



**ASMR MRW<sup>(R)</sup>  
2001**



**Professor Alan  
Bernstein  
ASMR  
Medallist 2001**

**Awards & Prizes**

**A/Prof Phil Hogg  
Federal Health  
Minister's Award  
for Excellence in  
H&MR**

**Dr Levon  
Khachigian,  
AMGEN Medical  
Researcher Award**

**James Beeson  
Vic Premier's  
Award for  
Medical Research**

**Uwe Dressel and  
Delvac Oceandy  
AMP Biomedical  
Research Award  
Winners**

**President's Report**

*Dr Peter O'Loughlin, July 2001*

**Political**

The announcement earlier this year of the Government's Backing Australia's Ability innovation action plan has been backed up, at least partially, in the May budget statement. We are working to compile a fully detailed description of the implementation plan by extracting the appropriations figures from the various portfolios over which the innovation plan is spread. In my search of the 4 year forward projections I have so far identified about 2/3rds of the promised \$2.9b plan. Obviously the 4 year projections will not describe the delivery of the entire 5 year plan. I have written to the ministerial implementation committee for an official summary, which I will circulate.

Over the past month various members of the Executive have joined me in meetings with a number of key politicians to discuss the needs of medical research in Australia. Some of the more important issues that have been raised in these meetings include:

- rapid implementation of any new investments to encourage innovation.
- the need to encourage philanthropy.
- distribution of new project-related infrastructure should target the organisations which incur the research project costs.
- the need for an evidence-based approach to regular review of government spending on medical research. We suggest that the appropriate indicator should be the average per capita government

expenditure on medical research in OECD countries.

Politicians visited: Michael Wooldridge, David Kemp, Jenny Macklin, Senator Kelvin Thomson, Senator Kim Carr, Martyn Evans and Senator Meg Lees. A meeting has been scheduled with Martin Ferguson and others are being sought with Peter Costello, Kim Beazley and Simon Crean.



**ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup>**

ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup>2001 was a great success thanks to the dedication of members of ASMR State branch committees, the direction of Moira Clay and Joe Simonetta, the indispensable administration of Cath West and Lexy Harris in the ASMR head office and to the practical organisation of ASN Pty Ltd. With support from the Department of Health and Aged Care we were able to undertake a truly national event.

The main focus of the week was the national lecture tour of the ASMR Medallist, Professor Alan Bernstein, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. He addressed events attended by politicians, key figures from the corporate sector, journalists and medical researchers and spoke on the "Revolution in Health Research: the 21st century venture". The events included dinners or luncheons in most capital cities the televised National Press Club Luncheon in Canberra and the RICH Forum in Melbourne.

ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> is aimed at promoting the value of medical research to the public. Medical researchers across Australia showcased their work at EXPOs in capital cities in all States and in Canberra. There were public lectures in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne and career information events in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. Forums on the commercialisation of medical research were being held in Melbourne and Perth.

The Society takes considerable pride in its encouragement of young Australian researchers with a number of awards for excellence presented during the week. These included awards supported by the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Premiers in Vic and Tas, AMGEN and AMP. Many other awards were offered for the best presentations at Scientific Meetings held in Adelaide, Sydney, Perth and Brisbane.

#### **NHMRC**

A recent article by Peter Pockley in the Australian of 30th May 2001 criticised NHMRC accrual accounting figures and suggested that they could not be trusted. These claims have been answered by NHMRC in a document published in this edition of the Newsletter.

Research Committee has recently announced the introduction of a new scheme - the Career Development Awards. Available to researchers in all areas of health and medical research, this scheme aims to further develop Australian health and medical researchers early in their career. A part-

time award will be available to allow the recipient to undertake research while continuing in a related health professional position. The scheme was advertised in the Australian on Saturday 16 June and Wednesday 20 June, with a closing date of 23 July 2001. Relevant documents can be obtained either through links at the ASMR website: <http://www.asmr.org.au/news/NHMRC/Index.html> or from the NHMRC website: <http://www.nhmrc.health.gov.au/research/train/career.htm>.

Peter O'Loughlin PhD  
President

## **\$5,000.00**

### **ASMR Research Award 2001**

This Award will support a postgraduate student member nearing completion of their studies or a recently graduated postdoctoral ASMR member to undertake research in laboratories outside their home city. The Award specifically excludes support for conference attendance. Applications close at 5:00pm on Friday September 28, 2001.

Full details from:  
[www.asmr.org.au/resfund/intro.html](http://www.asmr.org.au/resfund/intro.html)

**This message (from ONHMRC) has been prepared to advise members of Council and Research Committee of issues raised by Peter Pockley in the article in the Australian of 30th May, 2001.**

First, it is important to note that the budget papers relating to the NHMRC research grants are fully commensurate with the Government's 1999-2000 decision as a result of the Wills Review to significantly increase funding for medical research over the next 6 years.

Dr. Pockley's concern that "This shows that accrual figures cannot be trusted even by ministers as an approximation of real dollars available" is understandable, but mistaken.

The figures for 2000-1 that related to Medical Research Grants presented in the Additional Budget Estimates (\$365M) included several items as well as funding for NHMRC support. These were:

1. funding for the National Institute of Clinical Studies (\$7M) which is administered by another division,
2. funding previously committed for capital grants to medical research institutes (\$11M)
3. funding for NHMRC grants offered but not yet activated (e.g. waiting for ethics clearances, etc.) (\$34M), and
4. an accounting adjustment to the figure for future liabilities that had been overestimated in 1999/2000 at the time of transition from cash to accrual budgeting (\$62M).

Estimated expense for research support to June 30, 2001 (\$251M) indicates that there is no underspending of the appropriation. This can be compared to actual expenditure of \$183M in 2000 and \$161M in 1999.

The Budget for 2001-2 is reported at \$379M in line with the increased support indicated in the 1999-2000 budget. This value includes ~\$13M for capital grants to medical research institutes. The remaining \$366M is available for NHMRC research support in 2002.

Further information has been prepared by Budget Section of the Department of Health and Aged Care and will be available on request.

# News from the Australian Health Ethics Committee

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## ■ *What is AHEC and what does it do?*

The Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC) is established under the Commonwealth NHMRC Act 1992 as a principal committee of the NHMRC. Its members are appointed by the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Aged Care every three years according to categories of membership laid down in the Act. The Act also provides AHEC with its terms of reference. Those of particular relevance to ASMR members include

- Provision of guidelines to NHMRC on the conduct of medical research involving humans (as represented by the 1999 National Statement on the Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans).
- Provision of advice to NHMRC on ethical issues relating to health.
- Monitoring and advising on the workings of Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs).

Translated into action, these terms of reference give AHEC two distinct areas of work:

- producing guidelines (after wide consultation) on ethical aspects of health and health care research
- Monitoring and supporting HRECs.

## ■ *Ethical review and monitoring of research in Australia*

Research proposals involving human participants must be reviewed and approved by a HREC established by the institution (or organisation) in or for which the research is to be undertaken, according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. In approving the research proposal, the HREC also undertakes to monitor the conduct of the research as one means of protecting the safety of the research participants.

National guidelines and a system of ethical review have existed in Australia since the 1960's. The system has been reviewed and strengthened from time to time to remain responsive to the need to ensure that research involving humans is conducted to high ethical and scientific standards. The most recent detailed review, involving two rounds of extensive public consultation, resulted in the 1999 National Statement, which now guides the conduct and ethical oversight of human research in Australia.

In the every day tensions of seeking research funding, getting proposals "through" HRECs and undertaking the research, it is understandable that some researchers might regard HRECs as obstacles or even adversaries. However, although the primary role of HRECs is to protect the interests of participants, they also serve to

protect the interests of researchers and their institutions by ensuring compliance with relevant ethical standards: a condition of eligibility for continuing NHMRC research funding. AHEC considers the responsibilities of researchers and HRECs to be mutual and is seeking to increase the level of awareness of this mutuality. AHEC plans to look for opportunities for HREC members to interact with researchers, as in the forthcoming series on clinical trials.

## ■ *Clinical trials workshops*

AHEC, in collaboration with the Research Committee of NHMRC and the Therapeutic Goods Administration will conduct a series of half day workshops in all capital cities during June and July 2001. The workshops will serve to bring together researchers and HREC members to discuss a number of issues about the ethical review and conduct of clinical trials. Issues to be discussed will include recent amendments to the Therapeutic Goods regulations, opportunities for simplifying the ethical review of multicentre trials and the monitoring of clinical trials. The dates and locations for these workshops will be widely notified and can be accessed on the NHMRC website (<http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc>)

## ■ *Media coverage of allegations about clinical trials*

ASMR members will have observed recent media coverage of allegations made about the conduct of clinical trials of pharmaceuticals in Australia. The allegations were that

- (1) an ethics committee was not truly independent
- (2) payments to clinicians conducting clinical trials, or recruiting patients for clinical trials, influenced recruitment or were excessive, and,
- (3) some participants were not adequately informed about some trials or were not aware that they had been recruited.

The National Statement specifically addresses these issues. Paragraphs 2.1-2.3 and 2.23 emphasise the independence of HRECs.

Paragraphs 2.21, 12.5 and 12.6 provide HRECs with the authority to require provision of, and where justified, disclose details of funding of pharmaceutical trials. The critical importance of full disclosure of relevant material when obtaining the consent of participants is covered in paragraphs 1.7, 1.12 and 12.2.

Co-operation between researchers and HRECs based on a shared understanding of their mutual responsibilities reflected in the National Statement would help to prevent recurrence of such allegations.



## ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup>, 2001

***ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> 2001 was a huge success and marked a considerable expansion in the Societies public outreach activities.***

**This year events included -**

- **expos in seven cities**
- **public lectures and debates**
- **career days**
- **scientific meetings**
- **community service announcements on Channel 7**
- **radio advertisements**

and six events (including the televised address at the National Press Club) featuring the ASMR Medallist for 2001, Professor Alan Bernstein (Canadian Institutes of Health Research).

The Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Dr Michael Wooldridge presented the ASMR Medal to Professor Alan Bernstein at the National Press Club.



*Our thanks to Alan as an extremely worthy (and entertaining!) recipient of the ASMR Medal with his theme of the revolution in health research. His messages reached far and wide during the week via formal addresses, media stories and informal discussions with key stakeholders in the medical research community.*

The success of ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> 2001 would not be possible without the enormous energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers in our local branch committees.

We also owe an enormous vote of thanks to Cath West and Lexy Harris in the Executive Office; this year was a much greater challenge for them but *they handled this with great professionalism - we are lucky to have them!*

Several of our finest young researchers were honoured with awards for excellence during ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> 2001.

Award winners included Philip Hogg who received the Commonwealth Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research, Levon Khachigian received the AMGEN Medical Researcher Award, James

Dr David Rains  
*(alias Campbell McComas)*  
delighting dinner audiences across the country.



Beeson received the Premier's Award for Medical Research (VIC), Delvac Oceandy and Uwe Dressel received the AMP Biomedical Research Awards.

***Congratulations to all winners including the recipients of New Investigator Awards at Scientific Meetings around the country.***

### Expo Torso

The 'pull apart' torso proved to be a popular attraction at all of the Expos





The week's activities attracted strong media attention featuring newspaper articles and radio interviews in all states.



## Expos

### ASMR Medical Research Week<sup>(R)</sup> Dinner Vic



Dinners in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth were well attended



*Dr Levon Khachigian*



*A/Prof Phil Hogg*

Levon Khachigian, winner of the AMGEN Medical Researcher Award and Phil Hogg the recipient of the Commonwealth Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research.

### Comments from Expo visitors:

- Great to see you bringing 'the science' to the people's level
- Interesting to see a human model to scale. You don't often see this type of thing!
- Well presented, very interesting material with well documented examples and literature
- Helpful. Should be more public displays. Keep up the good work
- A great help for those teaching about scientific research
- The display shows the direct relevance of research to everyday life
- Great to see this type of display in a shopping centre.

A budding researcher checks out the Expo in Western Australia



Public Lectures and Debates  
*Barry Jones in Melbourne*



The Society received strong financial support for this year's activities from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and we thank the Minister for Health, Dr Michael Wooldridge, for his role in securing ongoing support for three years. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our other national sponsors (Medibank Private, AMGEN and AMRAD) and all our state sponsors.

*Dr Moira Clay,  
Director ASMR*

## ■ *Other matters currently under consideration by AHEC*

- Assistance for researchers and HRECs  
(1) AHEC has agreed to convene a national group to undertake the work of producing a national common application form for ethics committees, based on the two prototypes referred to in the last ASMR newsletter.  
(2) The Handbook which has been prepared to assist HRECs in interpreting and applying the National Statement has been completed and is now receiving final professional editing and indexing.
- Guideline development  
AHEC is participating in the NHMRC working group which is preparing national guidelines for xenotransplantation. A draft consultation

document will be available for public comment shortly.

The terms of reference for the joint inquiry into genetic testing being conducted by AHEC and the Australian Law Reform Commission have been announced. Public consultations will take place in the second half of this year.

- Advice development  
AHEC has recognised the need for HRECs to be provided with advice as to how clinical research (requiring ethical review) may be separated from clinical audit and quality assurance studies (not needing such review). A working group involving relevant stakeholders has been established to produce a draft statement of advice.

Dr Kerry Breen

## **Consumer and community participation in health research -**

*information from the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia - Melinda Brady & Helen Hopkins*

The Consumers' Health Forum (CHF) has been funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council to investigate and develop a 'Statement for Consumer and Community Participation in Research'. CHF has sought extensive input from consumers and researchers, and the ASMR has participated actively in this process. The final Statement is shortly to be submitted to the NHMRC for consideration. In this article, Melinda Brady and Helen Hopkins of the Consumers' Health Forum outline some of the thinking that has led to the development of the Statement.

Research is a very powerful tool and those who control research have a great influence over the health care system and a profound effect on the lives of all health consumers and their families. Health consumers believe they have a great deal to offer health and medical research. It is clear to them that those most affected and most intimately acquainted with the issues of health and medical services (i.e. the users themselves) should be involved in its ongoing development. Those who are to benefit (or suffer) from the decisions made by policy makers, health care administrators and researchers should be an integral part of the decision-making process.

Many health consumers see they have the right to participate in health research, not simply as passive subjects or token representatives but as equal partners in the development of research goals, questions, strategies, methodologies, information dissemination and reporting. In this

way, research can better serve the needs of its true constituents, health consumers. And, a community that is more aware of current health research activities is likely to provide greater support for research and researchers.

However consumer participation in the research process brings with it responsibilities for consumers and researchers-the responsibility to be respectful of each other's knowledge and the responsibility to ensure the ethics and value of the research.

It is easy to see how the participation of the users of health services can add to research into how health services are provided. Research into disease cures, treatment and prevention must obviously involve consumers and their families. But there is not always a clear understanding of how consumer participation might benefit scientific discovery. Although this sort of research may involve more scientific expertise in its execution, consumers still have the right to give informed input to strategic priority setting, direction and design.

Consumers believe they have rights to hold power over what is done to them, what is researched, how it is researched and how the research is used. But researchers are concerned that the process of empowering consumers should not result in a disillusioned, disinterested and hence unproductive research community. The balance of power in this partnership is a fine line to walk. Sharing power along the spectrum (either towards researchers or consumers) may vary for different research projects or even different stages of the

# 40th ASMR National Scientific Conference

Marriott Hotel, Gold Coast, Queensland 25th - 27th November 2001

## ***BioInnovation: The Future of Medical Research***

**The Firkin Orator this year is Dr Edison Liu, current Head of the Clinical Sciences Division, National Cancer Inst. USA and recently appointed Executive Director of the Genome Institute of Singapore.**

The Marriott Hotel offers fantastic facilities to all delegates and there are a variety of affordable accommodation packages. Details will be found on our special conference web page: [www.asmr-nsc2001.conf.au](http://www.asmr-nsc2001.conf.au)

### ***Call for Abstracts***

Once again members are encouraged to submit abstracts for inclusion in either symposia, free communication sessions or poster displays. Full instructions will be found on the web page. Poster and oral presenters are eligible for a number of significant prizes and a feature of the 2001 program will be the reports by the inaugural winners of the Medibank Private Student Research Awards, before the presentations to this years Student Research winners. Abstracts should be lodged by September 21, 2001.



*All enquiries, pre-registrations and submissions are best made from [www.asmr-nsc2001.conf.au](http://www.asmr-nsc2001.conf.au)*

Assoc. Professor Lyn Griffiths  
Convenor, ASMR NSC 2001

## **Consumer and community participation in health research (continued)**

same research project to allow research that is meaningful, ethical and sound.

*Researchers are particularly concerned to ensure that the natural curiosity of an individual researcher, which may be a driving force towards outcomes that have never been thought of before, is not discounted. Basing research priorities on work that is likely to result in tangible improvements in health may limit potential medical breakthroughs.*

Researchers need the right to use their own skills and follow their own intuition, while maintaining the rights and role of consumers in this process. The challenge is to work out the ways that all parties together can contribute to identification of research priorities, better research outcomes and ultimately better health outcomes in the community.

*Melinda Brady & Helen Hopkins  
Consumers' Health Forum of Australia*

## **ASMR Election of Directors**

**Two Year Term - Nov 2001 to November 2003 - 6 Vacancies**

Nominees to the Board of Directors must be prepared to accept portfolio responsibilities, attend three board meetings per year and the National Scientific Conference.

Please refer to the enclosed Nomination Form or download from [www.asmr.org.au/about](http://www.asmr.org.au/about)

Being an ASMR Director is a rewarding experience and valuable contribution to HMR in Australia

## **TOXICITY TESTING**

Pharmatox is a well established toxicology laboratory working to international guidelines of the OECD and is a GLP and GMP registered laboratory, specialising in pre-clinical toxicology including pharmacokinetics, toxicokinetics and a wide range of pharmacopoeal tests.

**Pharmatox**

For further information contact:

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## Awards & Prizes - ASMR MRW<sup>(R)</sup> 2001

### National Prize Winners

A/Prof Phil Hogg  
Commonwealth Health  
Minister's Award for  
Excellence in Health and  
Medical Research  
Dr Levon Khachigian  
AMGEN Medical Researcher  
Award

### New South Wales

Mark Corbett - University of  
Sydney Medal for Excellence  
in Medical Research  
Alaina Ammit - Johnson &  
Johnson Research  
Postdoctoral Prize  
Linda Raffaele - Eli Lilly  
Student Prize for Best Oral  
Presentation  
Fernando Santiago - Bio-Rad

### Technical Prize

Celina Seeto - Eli Lilly Student  
Prize for Best Poster  
Presentation

### Queensland

Delvac Oceandy - AMP  
Biomedical Research Award  
(Pre-doctoral)  
Uwe Dressel - AMP Biomedical  
Research Award (Post-  
doctoral)  
Sarah Paget-McNicol - finalist  
AMP Biomedical Research  
Award  
Christine Stewart - finalist AMP  
Biomedical Research Award  
Christopher Dayas - finalist  
AMP Biomedical Research  
Award  
Dale Nyholt - finalist AMP

*Biomedical Research Award*  
Michelle Down - Best Poster  
Presentation, Student  
Conference  
Tina Schroeder - Best Oral  
Presentation, Student  
Conference

### South Australia

Wendy Ingman - Ross  
Wishart Award for  
Excellence (spons. by the  
Dept of Human Services)  
Michele Grimbaldston -  
Ross Wishart Award for  
Excellence (spons. by the  
Dept of Human Services)  
Dani-Louise Bryan - Bio-  
Rad Award for Best Oral  
Presentation  
Lisa De Candia - Bio Rad  
Award for Excellence  
Marie Shaw - Bio Rad  
Award for Best Poster  
Presentation

### Victoria

James Beeson - Premier's  
Award for Medical  
Research

### Western Australia

Student Winners -  
Symposium Presentations  
Melissa Greeve  
Christopher Mann  
Emma Alister  
Louisa MacDonald



SPF Mice and Rats  
SPF Chickens  
SPF Fertile Chicken Eggs  
Custom Breeding  
Importation



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### ASMR Directors 2001

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