

in this issue

ASMR launches Exceptional Returns II



Dr Mark Hulett, ASMR President

In November 2007, ASMR commissioned Access Economics to update and expand on the 2003 study "Exceptional Returns: The Value of Investing in health R&D in Australia". The 2003 report was a landmark document and provided critical benchmark economic figures that underpinned the successful campaign by the Health and Medical Research (HMR) sector to leverage increased funding to the NHMRC in the 2006 federal budget. The new 2008 study estimates the economic value of Australian investment in HMR&D following the recent funding increases and includes sensitivity analysis, benchmarking, and case studies of 4 specific examples of well-being returns to Australia — in diabetes, dementia, cancer, and indigenous health. With the help of Sir Gus Nossal, the 2008 ASMR medalist, ASMR launched the new report at the National Press Club in Canberra on June 4. I am extremely pleased to report that "Exceptional Returns II" demonstrates the continued excellent health and economic returns on investment in the Australian HMR sector.

The key findings of the report include:

- Australian Health R&D expenditure between 1992/3 and 2004/5 was estimated to return a net benefit of around \$29.5 billion dollars. For a dollar invested in Australian health R&D, an average of \$2.17 dollars in health benefits is returned, with a minimum of \$0.57 and maximum of \$6.
- Comparing the returns on investment with other sectors, health R&D out performs the market, manufacturing and agricultural sectors, and is less only than mining and the retail/wholesale trade sectors.

The figures are also impressive for the specific case studies:

- The development of Gardasil to vaccinate against 70% of cervical cancer has potential returns in well-being of 2.5 to 1.
- The prevention or delay of vision loss associated with diabetes will result in \$7.6 billion dollars of savings by 2025.

- Decreasing the incidence of Alzheimer's disease by 5% through Australian R&D will result in estimated savings of \$10.3 billion dollars by 2050 — with over half of these savings in the residential care sector.
- The value of a Group A Streptococci vaccine is predicted to provide health benefits valued at \$319 million per year of which \$78.4 million will be realised by indigenous Australians.

Furthermore, the new report indicates that although the greatest burden of disease remains from cancer (19% of Australia's total) and cardiovascular disease (18%), non-fatal diseases also play a significant and increasing role in the burden of disease and the years of healthy life lost due to disability. In particular, the projected cost and impact of the chronic diseases of aging is forecast to present a challenging burden and the greatest hope is new R&D breakthroughs. It is clear that Australia has a comparative advantage in health R&D given the levels of discovery, output and quality of publications, and impressive translational outcomes. In addition to the "good international citizen" arguments, the new report provides strong economic reasons for sustaining and enhancing health R&D investment in Australia.

I encourage all ASMR members to read the full report and to disseminate the key findings at all opportunities to the public and politicians. I would like to thank Lynne Pezzullo, Henry Cutler and the Access Economics team for their outstanding work on the report, Maria Kavallaris, Moira Clay and the ASMR national executive for their valuable input, and the many supporters in the HMR sector that provided sponsorship to help fund this important study.

"Exceptional Returns II" can be downloaded from the ASMR website:

<http://www.asmr.org.au/breakingnews.html>

Mark Hulett
President

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The Australian Society for Medical Research

145 Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

ACN 000599235 · ABN 18000599235

Catherine West
Snr. Executive Officer

Ph: 02 9256 5450

Fax: 02 9252 0294

Email: asmr@world.net

Web: www.asmr.org.au

Newsletter Editor-in-Chief,
Dr Andrew J. Brown

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Perceptions in Health and Medical Research — Rewards and career concerns of Australian Medical Researchers

ASMR is pleased to announce the publication in the Medical Journal of Australia of the results of a pilot study "Perceptions in health and medical research careers: the Australian Society for Medical Research Workforce Survey". The survey of nearly 400 members gauged views on career and funding opportunities, salary and quality of working environment and discussed the impacts of these views on retaining a skilled medical research workforce in Australia.

We know we are very good at what we do! The Australian Health and Medical Research (HMR) sector has performed outstandingly on the global stage with our basic research output being twice the OECD average on a per capita basis with an impressively high international standing by citation, and our translational outcomes have had a major global impact. In terms of efficiency of output — we punch above our weight-delivering 3% of the total world health R&D from only 1.5% of the expenditure.

We have contributed to the amazing progress in the prevention and treatment of disease and HMR over the last 40 years has underpinned this progress — with you, me and our family and friends being the direct recipients of these dramatic improvements in health and well-being.

However, there are many challenges that we face now and into the future which may reverse these advances in our health and well-being, for example the increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases and an ageing population with associated chronic disease, and potential health issues associated with climate change. To meet these challenges and ward off these threats to the social and economic fabric of our nation, a well-planned (strong and diverse) HMR workforce is critical. But first, we needed to determine the 'health status' of our medical research workforce as there is limited quantitative data available on job satisfaction, workplace conditions, brain drain/retain and the sentiments of researchers. In this study, we set out to gauge career concerns of medical researchers, as a first step towards remedying this situation.

The key finding of the survey is that employment insecurity and a lack of funding are causing considerable anxiety among Australian health and medical researchers.

Factors influencing decisions about whether to leave HMR included shortage of funding (91%), lack of career development (78%) and poor financial rewards (72%).

Other key findings of the study included:

- 6% of respondents had left active research in the past five years;
- 73% had considered leaving;
- 57% were directly supported by grants or fellowships;
- 16% were not reliant on grants for their continuing employment;
- 62% believed funding had increased in the past five years, yet only 30% perceived an increase in employment opportunities in HMR; and
- females with postgraduate qualifications and earning \$100K plus made up only one in three of this salary group compared with males (66%).

Our survey revealed a strong feeling of non-sustainability of a career in HMR. This perception suggests that a review of current policies affecting research careers in HMR people support in broader terms may be warranted, if Australia is to retain its reputation for research excellence and leadership. The fact that the majority of respondents have considered leaving active research highlights the need for a coordinated multi-streamed approach to ensure the long term viability of our sector. To maintain our 'edge' it will be necessary to provide a career path that captures, nurtures and retains talented minds, and provides abundant career opportunities. A significant loss of Australia's highly trained researchers represents potential erosion of intellectual capacity and future preparedness. Thank you for your participation and support.

The publication arising from this study is available from <http://www.asmr.org.au/breakingnews.html>.

Sarah Meacham
ASMR President Elect

- **Conferences**
- 19th Annual Australasian Association for Quality in Health Care Conference**
September 1–3, 2008;
Christchurch Convention Centre.
www.conference.co.nz/index.cfm/aaqhc08
- Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists 46th Annual Scientific Conference.**
September 15–18, 2008;
Adelaide Convention Centre.
<http://www.aacb.asn.au/>
- Annual Dementia Research Forum.**
September 18–19 2008;
Wesley Conference Centre, Sydney.
<http://www.dementia.unsw.edu.au/>
- Australian Atherosclerosis Society Annual Scientific Meeting.**
28–31 October, 2008;
Sydney.
<http://www.athero.org.au/>
- Australian Health and Medical Research Congress.**
16–21 November, 2008;
Brisbane Convention Centre.
<http://www.ahmrcongress.org.au/>

The 4th Australian Health & Medical Research Congress

16–21st November 2008,
Brisbane Convention Centre

The 4th Australian Health & Medical Research Congress will be held in Brisbane this November. The AH&MRC is a unique event in the health and medical research calendar, providing an outstanding multi-disciplinary scientific program across a wide range of health and medical research disciplines, from basic science through to translational research. Together with the programming committee, program convenor Greg Anderson has put together an exciting and stimulating program, including a world-class line-up of international plenary speakers: Elaine Fuchs (skin biology, stem cells), Roger Tsien (fluorescent markers of intracellular signaling), Josef Penninger (mechanisms of disease pathology, including heart, lung, autoimmune diseases and cancer), Steven Baylin (loss of gene function in cancer progression) and this year's ASMR Firkin Orator, Michael Karin (signalling in inflammation, infection and cancer).

Together with ASCEPT, MEPSA, APClub, ANZOS, ANZORS, the Diamantina Institute and Queensland Health, ASMR will be holding its National Scientific Conference within the AH&MRC. Convened by Assoc. Professor Alejandro

López, this year's NSC is based 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 therapeutical approaches for epithelial diseases. ASMR is offering travel bursaries to assist with interstate travel of ASMR student members who are not supported by their Institute, and students can also apply for the prestigious ASMR Campion-Ma-Playoust Memorial Award.

An additional 24 societies and organizations are presenting symposia at the Congress, further enhancing the program to include over 50 international speakers, and nearly 200 national speakers. Generous prizes and awards are on offer, including the Merck Sharpe and Dohme Best of the Best Poster Award (\$8,000) and the CASS Foundation Best of the Best Student Poster Award (\$5,000), and the Congress 'Carnivale' on Wednesday evening promises to be another fun and entertaining way to continue the scientific interactions!

Everything is in place for another outstanding scientific event in November — register now so you don't miss out!

Alison Butt
Convenor, 2008 AH&MRC

Important Dates

**Register now,
don't miss out!**

**Travel bursaries
for ASMR student
members.**

**Abstract deadline for
poster presentations:
19th September 2008**



The 47th National Scientific Conference of the AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH — ASMR

Tuesday 18th November – Thursday 20th November 2008

"Epithelial Tissue Dynamics: From Stem Cells to Cancer"

Michael Karin, USA Firkin Orator • **Fiona Wood**, WA Edwards Orator

ASMR Campion-Ma-Playoust Memorial Award 2008 for best student oral/poster presentation

International Speakers:

Elaine Fuchs, USA • **Margarete Heck**, UK • **Greg Mundy**, USA • **William Nelson**, USA
Bonnie Sloane, USA • **Buddy Ratner**, USA • **Hans-Georg Rammensee**, Germany

National Speakers:

Judith Clements (Queensland University of Technology) • **Allison Cowin** (University of Adelaide) • **Robin Cranston** (CSIRO)
Roger Daly (Garvan Institute) • **Matthias Ernst** (Ludwig Institute) • **Patrick Humbert** (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre)
Dietmar Hutmacher (Queensland University of Technology) • **Pritinder Kaur** (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre)
Mike McGuckin (Mater Medical Research Institute) • **Don Newgreen** (Murdoch Children's Research Institute)
Wayne Phillips (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre) • **Gail Risbridger** (Monash Institute of Medical Research) • **Andrew Scott** (Ludwig Institute)
Zee Upton (Queensland University of Technology) • **Brandon Wainwright** (IMB, University of Queensland)
Fiona Wood (University of Western Australia) • **Alpha Yap** (University of Queensland)

Early Bird Registration/oral presentation abstract submission deadline — Friday 15th August.

Poster Only presentation submission deadline is Friday 19th September.

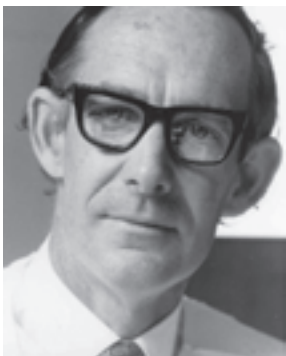
For membership forms and information: www.asmr.org.au Contact ASMR: asmr@alwaysonline.net.au



Alan Skyring,
ASMR's second president.



Rodney Shearman,
ASMR's third president.



Gordon Archer,
ASMR's fourth president.



James McRae,
ASMR's fifth president.

Some reminiscences about the early days of the Australian Society for Medical Research

It was a great honour indeed to be the ASMR Medallist for 2008, and the Medallist's tour, comprising seven capital cities in 8 days, was a real highlight. It gave me an opportunity of meeting old friends and colleagues; of interacting with ever so many keen and talented younger Australian medical researchers; and of reminding the media all over the country of the value and rich promise of Australian health and medical research.

During the Sydney visit, my two "minders" (Mark Hulett and Emma Parkinson-Lawrence) and I called in on the ASMR Headquarters and met with Cath West and her staff. There facing me on the walls of the crowded office were photographs of all the Presidents going back to the formation of ASMR in 1961, bringing back a host of precious memories. Though resident in Melbourne since 1957, I went to school and University in Sydney, graduating MB BS in 1955. All the early Presidents were my "mates" and I regaled the little group with a few stories about them. Mark Hulett was kind enough to suggest that these could be pulled together as a short piece for the ASMR Newsletter.

The first point is that the early focus of ASMR was unashamedly medical and clinical. It is difficult now to recall that during my time at The University of Sydney, clinical research hardly existed in Australia. There were really only two serious Clinical Research Units, one led by Dr (later Sir) Ian Wood at The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, the other by Dr (later Professor) Ruthven Blackburn at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. Blackburn was a towering figure in Sydney medicine. With a razor-sharp mind, a surprising breadth of expertise and undoubted charisma, he far outshone the ageing Professor of Medicine, Charles Lambie, and at times the two were at loggerheads. Blackburn succeeded Lambie in 1957 and not long thereafter his protégé, a young haematologist Barry Firkin, took over as Director of the Clinical Research Unit. Firkin, like the second and fifth Presidents of ASMR, Alan Skyring and Jim McRae, had been heavily influenced by a research stint in the United States. There, the most honoured research society in medicine was the Association of American Physicians, fondly known as the "Old Turks" but they were more impressed by the group comprising younger researchers, the American Federation for Clinical Research, the "Young Turks." A further strong

supporter, Rodney Shearman, was also a Prince Alfred Hospital man, and from this nidus arose ASMR in 1961.

Barry Firkin, the first President, got ASMR off to a flying start. I was off on my own US jaunt at that time, spending 1959–1961 as an Assistant Professor of Genetics at Stanford Medical School in California. Barry was kind enough to contact me there to seek my support which was warmly given. I didn't quite make his first AGM in Sydney in 1961 but well remember the second one in Canberra in 1962. Barry and his wife Ruth were kind enough to welcome me and my wife back to Australia just before Christmas 1961 and the other dinner guests were Bill McBride (who had taught me Obstetrics), the discoverer of thalidomide as the cause of birth defects, and his talented wife Patricia Glover, a general practitioner who had been in my own year. A warm homecoming indeed. Barry later moved to Melbourne as Professor of Medicine at Monash University.

Alan Skyring, a gastroenterologist, had also been one of my seniors at Prince Alfred. He was under the sway of the fabled Sir William Morrow, a patrician figure who was an "Honorary" at Prince Alfred. These senior physicians gave their services freely to teaching hospitals in the mornings and made their income by practising medicine in Macquarie Street in the afternoons. Alan was a vigorous clinical researcher and a fitting second President of ASMR.

"Gus, he was your worst teacher! He told you what to do in every situation, but did he ever ask you to question anything?"

The third President, Professor Rodney Shearman, had a big influence on my life. He was the Professorial Registrar at the Obstetrics and Gynaecology wing of Prince Alfred, known as the King George V Hospital, during the seven months I spent there as a Junior and Senior Resident in 1955 and 1956. He was widely known as one of the most talented people at Prince Alfred and he taught me a lot. One day we were chatting about his "boss," Professor Bruce Mayes, who hailed from Toowoomba in Queensland. As students, we had voted him to be our best teacher, largely because he authored a very clear textbook of obstetrics which, if you followed it, would easily earn

you a high distinction in the exam. Somewhat cheekily Shearman said: "Gus, he was your worst teacher! He told you what to do in every situation, but did he ever ask you to question anything? What is the cause of toxæmia of pregnancy? Why do some women have a disastrous post-partum haemorrhage? What makes the placenta sometimes attach across the cervix (placenta prævia) creating a serious obstetric emergency?" Food for reflection in that view!

In 1973, Shearman took a year's sabbatical leave to work with the World Health Organization in Geneva in a large programme seeking a more diverse series of birth control options suitable for the different cultures of the world. He seriously contemplated leaving his Chair at the University of Sydney to pursue this humanitarian goal. Describing this experience to me, he inspired me to take a sabbatical of a similar nature in 1976 to plan a new programme of tropical disease research for WHO — which, if I may say so, has been one of its most successful programmes.

The fourth President, Gordon Archer, was a breezy individual who worked full-time for the Red Cross Blood Bank in Sydney. He was largely responsible for setting up the fine tradition of research which that body enjoys to this day.

The fifth President, Dr James McRae, is a particularly close friend of mine. He had done his Bachelor of Science (Medical) in the same department as me, one year earlier, in 1951. He was a senior resident at Prince Alfred when I was a junior, and a superb one at that. Some years later we caught up again when he was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley, while I was at Stanford. Jim came back to Sydney to head up nuclear medicine at St George's Hospital, but there he encountered great frustrations. Basically, the funding just was not there for him to build a proper department. Jim and his family went back to Berkeley and stayed there, but he remains a committed Australian who never lost his Aussie accent.

The sixth President, Tony Edwards, was a tireless worker for ASMR and served as a Director from 1962–1966, the last year as President. Just one week after the 1966 AGM, Tony died. The A W T Edwards Oration was instituted in his honour, to be delivered each year at the AGM. It was my privilege to give it in 1977.

The seventh President, Marc Playoust, was another good friend. He had been Dux of my old school, St Aloysius College, in 1949 and performed brilliantly in his medical course as well. Another scion of the Clinical Research Unit at Prince Alfred, Marc served on the General Committee of ASMR for several years before becoming President in 1967. After much soul-searching (during which he was kind enough to consult me) Marc decided to study for the Catholic priesthood as a Jesuit. He completed an accelerated course in 1972 and was being driven to his ordination in Adelaide when he was tragically killed in a car crash.



Sir Gustav Nossal, speaking at the National Press Club, 4 June 2008

What an amazing potential leader of the Australian Catholic Church was thus lost! The annual Champion Ma Playoust Award for the best presentation by a young investigator commemorates his short life.

The eighth President, Paul Nestel, remains the only person to have served for two years, 1968 and 1969. He was also the first non-Sydney President. Paul was a member of Professor Richard Lovell's Department of Medicine at The University of Melbourne. Paul has the distinction of being very early in the stream of discoveries which led to the concepts of "good" cholesterol and "bad" cholesterol. He moved to the Baker Institute and then later to Adelaide as Head of CSIRO's Division of Human Nutrition. In his retirement, he is still very active at the Baker.

This brief survey of leaders in the ASMR's first decade ends with Peter Castaldi, another good friend, a haematologist from Prince Alfred who was President in 1970. Peter held two important professorial positions, first at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne and then at the Westmead Hospital back in Sydney. Universally liked and respected, Peter is still a welcome figure and adviser in the Department of Medicine at Westmead.

Interestingly, the strong advocacy function of ASMR was not apparent in those early years. This vital role began in 1970 with a symposium on the Economics of Medical Research. Over subsequent years, ASMR has become an ever more important voice for medical and health research in Australia, particularly with respect to the Federal Parliament. The hugely successful Medical Research Weeks supervised by the State Committees of ASMR have ensured that the wider public is also involved. ASMR can be justly proud of the part it has played in securing a much better deal for medical and health research in this nation.

Sir Gustav Nossal
Department of Pathology
The University of Melbourne



Tony Edwards,
ASMR's sixth president.



Marc Playoust,
ASMR's seventh president.



Paul Nestel,
ASMR's eighth president.



Peter Castaldi,
ASMR's ninth president.

ASMR Medical Research Week® 2008



University of Queensland researcher, Professor Mark Kendall, was awarded the 2008 Amgen Medical Research medal for his excellence in translational medical research studies. Pictured from left to right are: Sarah Meachem (ASMR President Elect), Brian Cohen and Frances Passuello (both from Amgen), the winner Mark Kendall and his wife, Faith, with son, Luca.



Sir Gustav Nossal with two other former Australians of the Year, Professors Fiona Wood and Fiona Stanley, flanking ASMR President, Mark Hulett.



Dr Morag Young, Victorian MRW Convenor, with the MC for the MRW® dinner, Bernie Hobbs, ABC Science Communicator.



Professor James Whisstock was awarded the 2008 Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research at the ASMR Medical Research Week® dinner by Federal MP Mike Kelly.



A group of the winners from the WA Scientific Symposium

Congratulations to the Prize winners from ASMR MRW® 2008

ACT

ASMR Award for Oral Presentation

(\$500)
Michelle Linterman
(JCSMR, ANU)

ACT Health Award for Oral Presentation

(\$500)
Sarah Bombell
(ANU Medical School)

Young Tall Poppy Award for Oral Presentation

(\$500)
Sonja Kowalczyk
(School of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, ANU)

ACT Medical School Poster Prize

(\$500)
Sean Robison
(ANU Medical School)

Pathtech Poster Prize

(\$500)
Claire Larter
(ANU Medical School)

Biorad Poster Prize

(\$500)
Jade Redfern
(University of Canberra)

University of Canberra Poster Prize

(\$500)
Ivan Poon
(JCSMR, ANU)

Queensland

Senior Researcher Premier's Award

(\$6000)
Kathy Andrews
(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

Runners up

(\$1500 each)
Patricia Valery
(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

Ben Goss

(Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, Queensland University of Technology)

Post Doc Premier's Award

(\$5000)
Trent Woodruff
(University of Queensland)

Runners up

(\$1250 each)
Jenny Ekberg
(Griffith University)
Michael Piper
(Queensland Brain Institute, UQ)

Postgraduate Premier's Award

(\$4000)
Erin Rayment
(Queensland University of Technology)

Runners up

(\$1000 each)
Nadia Whitelaw
(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)
Matthew Dixon
(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

Student Oral Presentation 1st Prize

(\$400)
Melina Georgousakis
(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

2nd Prize

(\$200)
Jane Lattin
(Institute for Molecular Bioscience, UQ)

3rd Prize

(\$100)
Kate Markey
(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

Student Poster Presentation 1st Prize

(\$400)
Yvette Drabsch
(Diamantina Institute)

2nd Prize

(\$200)
Vanessa Oakes
(Diamantina Institute)

3rd Prize

(\$100)
Sherry Wu
(Diamantina Institute)



Steve Vucic accepts his award from Professor Gavin Brown, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney.

NSW

University of Sydney Award for Best Overall Presentation

(\$2000)
Steve Vucic
(POWMRI)

NSW Office of Science and Medical Research Award for Best Postdoctoral Oral Presentation

(\$1000)
Charles de Bock
(University of Newcastle)

ASMR Award for Best Student Oral Presentation

(\$1000)
Carol Au
(The Childrens Hospital at Westmead)

Johnson & Johnson Best Student Poster Presentation

(\$500)
Brian Gloss
(Garvan Institute of Medical Research)

Corbett Life Science Best Poster Presentation

(\$500)
Urzuła Wilczynska-Kalek
(CCIA)

South Australia

Ross Wishart Award

(\$500)
Martin Sale
(University of Adelaide)

Best Oral of the Day

(\$350)
Benjamin Blyth
(Flinders Medical Centre)

Best Poster of the Day

(\$350)
Steven Thompson
(University of Adelaide)

Healthy Ageing Research Cluster Oral Presentation

(\$300)
Ashley Smith
(University of Adelaide)

Healthy Ageing Research Cluster Poster Presentation

(\$150 each)
Melanie Sulda
(Flinders University)
Duminda Kumarasinghe
(Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science)

Best Early Career Oral Presentation

(\$300)
Adeline Lau
(Genetic Medicine, WCH)

Best Early Career Poster Presentation

(\$300)
Beverly Muhlhausler
(University of South Australia)

Best Honours Student Oral Presentation

(\$300)
Irene Zinonos
(Hanson Institute)

Best Honours Student Poster Presentation

(\$300)
Zhi Yi Ong
(Hanson Institute)

Tasmania

Postgraduate Student Award Winner

(\$1000)
Catherine Blizzard
(Menziess Research Institute, University of Tasmania)

Runners up

(\$250 each)
Costan Magnussen
(Menziess Research Institute)
Helen Cameron-Tucker
(Menziess Research Institute)
Cassandra Saunders
(School of Human Life Sciences, University of Tasmania)

Western Australia

Department of Health, Government of Western Australia, Student Prizes

(\$2000 each)
Holly Chinnery
(University of Western Australia)
Anna Barron
(University of Western Australia)

Curtin University and Western Australian Biomedical Research Institute Student Prize

(\$1000)
Steven Broomfield
(University of Western Australia)

University of Western Australia PVC Research Student Prize

(\$1000)
Darren Beales
(Curtin University)

Murdoch University DVC Research Prize Student

(\$500 each)
Ibrahim Fleyfel
(Royal Perth Hospital)
Joshua Lewis
(Murdoch University)

Edith Cowan University DVC Research Student Prize

(\$500 each)
Jay Ebert
(University of Western Australia)

Western Australian Institute for Medical Research Student Prize

(\$1000)
Clare Berry
(University of Western Australia)

Telethon Institute for Child Health Research Student Prize

(\$1000)
Jonathan Williamson
(University of Western Australia)

Lung Institute of Western Australia Student Prize

(\$500 each)
Bree Foley
(University of Western Australia)
Rasha Ruhayel
(University of Western Australia)

UWA School of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Student Prize

(\$500 each)
Maureen Verheggen
(University of Western Australia)
Ambika Singh
(University of Western Australia)

Women's and Infants' Research Foundation Student Prize

(\$1000)
Renita A. Almeida
(University of Western Australia)

Tri-Med Student Prize

(\$1000)
Jasmine Singh
(Western Australian Institute for Medical Research)

Australian Neuromuscular Research Institute Student Prize

(\$500)
Sharyn Pope
(Curtin University of Technology)

OrthoCell Student Prize

(\$500)
Darren Preece
(University of Western Australia)



Acting Director General of Health, Dr Peter Flett, with one of the two WA Department of Health prize winners Holly Chinnery.

Another successful ASMR MRW®

Our thanks to the ASMR Medallist, Sir Gustav Nossal, and to the hard working state committees. This year, the health and medical research message reached 12.5M Australians.



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

Our thanks to the major national sponsors of ASMR Medical Research Week®

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- Dr Mark Hulett** — President
Dr Sarah Meachem — Treasurer and President Elect
Dr Alison Butt — Convenor AH&MRC 2008
Dr Emma Parkinson-Lawrence — Media portfolio

Directors

- Dr Andrew Brown** — Newsletter Editor
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Professor Fabienne Mackay — Business Development
Dr Kristen Nowak — ASMR MRW® 2008 Coordinator
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SA Convenor **Dr Cadence Minge**
Vic Convenor **Dr Morag Young**
Tas Convenor **Dr Tracey Dickson**
WA Co-Convenor **Dr Jason Kirkness**
WA Co-Convenor **Ms Sharyn Pope**

Contact details from www.asmr.org.au/Statebranch.html

Invitation to Members
ASMR Annual General Meeting
November 19th, Brisbane Convention Centre,
12:30pm

ASMR NHMRC Enterprise Bargaining Salary Gap Survey

On 30th April 2008, the ASMR requested its members to complete an online survey containing questions about the monetary gap between their host institution's salary scales and the funding they receive for their or their staff's salaries from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). This survey was initiated in a response to concerns raised by some of our members about the increasing gaps between the actual amount medical researchers get paid as a result of enterprise bargaining at their host institution, and the amounts of NHMRC fellowships or Personnel Salary Packages (PSPs). The survey was kept open for 2 weeks. 170 ASMR members completed the survey and of these, 115 had a current NHMRC research grant, and 89 were current NHMRC research fellows (49% early career fellows, eg training or CDA fellows). A summary of the findings is as follows:

- 95% of respondents had a salary gap for themselves or their staff.
- The average gap was \$19,077 per NHMRC fellowship and \$15,759 per PSP appointment.
- 15% of PSP and 48% of fellowship salary gaps were paid by the host Institute, Hospital or University.
- 21% of respondents used the consumables budget from their grant in order to pay the gap for PSP salaries.
- Alarmingly, some respondents' staff were paid less than a full time equivalent (5%), employed less than the full length of the grant (6%), appointed at a lower level on the academic scale (4%), paid on a general staff scale rather than an academic scale (1%) or a lesser qualified person was employed so that they

could be paid less (5%) in order to manage the gap.

- 79% of participants responded that managing the PSP gaps caused them a large or great deal of concern, whilst 82% found managing the fellowship gaps caused them a moderate, large or great deal of concern.
- 69% of respondents thought that the NHMRC salary structure negatively affected their motivation and performance.
- 72% thought that the NHMRC salary structure negatively affected the quality of their work and 76% thought it negatively affected the quantity of their work.
- 87% of participants felt the current NHMRC salary system was unacceptable.
- 67% of participants said that the salary gaps were a direct reason for them considering leaving their medical research career.
- 89% felt the current salary system affected their medical research career outlook and progression.
- 65% of respondents undertook teaching (including post-graduate student supervision), with 21 hours the mean amount of teaching conducted per month. 73% were not paid for teaching.
- 89% of respondents perform some other type of paid work in addition to their NHMRC-funded role.

The ASMR sincerely thanks members for responding to this survey, allowing us to gather information which will be made available to interested stakeholders.

Kristen Nowak
ASMR Director



MIND THE GAP