

# President's Report

## August 2006

**T**his year's Federal Budget affirmed the Commonwealth Government's recognition of the exceptional value of investing in health and medical research, allocating funds for research project, infrastructure and fellowship support, and raising the NHMRC funding base to over \$700 million by 2010. ASMR can be justifiably proud of its tireless advocacy — it's been at the forefront of a multi-layered campaign, both in and out of the public arena that paid off on May 9. High level interactions were underpinned by a concerted "grass roots" campaign in which you — as ASMR members, friends and affiliate members — took the time to sit down with your local federal politician and explained the case for increased funding of the "golden egg", eye-to-eye. The Budget announcement will help health and medical researchers build upon previous gains, and turn both curiosity — and priority-driven research into new medicines and treatments, with flow-on health, social and economic returns, nationally and abroad. It also complements the recent visionary injections of funding and critical infrastructure support in states like Victoria (the "Healthy Futures" initiative) and Queensland ("Smart State" initiative). Investment in health and medical research is vital and should be a prioritised continuum for any government in the developed world. The reality is that it costs money to maintain excellence in research, and society unarguably benefits from this "golden egg". Even with this increased investment, which kicks off in 2007, the National Health

and Medical Research Council has received close to 3000 project grant applications this year, which may well have a serious impact on success outcome. Mechanisms of perpetually increased funding for health and medical research therefore should be explored and debated. Aristotle summed it up nicely: "We are, what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit". GRP deliberations under NHMRC's new grants evaluation system are presently under way.

The NHMRC is currently in the process of restructuring and is now a statutory body, which strengthens its independence and facilitates clear lines of responsibility for governance and financial accountability. On your behalf, I again congratulate Professor Michael Good, director of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research on his recent appointment as Chair of the NHMRC, and Professor James Best from the University of Melbourne as Chair of NHMRC Research Committee. Professors Good and Best are three of 19 members of Council for the next three years, effective July 2006. Other members of Council include Professor Colin Masters, who will chair the National Health Committee, Professor Ron Trent, who will head the Human Genetics Advisory Committee, and Professor Jock Findlay, a former President of ASMR, who leads the Embryo Research Licensing Committee. It is also great to see that two ASMR Past Presidents, Bronwyn Kingwell and Matt Gillespie, will sit on the new NHMRC Research Committee which has amongst its members 2006 Australian of the Year Professor Ian

<b>President's Report</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>August 2006</b>	
<b>Celebrating Health and Medical Research in Australia</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ASMR Medical Research Week® 2006</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>State Awards</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Australian Twin Registry</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The 3rd Australian Health &amp; Medical Research Congress</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Commonwealth Health Minister's Award</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Prof. David de Kretser Appointed Governor of Victoria</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Dr El-Osta — Winner of the 2006 Amgen Award</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Australian Biomedical Scientist Wins Top UK Award</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Clinician Researchers and ASMR</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Professor Berkovic Receives 2005 Curtin Medal</b>	



**ASMR Past and Present Presidents Celebrate Budget Result at ASMR MRW® Dinner in Melbourne.**  
*From left to right:*  
 Levon Khachigian (2006),  
 Bronwyn Kingwell (2005),  
 Andrew Sinclair (2004),  
 Moira Clay (2003).



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Frazer. Professor Warwick Anderson, who formally presented Bill his ASMR Medal, commenced his position as the new NHMRC CEO during ASMR Medical Research Week®. Warwick has kindly agreed to write for us in the next issue of the Newsletter. We wish Professors John Shine and Judy Black, as outgoing Chairs of the NHMRC Council and Research Committee, respectively, the very best as they pass on the batons.

ASMR in June held another highly successful Medical Research Week®, a week that brought the benefits of health and medical research to all Australians through vibrant public, political and scientific advocacy. ASMR Medallist Professor Bill Brinkley helped celebrate throughout the week the critically-needed increase in health and medical research funding announced in the Federal Budget. To all members and friends of ASMR that participated in the Week through organisational roles running dinners, expos and community lectures, cinema events, scientific "showcase" meetings, careers sessions and professional development programs, or by attending one or more of these functions, I thank you for your support. I want especially to acknowledge the strong leadership of all our State Convenors (Mike McGuckin, Beverly Muhlhausler, Melanie Bagg, Andrew Buckle, Craig Freeman, Jeff Craig, Steven Mutsaers, Sharyn Pope and

Alan Champion) as well as the remarkable talents of Alison Butt (ASMR Medical Research Week® Convenor), Peter Eastwood (Co-ordinator State Committees), Cath West (Executive Office) and Maree Overall (ASN Events).

The second half of the year will see ASMR realise a number of new initiatives, including an important workforce survey we've professionally commissioned. Information gained from this will be used in efforts to better understand and improve career structure and conditions of health and medical researchers. We have also been working on an innovative FASEB-style web-based Member Directory, the establishment of a panel of 'National Treasures' of health and medical researchers, and an equally-influential 'Friends of ASMR' group drawing on advocates from the wider community.

Finally, I'd encourage all researchers to attend the 3rd Australian Health and Medical Research Congress which will be held in Melbourne in November, featuring the latest outstanding research from 2-3 thousand scientists and clinicians, representing around 30 separate societies, providing a perfect opportunity for 'beyond the square' ideas and conceptual cross-fertilisation.

With warmest wishes,  
**Professor Levon Khachigian,**  
**ASMR President**

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# **Celebrating Health and Medical Research in Australia:**

## **A Renaissance for Discovery and Opportunity**

**William (Bill) R. Brinkley, Ph.D**  
**2006 ASMR Medalist**  
**Senior Vice President**  
**for Graduate Sciences.**  
**Dean, Graduate School of**  
**Biomedical Sciences,**  
**Baylor College of Medicine, Houston**

**I**t is an honor and privilege to be selected by ASMR as the 2006 Medalist and to be invited to tour this remarkable nation and speak on behalf of Health and Medical Research (HMR). I am especially grateful to Professor Levon Khachigian, distinguished President of ASMR, and his outstanding team, for their wonderful hospitality during my visit. I would also like to honor and acknowledge all previous ASMR Medalists who have come before me through the words of Sir Isaac Newton, *"If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants."*

In this presentation, I would like to address two important issues: (1) The present and future role of HMR in Australia,

and (2) why countries like America and Australia need to develop an effective "Science Policy" that would stabilize research funding needed to attract and retain our best and brightest young stars into science.

As one reviews recent advances in Australia, it is obvious that the country ranks public health and medical care among its highest priorities. ASMR, Research Australia and AAMRI have played, and will continue to play, a critical role by garnering support for basic and clinical research programs needed to foster Australia's rise to prominence and world leadership in science. Recently, the Australian government sent a clear message to this effect by naming Professor Ian Frazer as the 2006 Australian of the Year for pioneering work in the development of cervical cancer vaccines. Other medical researchers have been so honored in previous years. Australia has produced six Nobel Prize winners, including your most recent, Professors Barry Marshall and Robin Warren, who shared the 2005 Prize in Medicine and Physiology.




Prof. Brinkley addresses the National Press Club in Canberra during ASMR MRW®

Perhaps the most exciting development was the decision made by the Australian government in May of 2006, to allocate an additional \$905 million for HMR, an outstanding achievement that will again double the NHMRC funding base from its current level of \$400 million per year. Collectively, these accomplishments indicate that Australia's political leaders regard HMR as a national asset. Moreover, a clear message has been sent to the rest of the world that Australia values the health of its citizens and understands the economic importance of investment in HMR. Further, your investment in medical research has already begun to bear significant economic fruit. The ASMR commissioned Access Economics Report revealed that for each Australian dollar invested in medical research, there is 5–8 dollar return to the economy. This ratio will continue to improve if future investments from both government and private industry are maintained.

Ironically, as we have learned in America, success in acquiring government funding for research also makes

one's advocacy mission vulnerable. In 2003, the U.S. completed a successful five-year campaign to double NIH funding (see Figure 1). Although the "doubling" of the NIH budget was a great victory for the health of our citizens and created optimism and remarkable potential for our researchers, the lack of a rational plan to stabilize the build-up in subsequent years has resulted in precipitous drop in awards and essentially, a "de-doubling" of the NIH budget (see Figure 2). I encourage all of our policy makers to seek and establish a more rational "science policy" that will secure our countries' leadership, and the future for our best and brightest scientists.

With a more stable investment in medical research, our countries can retain leadership and bring better health and prosperity to our own citizens and to the people of the world. Our two nations have long been allies in times of war and peace; may we remain allies in the greatest war of all — the war on disease. Thank you for this remarkable honor. 

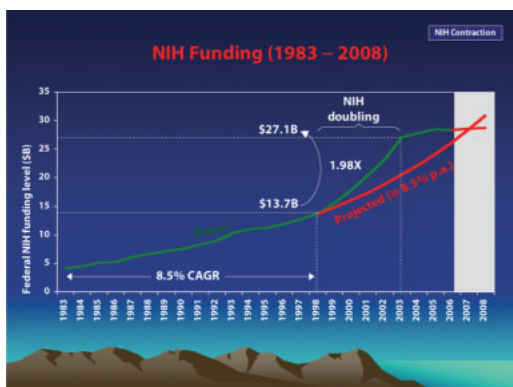


Figure 1

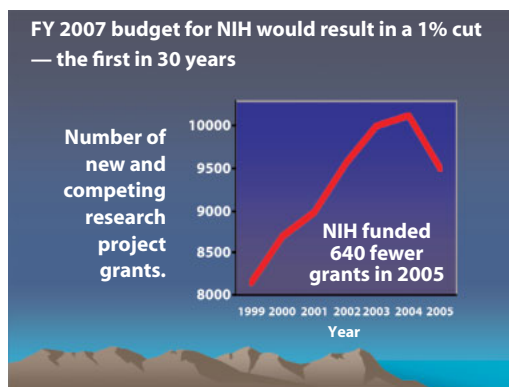


Figure 2

**Calendar**  
**3rd Australian Health & Medical Research Congress**  
 26 Nov – 1 Dec, 2006  
 Melbourne Convention Centre  
[www.ahmrcongress.org.au](http://www.ahmrcongress.org.au)

**NSC 2007 Tissue Remodelling**  
 11 – 14 November, 2007  
 The Carrington Hotel, Blue Mountains, NSW

**International Diabetes Federation Diabetes in Indigenous People Forum**  
 13 – 15 November, 2006  
 Melbourne Exhibition Centre

**2006 Society for Reproductive Biology Annual Scientific Conference**  
 20 – 23 August, 2006  
 Gold Coast Convention Centre  
[www.srb.org.au/annual\\_meeting.htm](http://www.srb.org.au/annual_meeting.htm)

**18th Annual Conference of the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine**  
 11 – 14 October, 2006  
 Carlton Crest, Melbourne  
[www.ashm.org.au/conference](http://www.ashm.org.au/conference)

**19th Annual Scientific Meetings of the Australasian Sleep Association (ASA) & Australian Sleep Technologists Association (ASTA)**  
 5 – 7 October, 2006  
 Burswood Resort, Perth  
[www.sleepaus.on.net](http://www.sleepaus.on.net)

**11th International Congress of Human Genetics Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre**  
 6 – 10 August, 2006  
 Brisbane  
[www.ichg2006.com](http://www.ichg2006.com)

**Huntington Disease satellite meeting**  
 Radisson Gold Coast  
 August 4-5 2006  
[www.huntingtons2006.com](http://www.huntingtons2006.com)



# ASMR Medical Research Week® 2006

**Dr Alison Butt,  
National ASMR MRW® Convenor and  
Associate Professor Peter Eastwood,  
Coordinator of State Committees**

**A**SMR Medical Research Week® is the society's major public outreach event of the year, promoting community understanding and support for health and medical research across Australia. This year's ASMR Medical Research Week® was a huge success, with record numbers of researchers and members of the public joining together to celebrate Australian health and medical research. A special thanks to our State Convenors (*South Australia*: Beverly Muhlhausler & Melanie Bagg; *Queensland*: Mike McGuckin; *New South Wales*: Andrew Buckle; *ACT*: Craig Freeman; *Victoria*: Jeff Craig; *Western Australia*: Steven Mutsaers & Sharyn Pope; *Tasmania*: Alan Champion) and their committees for all the hard work that went into organising the week's events.

Former ASMR President  
Prof Jock Findlay with  
Ross Bury from DHS  
at the ASMR MRW® dinner



Public outreach events included 'bringing the lab to the public' with Medical Research Expos in Rundle Mall and Federation Square, public lectures in Adelaide and Launceston, and the 'Science in the Cinema' event in Sydney. There were also many initiatives for school students with the very popular rural schools program



Professor Levon Khachigian with Professor Bill Brinkley and Dr Sarah Meachem at the MRW dinner in WA

continuing in South Australia, careers lecture tours and seminars in Victoria and NSW, and an online ASMR Medical Research Week® Quiz in Victoria and Queensland.

Those already engaged in medical research had an opportunity to showcase their work with successful scientific meetings and symposia across the country. Highlights included the 2006 Australian of the Year, Professor Ian Frazer who delivered the Plenary Lecture in NSW, and the inaugural ACT Young Investigator Forum in Canberra held in the impressive surroundings of the newly opened John Curtin School of Medical Research. ASMR has also continued and expanded its Professional Development days, which were held in Victoria and Western Australia (both were sell-outs!), with NSW and South Australia planning their events for later in the year.



Professor Bill Brinkley at ASMR dinner with Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, Professor Michael Good and Professor Levon Khachigian



NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson at the National Press Club in Canberra during ASMR MRW®




Victorian ASMR convenor Dr Jeff Craig with Professor Suzanne Cory and Professor Jerry Adams at the ASMR MRW® dinner in Melbourne



Prof David de Kretser, Governor of Victoria and Mrs Jan de Kretser at the ASMR MRW® dinner in Melbourne

A real highlight of the week is the national lecture tour by the ASMR Medallist, and this year was no exception. The ASMR Medallist 2006, Professor Bill Brinkley, gave an insightful address describing the future of H&MR funding in Australia with lessons to be learnt from his experiences within the US system. He spoke at dinners in Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth, and also delivered the NAB address at the National Press Club in Canberra, when he was presented with the ASMR Medal 2006.

Thanks as always to Cath West and Priscilla Diment in the Executive Office, ASMR Directors and all at ASN for making ASMR Medical Research Week® 2006 such a success! 



Bill Brinkley with past and present ASMR Directors in front of the new John Curtin Medical Research Building (ANU)



Conga line at the MRW dinner in WA

## ASMR Research Awards

The Australian Society for Medical Research invites applications for the ASMR Research Award. This award will support a postgraduate student member of the ASMR nearing completion of their studies or a recently graduated postdoctoral member to undertake a short period of research in a laboratory outside of Australia (\$5,000) or in a distal laboratory (\$2,000) within Australia. The award specifically excludes support for conference attendance and travel for an extended period of postdoctoral studies.


Applicants for "The ASMR Research Award" must have been members of the ASMR for at least 12 months immediately preceding the year in which the Award application is to be considered. Applicants must be not more than three years post their highest degree. The Award must be taken up during the first 6 months of the following year. Applications close 29th September, 2006.

Application forms may be found at  
<http://www.asmr.org.au/resfund/App06.pdf>

## Friends of ASMR

The "Friends of ASMR" is a new initiative of ASMR, with the aim of bringing together non-scientist public and political advocates for Australian health and medical research from within the wider community (eg. individuals with expertise in law, publicity, business development, promotion and strategic endeavour as well as holding strong networking ties of influence

throughout the economic, political and social communities, as well as patient group representatives).

This group, whose membership will have been endorsed by the ASMR Board, will support the goals and missions of ASMR, by developing strategies in support of and at the direction of the ASMR President and Board. 

## National Health and Medical Research Council

### Research Committee Membership 2006-09 Triennium

Professor James Best (Chairman)  
 Dr Jon Currie  
 Professor Tim David  
 A/Professor Jacinta Elston  
 Professor Ian Frazer  
 A/Professor Mathew Gillespie  
 Professor Robert (Bob) Graham  
 Mrs Elizabeth Grant  
 Professor D'Arcy Holman  
 A/Professor Bronwyn Kingwell  
 Professor Margaret O'Connor  
 Professor Kerin O'Dea  
 Professor Sally Redman  
 Dr Nicholas Samaras  
 Professor Peter Silburn  
 Professor Ron Trent



# State Awards

## Queensland

### ASMR Queensland Premier's Awards

*Postgraduate Student Award*

**Alberto Pinzon-Charry**

QIMR

*Postdoctoral Award*

**Ian Mackay**

Royal Children's Hospital

*Senior Postdoctoral Award*

**Christopher Schmidt**

QIMR



Neale Fong, Director General Dept. of Health and Chair of Health Implementation Taskforce, awards Helen Currie with the Department of Health Award

## New South Wales

*University of Sydney Medal*

*for Excellence in Medical Research*

**Lowenna Holt**

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

*Ministry for Science & Medical Research Postdoctoral Award for Excellence in Science*

**Michael Trenell**

Woolcock Institute of Medical Research

*Eppendorf Technical Prize*

**Caroline Roberts**

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

*ASMR Student Poster Prize*

**Anusha Hettiaratchi**

University of New South Wales

*Eli Lilly Student Prize*

**Ee-ling Fock**

University of New South Wales



NSW scientific meeting convenor, Dr Claire Inman, Plenary Lecturer Professor Ian Frazer and NSW Branch Convenor, Andrew Buckle

## ACT

*ASMR Oral Presentation Prize*

**Owen Siggs**

John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU

*Tall Poppy Campaign Oral Presentation Prize*

**Sonja Kowalczyk**

Australian National University

*ANU CMHS Poster Prize*

**Lydia Makaroff**

Australian National University

*ASBMB Poster Prize*

**Elissa Sutcliffe**

John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU



Taking medical research to the schools in South Australia, Amanda Aloia demonstrates DNA fingerprinting to fascinated students

## South Australia

*The Ross Wishart Memorial Award*

**Lachlan Moldenhauer**

Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University of Adelaide

*Clinical Research Award*

**Amy McLennan**

Department of Anatomy, University of Adelaide

*Early Career Research Award*

**Grant Tomkinson**

School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia

*Most Outstanding Oral Presentation at Meeting*

**Nicole Pardini**

Department of Biochemistry, University of Adelaide

*Most Outstanding Poster Presentation at Meeting*

**Beverly Muhlhausler**

School of Pharmacy & Medical Science, University of South Australia

*Honours Oral Presentation Award*

**Amy McLennan**

Department of Anatomy, University of Adelaide

*Honours Poster Award*

**Sarah Wakefield**

Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University of Adelaide

*Healthy Aging Research Award*

**Degu Abebe**

Department of Human Physiology, Flinders University



Live outside broadcast of 3RRR's Einstein a Go Go at Federation Square in Melbourne  
From left: Dr Shane, Ms Nicola Smith, Dr Jeff Craig (Victorian Convenor), Dr Fifi and Dr Andi (aka Dr Andrea Horvath).

## Victoria

### Premiers Award

#### Mark Shackleton

The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

### Premiers Award Commendations

#### Nicholas Huntington

The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

#### Shalin Naik

The Walter & Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

#### Ken Pang

Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, University of Melbourne

## Western Australia

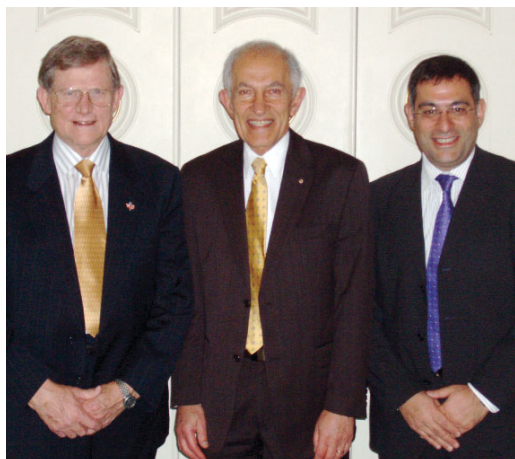
### The Department of Health Awards

#### Helen Currie

University of Western Australia

#### Sherif Boulos

Australian Neuromuscular Research Institute



Professor Bill Brinkley, Governor David de Kretzer and Professor Levon Khachigian at Government House in Melbourne

*The University of Western Australia Pro Vice Chancellor, Research & Innovation Award*

#### Jacqueline McGlade

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

*Invitrogen Student Encouragement Awards*

#### Jasmin Dromey

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research

#### Paul Ellery

Western Australia Biomedical Research Institute, Curtin University

#### Angela Rate

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

#### Matthew Leigh

University of Western Australia

#### Christin Down

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research

*The Murdoch University Award*

#### Caitlin Wyrwoll

University of Western Australia

*The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research Award*

#### Tulene Kendrick

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research

*Western Australian Biomedical Research Institute Award*

#### Brioni Moore

Curtin University and Western Australia Biomedical Research Institute

*Asthma and Allergy Research Institute Award*

#### Cathy Wang

University of Western Australia

#### Esme Hatchell

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research

*University of Western Australia School of Surgery & Pathology Award*

#### Demelza Ireland

University of Western Australia

*Professor Barry Marshall Award*

#### Jana Vukovic

University of Western Australia



Victorian medical researchers listen to Doug Weller's interactive presentation on media communication



Former ASMR President Professor Andrew Sinclair with Mr Bob Sensholt, Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury and Finance (left) and the Hon Fran Bailey MP (right) at the ASMR MRW® dinner in Melbourne



Professor Bill Brinkley (left) with Professor Robert Graham (right) at an ASMR MRW® dinner



Professor Bill Brinkley and Professor Levon Khachigian meet Past-President Professor Judith Whitworth and NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson during ASMR MRW®



# The Australian Twin Registry

**Kim Dorrell**

**T**he Australian Twin Registry (ATR) is a voluntary registry of twins who are willing to consider taking part in medical and health related research, as well as studies devoted to issues of particular concern to twins.

The Registry is a valuable resource for conducting:

- studies of genetic and environmental causes of variation in traits, and on susceptibility to disease;
- co-twin control studies, using pairs discordant for disease or for exposure, to study the effects of environmental and epigenetic factors on disease outcome and measures of morbidity;
- intervention studies matching for age, sex, and genetic factors;
- longitudinal studies of the natural history of medical, physical, and behavioural characteristics;
- studies related to twinning and to particular problems of twins.

Conditions investigated in past studies conducted with the participation of Registry twins include: alcohol and tobacco use, asthma, anxiety and depression, Alzheimer's disease, breast cancer, cholesterol, diabetes, eating disorders, endometriosis, heart disease, male infertility, myopia, osteoporosis, premenstrual tension and prostate size.

The Australian Twin Registry (ATR) is one of the largest volunteer registers in the world. It was formed in 1981 when the Victorian Twin Registry was combined with two smaller research registries based in Sydney and

Canberra. Over 33,000 pairs of twins have joined the Registry since its inception. The Registry enrolls Australian twins of any type, age, or state of health.

Of the currently active registered pairs:

- 40% are monozygotic (genetically identical)
- 42.5% are female/female twin pairs
- 32.5% are male/male pairs
- 25% are male/female pairs
- two thirds of currently active registered twins are over the age of 18

The ATR assists researchers with the recruitment of twins for health, medical and social science studies. The ATR receives an average of 10 applications per year from researchers and to date has approved over 100 applications from more than 50 research groups throughout Australia. These studies have in turn generated over 450 peer-reviewed publications.

All proposals to utilise the ATR are subject to scientific and ethical review. Studies need to be independently reviewed and approved by both an appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) established in accordance with the guidelines set out by the NHMRC, and by the Registry. More information about the Registry's policies and procedures can be found at: <http://www.twins.org.au/>

The Registry is one of the Special Facilities funded under the new NHMRC Enabling Grants scheme. More information on Enabling Grant facilities can be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/outcomes/enabactiv.htm> asmr



## The Power of Two!



Centre for MEGA Epidemiology  
School of Population Health



# The 3rd Australian Health & Medical Research Congress

**26 November – 1 December 2006,  
Melbourne Convention Centre**

**T**he 3rd Australian Health & Medical Research Congress (AH&MRC) will be held in Melbourne this November and an exciting line-up of international stars holds promise for an outstanding scientific meeting. An ASMR initiative, this is the largest meeting of its kind in Australia involving 30 different medical research societies and groups with an expected attendance of 2500 scientists, clinicians and allied health professionals. The aim of the meeting is to bring together a broad cross-section of scientists and clinicians from different disciplines, highlighting recent findings and fostering communication and collaboration. Together with COSA, APS, AMATA, ASCEPT, ASCC, MEPSA and MBSANZ, ASMR will hold its 3-day national scientific conference under the Congress umbrella. This year the ASMR NSC is convened by Robyn Starr from St Vincent's Institute and is based on the theme "Cytokines, Inflammation and Disease". Together with the programming committee, program convenor Hamish Scott has assembled an exciting program spanning emerging technologies, basic science and translational research. Key plenary speakers include: Professor Richard Flavell (ASMR Firkin Orator) whose use of mouse reverse genetics has resulted in seminal contributions to the field of T cell tolerance and activation in immunity and autoimmunity,

apoptosis and regulation of T cell differentiation. Professor Rudolph Jaenisch (epigenetic gene regulation in development & disease) and Professors Joe Nevins (breast cancer genomics), John Bergeron (proteomics of intracellular organelles) and Jean-Paul Thiery (cellular morphogenesis and tumour progression). They are joined by a great Australian line-up including Jonathon Sprent, Ian Fraser and Chris Goodnow. There are more than 50 other international speakers and a host of national speakers, which add up to an exceptional scientific program. The official "Congress Carnivale" on Wednesday night offers a fun and relaxed way to get to know other researchers, with a host of satellite and society-specific activities. The meeting encourages student participation with student travel awards and there are a number of poster prizes and awards, including the Campion-Ma Playoust memorial award, The CASS Foundation award, the Cure Cancer Foundation award and the Best of the Best poster award (sponsored by Merck, Sharp & Dohme). So take the time to browse through the full program, as I'm sure you'll find that this meeting is one you can't afford to miss! 

**Sandra Nicholson**  
2006 AH&MRC Convenor,  
[AHMRC@wehi.edu.au](mailto:AHMRC@wehi.edu.au)



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## Important Dates

- **Abstract deadline for oral presentations:**  
**11th August 2006**
- **Abstract deadline for poster presentations:**  
**8th September 2006**
- **Early bird registration deadline:**  
**11th August 2006**

## UNSW MEDICINE Faculty of Medicine

### Research Strengths

During the years 2003–2004, the Faculty undertook a large-scale review of its research activities with a view to planning more rationally to better support and grow these activities over the coming decade. A major outcome of this activity was the identification of our areas of research strength as well as areas of emerging strength within the Faculty. The point of this exercise was not in any way to discourage research activity in areas beyond those identified, but to recognise the fact that research is an expensive exercise both in terms of dollars and in terms of personnel, and that sensible investment of these scarce resources requires knowledge of what we do well and careful decision making about future strategies.

### Existing Strengths

Brain Sciences  
Cardiovascular Research  
Infection/Immunity/Inflammation

### Emerging Strengths

Health Informatics  
Policy and Practice Interface in Health Practice  
Cancer Research

### Postgraduate Research Programs

The postgraduate research programs offered by the Faculty involve a student undertaking an investigative project under the supervision of an academic. The investigation will culminate in the submission of a thesis that amongst other things, records the student's research methods, findings and results.

For more information, please refer to the following link:

<http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/medweb.nsf/page/Postgraduate+Research+Programs>

## NSC 2007 Tissue Remodelling

**11–14 Nov, 2007**  
**The Carrington Hotel**  
**Blue Mountains, NSW**  
**Convenors:**  
**Alaina Ammit and**  
**Alastair Stewart**

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

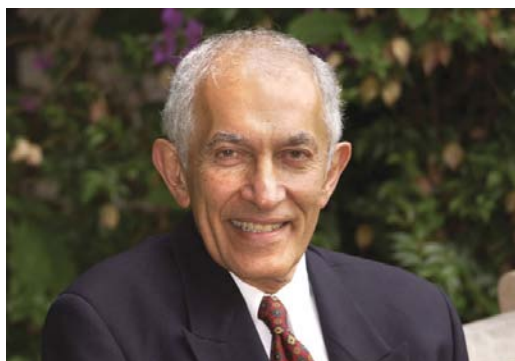
**A**ssociate Professor Tien Wong from the Centre for Eye Research, Melbourne University has been recognized for his outstanding research by winning the Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research. Associate Professor Wong has identified a novel method to assess the risk for cardiovascular disease based on blood vessel damage in the eyes using a simple and non invasive examination. Changes in blood vessels in the eye may identify people at risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and hypertension. Wong and his team



Associate Professor Tien Wong is presented with the Commonwealth Health Minister's Award by the Hon Fran Bailey MP at the ASMR MRW® dinner in Melbourne

conducted the research between 2000–2005 which involved more than 20,000 patients. Wong's research is ongoing and is supported by a \$2 million grant from the Victorian Government to conduct multidisciplinary collaborative research involving 15 research institutes and hospitals in Australia and the US. asmr

## Professor David de Kretser Appointed Governor of Victoria



Governor David de Kretser

**A**SMR pays tribute to Professor David de Kretser AO on his appointment as Governor of Victoria. Announced by the Premier Mr Steve Bracks, the five year appointment commenced on 7 April 2006.

Director of Andrology Australia since its inception five years ago, David has been at the forefront of men's health education and research for the past 40 years.

With reproductive medicine a key focus, David's main research interest is in male infertility; specifically sperm production and the role of hormones in this process.

In recent years, David has been passionate about educating the community and health professionals about male reproductive health. His collaborative work with countless organisations has made a strong contribution to improving men's health in Australia. David's professional career, coupled with his extensive community ties, will stand him in excellent stead for the challenges of his new, exciting role as Governor of Victoria. asmr

## Dr El-Osta — Winner of the 2006 Amgen Award

**D**r Assam El-Osta, from the Baker Heart Research Institute in Melbourne, has been recognised for his outstanding research in human epigenetics by winning the prestigious Amgen Medical Researcher Award. Dr El-Osta has identified the controller genes responsible for human leukemias and a form of mental retardation called fragile X syndrome, which also play a role in some form of heart disease. El-Osta's research team is now working with local and international teams to engineer drugs that target these disease-causing genes. His research was recently published in Nature Genetics. asmr



Kaylene O'Shea, Director of Scientific Affairs at Amgen Australia, presents Dr Assam El-Osta with the Amgen Award at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne

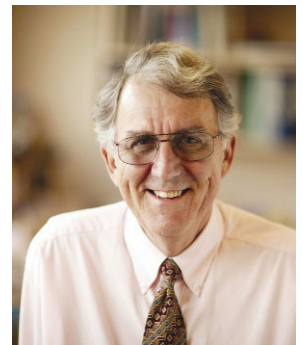


## Australian Biomedical Scientist Wins Top UK Award

**A**ustralian biomedical scientist Professor Jock Findlay AM has been awarded the UK Society for Reproduction and Fertility (SRF) Distinguished Scientist Award for 2006. This award honours Professor Findlay's outstanding contribution to reproduction and fertility research. He is the only Australian to have won this prestigious award. Professor Findlay will present a keynote lecture at the Society's Annual conference in July 2006 in Leeds, West Yorkshire, England.

Professor Findlay is a world renowned reproductive biologist with more than 30 years of experience in reproductive health research. He has been a pioneer in understanding the ovary and its function including the hormone inhibin, regulating fertility and treating infertility

in women. He was one of the original collaborators on the first paper on hormone replacement in women receiving IVF. Professor Findlay's research has had an enduring impact on the field through highly and consistently cited publications, and continuing invitations to write chapters in authoritative texts and speak at meetings of his peers. His achievements have been recognised through numerous awards including the 2006 Dale Medal the UK Society for Endocrinology. In 2001 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for services to medical research, as a researcher in reproductive biology and as a medical administrator. Professor Findlay is currently the Deputy Director of Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research. asmr



Professor Jock Findlay AM

## Clinician Researchers and ASMR

**Associate Professor Martin Delatycki,  
ASMR Director, Clinical Issues Portfolio**

**T**he clinician researcher plays a central role in medical research. Because of their experience with direct patient contact they are well placed to direct translational research that results in improved health care. We need look no further than the recently awarded Nobel Prize for the discovery of *Helicobacter pylori* as the cause of gastrointestinal ulceration to Western Australian researchers Barry Marshall and Robin Warren to recognise the importance of this group of medical researchers.

A steady stream of publications in the last 30 years has raised concerns about a number of issues related to clinician researchers. There is evidence in the United States at least that the numbers of clinicians who undertake research as a significant part of their working life is diminishing. Concerns are raised that it is becoming increasingly difficult to make high impact research contributions, while at the same time maintaining a high standard of clinical competence.

The NHMRC recognises the value of clinician researchers through its Fellowship schemes. In addition to career development awards, it also funds Practitioner Fellowships, which are available only to researchers who maintain at least a 30% clinical load or public health practice.

ASMR views clinician researchers as a very important component of the medical research workforce. Clinician researchers are under-represented in ASMR's membership and elected representatives. The ASMR Board has created a clinical issues portfolio with the specific goal of representing the needs of clinician researchers. ASMR is very keen for clinician researchers to become more involved in the work of ASMR and its leadership. Clinician researchers are encouraged to become members of the organisation so that its needs can be represented in the challenge of continuing the important contribution that this group makes to medical research overall.

I am keen to hear from clinician researchers about how they feel that their needs can be better represented by ASMR. Please email me at [martin.delatycki@ghsv.org.au](mailto:martin.delatycki@ghsv.org.au) to let me know your views. asmr

## Professor Berkovic Receives 2005 Curtin Medal

**T**he 2005 Curtin Medal for Medical Research has been awarded to Professor Samuel Berkovic, head of the Comprehensive Epilepsy Program at the Austin Hospital and the Epilepsy Research Centre of the University of Melbourne. Professor Berkovic is a neurologist and clinical

researcher who has strong collaborations with basic scientists in many Australian and international laboratories. He seeks to understand the basic neurobiology of human epilepsies, using varied approaches to gain insights that can be used for diagnosis and treatment of patients. asmr



Professor Samuel Berkovic

## ASMR: Call for Nominations for Election of Directors

information and nomination form available from  
<http://www.asmr.org.au/Nom06.pdf>

## ASMR Directors 2006

**Professor Levon Khachigian** — President  
**Assoc. Prof. Maria Kavallaris** — President Elect,  
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**Dr Alaina Ammit** — Honorary Secretary  
**Dr Mark Hulett** — Careers Convenor, Membership Co-convenor  
**Dr Sandra Nicholson** — 2006 AHMRC Convenor  
**Assoc. Prof. J Alejandro Lopez** — Membership Convenor  
**Dr Sarah Meachem** — Public Relations Convenor, Careers Co-convenor  
**Dr Gilda Tachedjian** — Newsletter Editor  
**Dr Alison Butt** — ASMR MRW Convenor  
**Assoc. Prof Peter Eastwood** — Coordinator State Committees  
**Assoc. Prof Martin Delatycki** — Clinical Issues  
**Dr Steven Polyak** — Board Liaison Representative for SA

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 Haematology Society of Australia and New Zealand  
 High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia  
 Human Genetics Society of Australasia  
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 Paediatric Research Society of Australia and New Zealand  
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