

MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:00 MIDDAY, WEDNESDAY JUNE 8, 2011

**ASMR MEDALLIST 2011
NOBEL LAUREATE PROF BARRY MARSHALL, AC, FRS, FAA**

“Extra Value in Medical Research: Lessons from the Nobel Prize”

Prof Barry Marshall is a highly accomplished medical doctor and researcher who is internationally respected for his amazing vision and persistence, his ground-breaking discoveries, his tireless dedication to his patients and his great desire to make significant contributions to humankind. He is an extremely active scientific researcher, an entrepreneur, passionate science ambassador and advocate, much-loved mentor to many, and one who enthusiastically embraces new technologies and knowledge.

At the National Press Club today, Prof Marshall speaks of a future when everybody will be a lot healthier and happier, because of the research and developments that are happening now. He believes that *“Medical research is so wide open for new breakthroughs because so many advances in technology in the 21st century.”*

Marshall sees sequencing the human genome and opening up this area of science, as one of the reasons why future generations will be healthier and happier.

“It’s not going to be long before every Australian will be carrying their genome on a smart card. This is going to be an enormous and unprecedented help to their health. It will give people ownership over their own health. It’s the ultimate personalised medicine.”

Marshall believes Australians are currently too paranoid to truly embrace genomics – whether because of a fear of what health insurance companies might do with the information, or a fear of knowing what genetic diseases they might carry in their DNA.

His wishes to help dispel this fear, by becoming the first Australian to make their whole DNA code available for all to see.

***“My genome is already in the sequencing machine!
It is being sequenced now at a Perth genomics facility,
My ENTIRE genetic code will be available on the web and people can
investigate it at will.***

***I have nothing very special to hide, and I don’t plan to patent my genome.
If my plan is a success, it will encourage others to be involved in genomics in
the future.”***

Marshall feels strongly that Australia needs to introduce a similar regulation to the USA, where it is illegal for a person to be discriminated because of their genetic information, meaning that you are not allowed to be asked to divulge your genetic information if you know it, and you cannot be made to have a test for medical insurance ratings, meaning that higher premiums cannot then be charged by insurance companies for your health care.

The ASMR MRW® undertaken by ASMR is supported by funding from The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing



Marshall sees investment in health and medical research making sense from a health and economic point of view, referring to the staggering \$3.8B investment required to sequence the human genome and the resultant positive economic impact of \$796B.

Understanding the crucial role of curiosity-driven research in the mix, which brings discoveries from bench to bedside, Prof Marshall has said:

“The excitement and power of curiosity-driven scientific research is not knowing where that research will end up. We just don’t know where new discoveries will come from.”

He cites his own research as an elegant example of starting in one niche and ending up making an enormous impact in a seemingly unrelated area.

He is frustrated by outdated regulations and slow-moving committees that impede scientific development and become bottlenecks to discovery.

Some aspects of scientific research are stifled, Marshall feels, by those with particular religious views and reminds us:

“Australia is supposedly a secular country. My values might not be your values, and might not be the Pope’s values, but I must be free to hold them. Yet various ethical specialists from specific religious groups are allowed to have a say in rules for the conduct of medical scientific research.”

“If scientific freedom is discouraged in Australia, our top brains will be winning their Nobel prizes in the USA or elsewhere in the world.”

He is also alarmed by the enormous amounts of money that Australians spend on alternative medicines and treatments, without any proof of their safety or effectiveness, Prof Marshall believes that the same rigorous research that is necessary to provide proper evidence to back conventional medicines should be applied to alternative medicines. Marshall suggests a levy on unproven medicines:

“Why should Australians spend so much of their money on treatments that may not work?”

News Editors/Chiefs of Staff, please note:

WHAT: National Press Club NAB Address
WHEN: 11.45am, Wednesday 8th June 2010
WHERE: 16 National Court, Barton, Canberra.
WHO: ASMR Medallist 2011, Nobel Laureate Prof Barry Marshall, AC, FRS, FAA
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Media resource material available from: <http://www.asmr.org.au/MRW/media.html>

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