected

Dr Rosemary Keogh (VIC)

Dr Andrew Laslett (VIC)

Professor Fabienne Mackay (NSW)

Dr Kristen Nowak (WA)

Continuing Directors

Dr Sarah Meachem (VIC)

Dr Emma Parkinson-Lawrence (SA)

NHMRC Australia Fellowship Awards

ASMR congratulates the eleven recipients of the first two rounds of the NHMRC Australia Fellowship Award. The prestigious Australia Fellowships are awarded to health and medical

researchers that demonstrate an outstanding record of achievement and are valued at \$800,000/year for five years. Four of the recipients are ASMR members and they include:



Professor Sam Berkovic from the University of Melbourne, Australia's leading clinical and translational researcher in epilepsy. He will use his fellowship to continue his work on the integration of high-level clinical medicine, molecular genetics and cutting-edge neuroimaging in the causes and treatment of epilepsy.




Professor David Vaux from La Trobe University. Professor Vaux is a leading researcher in the field of apoptosis, or cell death. Professor Vaux's fellowship will assist him to expand his groundbreaking research, which will lead to the development of new cancer therapies.



Professor Doug Hilton from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. Professor Hilton's pioneering work focuses on how the body's cells communicate with each other. The fellowship will assist Professor Hilton to determine the molecular basis for the onset and progression of cancer and other diseases.



Professor Alan Cowman from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. Professor Cowman is an internationally recognized malaria researcher. The fellowship will advance his work in designing new treatments and vaccines for this infectious disease. 

Dr Elke Hacker — Winner of the 2006 International ASMR Research Award

I recently received an ASMR Research Award and would like to thank ASMR for providing this funding. I visited Dr Colin Goding's laboratory at the Marie Curie Research Institute in the United Kingdom. The ASMR Research Award was pivotal in my participation and study of the transcription factor Brn-2. My overseas research allowed me to receive invaluable training from Dr Colin Goding, which enabled me to develop boarder skills in molecular research and undertake transcription regulation studies. My project examined the regulation of Brn-2 in melanoma cells and the interaction of Pax 3 with the Brn-2 promoter. The use of luciferase assays and DNA band shift experiments were used to demonstrate activation of Brn-2 by Pax3 and to characterize the binding site along the Brn-2 promoter sequence. By undertaking this training in one of the world's top melanoma laboratories, I have not only gained better laboratory practice but also broadened my knowledge


base and learned new approaches to melanoma modeling. The ASMR Research Award also enabled me to discuss my research with peers and learn of the latest advances in this field as well as building collaborations and access to resources, which will lead to a higher standard of my future research. 



Dr Elke Hacker, recipient of the 2006 International ASMR Research Award

GlaxoSmithKline Australia Award for Research Excellence

ASMR congratulates Professor Peter Koopman, from the Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) at The University of Queensland, who has been awarded the GlaxoSmithKline Australia Award for Research Excellence for his pioneering research that offers hope to children born with sexually ambiguous genitalia and other sexual development conditions. His work focuses on the study of how testes and ovaries develop in the embryo and the genetic controls that underpin their

development. The GlaxoSmithKline Award for Research Excellence is awarded annually in recognition of distinguished discoveries in scientific and medical research, which have the potential to lead to significant benefits in human health. Recipients of the GSK Award receive an honorarium of \$50,000 to acknowledge their discovery and contribution to science for research that has mainly been undertaken in Australia. 

Past and Current ASMR Presidents Honoured with the Eureka Awards

Professor Levon Khachigian, a vascular biologist and past ASMR President, has won the NSW Office for Science and Medical Research Jamie Callachor Eureka Prize for Medical Research for his development of DNazymes and other small molecule inhibitors. These potential drugs may have far-reaching therapeutic effects on the treatment of cardiovascular disease and other conditions involving abnormal growth and inflammation, such as rheumatoid arthritis and ageing and diabetes-induced blindness. The 2007 NSW Office for Science and Medical Research Jamie Callachor Eureka Prize for Medical Research is awarded to an individual or research team for outstanding, ground-breaking medical research in cardiovascular disease.


Associate Professor Maria Kavallaris, Dr Sela Pouha and Dr Nicole Verrills have been rewarded for their breakthrough research on the potential to save the lives of humans by successfully identifying drug resistant cancer cells without animal testing with the \$10,000 Voiceless Eureka Prize at this year's Australian Museum Eureka Prizes. The award highlights work that has reduced, or has the potential to reduce, the use of animals or animal products in laboratory-based research, education and testing. Using new molecular biology and tissue culture technologies, the Kavallaris team not only discovered what makes certain cancer cells unresponsive to treatment, but did so without using traditional animal test subjects. 

The 4th Australian Health & Medical Research Congress



**16–21st November 2008,
Brisbane Convention Centre**

Planning is already well underway for the 4th Australian Health & Medical Research Congress (AH&MRC), which will be held in November next year. This is the first time the congress has been held in Brisbane, and it builds upon extremely successful past events in Melbourne and Sydney. An initiative of ASMR, the AH&MRC is the largest meeting of its kind in Australasia. The most recent congress held in Melbourne in 2006 involved over 30 different research societies and groups from a wide range of medical research disciplines, attracting 2300 basic scientists, clinicians and allied health professionals and generating media coverage reaching some 16 million Australians. The strength of the AH&MRC is its ability to provide an outstanding and unique cross-disciplinary scientific program, including top plenary speakers from both international and national arenas. The 2008 congress

will also encompass the ASMR National Scientific Meeting which will be convened by Associate Professor Alejandro López on “Epithelial Tissue Dynamics: From Stem Cells to Cancer”, covering such themes as the origin and development of epithelia, epithelial homeostasis and pathology and emerging therapeutic approaches for epithelial diseases. This broad spectrum of interest will facilitate scientific interactions with other participating societies. Many societies that have participated in previous congresses have already come on board in 2008, and, together with the programming committee, program convenor Dr Greg Anderson has started to compile another exciting program for next year. More details of the 4th AH&MRC are available on the ASMR website and I hope you will join with us to make this event an even bigger success in 2008. 

Alison Butt
2008 AH&MRC Convenor
<http://www.ahmrccongress.org.au/>



UNSW UNSW MEDICINE Faculty of Medicine

Research Strengths

As a member of the Australian Group of 8 research-intensive universities and the international Universitas 21 grouping, UNSW is rightly proud of its national and international research profile which, in recent years, has seen a spectacular rise in competitive funding to support its world class research. The Faculty of Medicine is at the forefront of UNSW's research profile.

The Faculty takes a strategic view of Research and aims to focus its resources on identified areas of research excellence. Chief among these are:

- Cancer Research
- Cardiovascular Research
- Brain Sciences
- Infection/Immunity/Inflammation

Whilst research activity in other areas is still encouraged, we are now able to concentrate on our strengths to plan for the future, building infrastructure and forming strong partnerships that will continue to make us innovators and leaders in medical research. As an outstanding example of this, we were pleased to announce in June this year, the construction of a major new research facility on the UNSW campus, to be known as the Lowy Cancer Research Centre. On completion in late 2009, this \$100 million plus facility will house up to 400 cancer researchers, from UNSW and the Children's Cancer Institute Australia (CCIA). It will be one of the largest dedicated cancer research centres in the Southern Hemisphere and Australia's only fully integrated childhood and adult cancer research centre.

For more information on our research initiatives and our Postgraduate Research Programs visit our website: <http://www.med.unsw.edu.au>

ASMR Directors 2007

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Assoc. Prof. Maria Kavallaris — President
Dr Mark Hulett — President Elect and Honorary Treasurer
Dr Alaina Ammit — Honorary Secretary
Dr Sandra Nicholson — Business Development
Dr Sarah Meachem — Careers and Professional Development

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Assoc. Prof. Martin Delatycki — Clinical Issues
Assoc. Prof. Peter Eastwood — ASMR MRW® Convenor
Dr Emma Parkinson-Lawrence — Media and State Committee Convenor
Assoc. Prof. J Alejandro Lopez — Membership and Convenor NSC 2008
Dr Gilda Tachedjian — Newsletter Editor
Ms Catherine West — Senior Executive Officer

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