



The Australian Society for Medical Research

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How many PhD's does it take to change a light bulb?

Planning Australia's Future Health and Medical Research Workforce

The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) is today launching a study which snapshots the health and medical research workforce in 2009, projects attrition rates and estimates numbers of new PhD's required to 2019.

Speaking at the launch this morning, ASMR President, Dr Sarah Meachem, explains: *“People make research happen and it is the health and medical research workforce which is and will be, the foundation for prevention and cures, now and in the future.”*

ASMR commissioned Dr Deborah Schofield, Associate Professor and Director of Research Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health (NRUDRH), School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney to conduct the study.

Some key findings are:

- Australia has 15,200 PhD's within a health and medical research workforce of 23,400.
- 6,250 members of the health and medical research workforce will leave the sector by 2019, and of these, 4,000 will hold a PhD or equivalent.
- To maintain current PhD levels as a working population ratio to 2019, we must replace the 4,000 lost and add another 1,700 persons at a cost of around \$810 million.
- Australia would need to expand 2.5 fold to be on par with knowledge-based workforces such as the European workforce. Australia would require about 5,700 additional health and medical research PhD graduates to be comparable with US levels, about 22,800 to be comparable with German levels and about 38,000 to be equivalent with Switzerland.

Dr Meachem said, *“Australia needs a program which creates a self-sustaining and agile workforce able to meet head on, challenges in indigenous health, the overt diseases associated with the aging population and the emerging covert health risks associated with climate change. The development, design and implementation of informed, innovative and visionary policy reform is essential to attract and retain our best human capital and to expand international partnerships and collaborations.”*

Media contacts: Catherine West 0415 928 211 or Dr Sarah Meachem 0412 640 774
Further information: www.asmr.org.au/workforce09.pdf