



the *Australian Society* for *Medical Research*

Newsletter
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Shadow Health and Science Ministers write for ASMR

By Kim Carr and Julia Gillard

Australia has a real chance of becoming one of the top five medical research and biotechnology countries in the world.

A recent Ernst and Young Report, Evaluation of the National Biotechnology Strategy and Biotechnology Australia report found that "...over the next five years, Australia will either capitalise on its position or be left behind".

But the Howard Government is in the business of allowing critical opportunities for Australian researchers to slip away. Medical research and biotechnology is but one area in which we see this shameful neglect.

Labor believes that medical and other research fuels the long-term social and economic prosperity of the nation.

It nourishes the nation's imagination and creates high-skill, high-wage jobs.

It tackles the nation's big questions and works to solve the nation's big problems.

Australia punches above our weight in medical research and we have some competitive advantages such as our unsurpassed biological diversity, a low cost structure and experience in clinical trials.

We are competitive intellectually and on cost.

A Latham Labor Government will back our best brains, and the ideas and inventions they create.

Improved coordination of effort, and less red tape are two ways of doing this.

The Government spends an estimated \$60 million administering Commonwealth research programs across 40 different bodies. \$23.7 million alone is spent on

administering the research grants process through the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australia Research Council.

Better co-ordination will free up funds for more research.



Julia Gillard

Collaboration between the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments, but also between our universities, medical research institutes and the private sector, are also critical if we are to make the best of our opportunities.

Commercialisation is important, but must not be seen too narrowly. Turning a quick buck is not the only aim. Creating sustainable jobs, better health and a better environment must also flow from commercialisation of Australian ideas and inventions.

Labor believes Australia is well placed to take advantage of the world's medical research and biotechnology revolution - and with better targeted assistance and a greater commitment from government, we won't be left behind.

Senator Kim Carr is the Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research.

Julia Gillard is Shadow Minister for Health.

NHMRC Enabling Grants Announced

Scientists to benefit from National Research Facilities!

The NHMRC has for many years supported on an ad hoc basis, a range of facilities and activities that underpin research. The Enabling Grant Scheme represents a mechanism for pulling these various activities into a competitive, peer reviewed, transparent process and also a mechanism by which support of such facilities and activities can be enhanced.

The first round of the Enabling Grants was directed at supporting facilities and activities that underpin primarily but not exclusively, clinical research. This priority was identified in the previous triennium by the "Chalmers Committee". A second round will be announced shortly which will support clinical trial centres. The nature of subsequent rounds is still the subject of active discussion within the Research Committee of the NHMRC.

In addition to conducting the second round of this scheme, the Enabling Grants Committee will be charged with monitoring the success over their five year tenure, of the eight successful applications from the current round.

Professor Peter Fuller, Chair NHMRC Enabling Grant Committee

Successful projects -

The National Network of brain tissue banks

Neurological and psychiatric diseases are major public health and socio-economic problems throughout the world. The limited availability of high quality tissue is a rate-limiting step for research. The National Network of brain tissue banks allows research groups to assess the availability of categorised, high quality, post mortem tissue via a Web based system in order for them to design projects utilising both conventional and emerging technologies.

*A/Prof Catriona Mclean,
www.nnf.com.au*

The Australian Twin Registry (ATR)

A volunteer registry of over 31,000 twin pairs willing to consider participation in health research. This

national resource was established in the 1980s with NHMRC support because twin studies play a unique, powerful role in research on the impact of genetic and environmental factors on health. The ATR is administered through the University of Melbourne and access to its facilities for twin research is open to all science and medical researchers.

Prof. John Hooper, www.twins.org.au

A national population-based genetic epidemiology, biospecimen and bioinformatics resource

The Western Australian Genetic Epidemiology Resource (WAGER) aims to develop a national resource for genetic epidemiology that will build on the unique WA population health data collected and managed over the last 3 decades. These data are based on linkage within and between the WA statutory collections (all births, deaths, hospitalisations, mental health services contacts, cancer registrations) and additional population disease registers and health surveys.

*Prof. Lyle Palmer,
lyle@cyllene.uwa.edu.au*

The Breast Cancer Biospecimen Resource

A repository of samples of newly diagnosed breast cancers together with accurate prospective clinical data. It will also provide a model to assist future collection of other common Australian cancer specimens including cancers of lung, bowel, prostate and melanoma. The aims are: to establish a collection network for tissue, blood and clinical data from newly diagnosed breast cancer patients; to make materials available to Australian researchers according to agreed priorities; and, to establish and support a research agenda for rapid translation of new methods into clinical practice.

*A/ Prof Christine Clarke,
christine_clarke@wmi.usyd.edu.au*

Australian Prostate Cancer Collaboration (APCC) Bio-Resource

The APCC, with the support of the Commonwealth Bank, Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA) and Andrology Australia, has been developing an Australia-wide network of prostate tissue banks and

Continued Page 6

\$5000

ASMR Research Award 2004

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 their home city. *The Award specifically excludes support for conference attendance and travel for an extended period of postdoctoral studies.*

Further information from:

www.asmr.org.au/resfund/intro.html

Events

The Australian Health and Medical Research Congress 2004

November 21-26 2004

Darling Harbour, Sydney, NSW

www.ahmrcongress.org.au

4th Australasian Hepatitis Conference

National Convention Centre

Canberra, ACT

August 31 - September 2 2004

www.ashm.org.au

16th Annual Conference of the Australasian Society for HIV Med.

National Convention Centre, ACT

September 2 - 4 2004

www.ashm.org.au

ComBio 2004

September 26-30 2004

Perth WA

www.asbmb.org.au/combio2004/

5th International Breast Cancer Conf.

November 10-14, 2004

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre

www.tourhosts.com.au

Hanson Symposium

"Stem Cells: From Biology to Therapy"

November 19-21 2004

www.hansoninstitute.sa.gov.au/symposium.htm

Deciphering the Mammalian Genome-Phenome Code

November 18 - 20 2004

Australian Phenomics Facility and the Australian Academy of Science

www.apf.edu.au

Political Advocacy

In Federal election years there are both challenges and opportunities for organizations such as ASMR.

Our political advocacy is soundly based on the report ASMR commissioned from Access Economics: *"Exceptional Returns: the value of Investing in Health R&D in Australia."*

It is to ASMR's credit that the figures in this document are now both widely known and quoted by politicians and their staff. Despite this the 2004 Federal Budget was a mixed bag for Medical Research. It addressed one of the issues confronting medical research but failed to commit to funding which will build on the previous investment. The funding for institute infrastructure and a one off payment for building and equipment are both laudable and welcome initiatives. However, the Budget did not increase, in real terms, investment in Health and Medical Research. This means that Australian health and medical research will lose the momentum gained through the previous doubling of NHMRC funding and fall further behind other OECD countries.

With analysts predicting a slowing economy from 2005, it is difficult to understand the justification for a decision which does not capitalise on a proven investment (in Health and Medical research) and diminishes Australia's ability to deal with the realities of an ageing population, fewer tax payers and a future health budget blow-out!

Investments, which provide dividends to the health and economic wellbeing of all Australians, are required to deal with the demands of the coming decade.

Failure to increase the investment in health and medical research is particularly unpalatable in a Budget operating at a surplus.



In Perth for program grant announcements, Prof. Alan Pettigrew (left), A/Prof Andrew Sinclair and the Hon. Tony Abbott MP

'Investments which provide dividends for the health and wellbeing of all Australians are required to deal with the demands of the coming decade'

ASMR will continue to seek bipartisan support for the commitment, in the lead-up to the Federal Election, of an additional \$1 billion to Australian health and medical research, phased in over the five years beyond 2004/05.

Investment Review of Health and Medical Research

The report of the Investment Review of Health and Medical Research examined the impact of doubling the NHMRC budget in 1999 and advises on future options. On behalf of ASMR I made extensive submissions to this review committee.

This is clearly a critical review, which is likely to shape the future direction of Australian health and medical research for the next five years.

The report has been completed and was due for release early this year but is still with the government. (See above: opportunities and challenges in an election year!)

We now understand the report will be released by the Prime Minister presumably as a part of the election campaign. This would suggest a potential "good news" announcement in the form of an election promise.

I have made recent submissions to the office of Prime Minister and Cabinet to release this report as soon as possible.

Public Advocacy

ASMR's Medical Research Week^(R) of activities was an extraordinary success story around the country. TV, radio and print coverage was extensive and reached an audience of more than two million people. Our 2004 medallist, Professor Mary Hendrix, was sensational giving lucid inspirational and informative speeches around the country and happily following up with extensive media interviews. She kept up the pace on what is a rapid swing through Australia's major cities.

Other activities during ASMR Medical Research Week^(R) included Medical Research Expos, Careers Days, State Scientific Meetings, high profile public lectures, seminars, hands-on workshops for schools. In particular, our rural outreach programs were a major success and are set to be expanded. I would like to thank everyone involved for making ASMR's major public advocacy event the biggest and best we've seen.



A/Professor Andrew Sinclair,
President, ASMR



ASMR Medical Research Week ^(R) 2004



Professor Mary Hendrix

Professor Mary Hendrix, ASMR Medallist 2004, addressed audiences in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

An eminent scientist and a passionate advocate on behalf of health and medical research, her message on the economic benefits of investing in research and the ethical challenges thrown up by the Human Genome Project attracted wide media attention.



Prof Hendrix presents a Poster of the new NIH buildings to Prof John Shine, Chair NHMRC

The Board of Directors of The Australian Society for Medical Research wish to thank Professor Mary Hendrix, ASMR Medallist 2004, for her enthusiastic and unfailingly good-humoured participation in this gruelling week of appearances and talks.

2004 Victorian Premier's Award

Congratulations



Ben Croker

Walter & Eliza Hall Institute

The award is a joint initiative of the Vic. Dept. of Premier & Cabinet and The Australian Society for Medical Research.

Reaching more of the community through
"The Famous Radio National Quiz"
ASMR recorded two episodes for broadcasting in July.
"Great Discoveries in Medical Research"
and
"The Mysteries of the Human Brain"



Professor Mary Hendrix and Hon Tony Abbott, MP at the Melbourne Dinner

Regional Schools Tours
this year reaching more students and encouraging interest in medical research as a career.



From left, Prof. A. McLean, Dr Jacqui Gad, Dr Patsie Polly, Dr M Lawrence, Prof R Head and Bernie Hobbs at the Sydney Community Lecture

Associate Professor Kim Bennell
Amgen Award Winner 2004



A/Prof Kim Bennell (centre) with Shane Tiernan from Amgen Australia (left) and A/Prof Andrew Sinclair, President of ASMR (right)



Assoc. Prof. Robyn Ward (above) is the first woman to receive the Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research.
Minister Tony Abbott (above) announced the \$50,000 prize winner at the Melbourne Dinner

Sydney's Community Lecture
"Engineered Foods: Will they increase our lifespan?"
broadcast on ABC Radio

ASMR Scientific Meetings in

- Brisbane
- Sydney
- Adelaide
- Perth

ASMR supported scientific meetings in the ACT and Illawarra



Checking out Posters at the NSW Scientific Meeting



ASMR's strategic media and media co-ordination campaign resulted in the medical research message reaching Australians in all states, informing the community and raising the profile of research and researchers.



The ASMR Booth at the SA Expo in Rundle Mall, Adelaide



Jessica Harris is awarded the University of Sydney Medal by Professor Nick Hunt at the NSW Scientific Meeting



Participants enjoying 'speed networking' at the Communication Skills Workshop in Melbourne

The Board of Directors of The Australian Society for Medical Research, extend congratulations and thanks to the tireless state committees for their efforts and achievements in bringing these events to the health and medical research community, to stakeholders and to the general public.

We thank our major National Sponsors, the Department of Health and Ageing, NHMRC and all other national and state sponsors.

Over 800 research scientists attended scientific meetings and workshops throughout the nation.

Popular Vic Schools Quiz

Year 10-12:

1st : **Laura Sorensen**, Wodonga West College

Year 7-9: 1st Prize shared by three contestants

Thomas James Woodroffe, Daylesford Secondary College

Lachlan Howard, Gippsland Grammar

Lucy Lobodin, Mentone Girls Grammar

Runner up: **Gabriellas Gianni**, St Columba's College



From left, Dr Bronwyn Kingwell (ASMR President-elect), Rebecca James (Adviser to Hon Tony Abbott), Dr Moira Clay (Immediate Past President, ASMR)

Awards and Prizes

National Prize Winners

A/Professor Robyn Ward

Commonwealth Health Minister's Award

A/Professor Kim Bennell

Amgen Medical Researcher Award

ACT

Karl Brown

ASMR Student Poster Prize

New South Wales

Jessica Harris

University of Sydney Medal

Darren Saunders

Ministry for Science & Medical Research

Postdoctoral Prize

Marcelo Sergio, *ASMR Technical Prize*

Andrew Buckle, *Eli-Lilly Student Prize*

Biljana Ilkovski and Mai-Anh Nguyen

Roche Applied Science Student Prize

Justin Yerbury

ASMR Young Investigator Award

Queensland

Jai Kumar Duraiswamy

Wendy Ingram

Jun Li

Qld. Premier's Postgrad. Student Awards

Yin Xiao

Chris Schmidt

Paul Dawson

Qld. Premier's Senior Post-doc. Awards

Alistair Forrest, *Best Poster Prize*

Julie McAuley

Best Poster Prize runner-up

Edward Morris, *Best Oral Presentation*

Liam St Pierre

Best Oral Presentation runner-up

Meagan Walsh

Scientific Communication Award (Quantum Scientific)

South Australia

Brooke Summers, *Ross Wishart Award*

Mark Geier *Ross Wishart Awd. runner-up*

Sarah Williams

BioRad Young Investigator Poster Prize

Julia Kuliwaba and Kate Dredge (tied)

BioRad Young Investigator Oral Prize

Western Australia

Simone Leaver

Professor Barry Marshall Prize

Amanda Johnstone

Uni. of WA, Pro Vice Chancellor Rsh. Innov. & Training Prize

Tony Phan

WA Department of Health Prize

Ben Dwyer

Uni. of WA Schl. of Surgery & Path. Prize

Rebecca Traub

Murdoch University Prize

Kirk Yip, *Verigen Australia Prize*



“The 2nd Australian Health and Medical Research Congress will provide an outstanding quality program that will promote opportunities to establish new collaborative projects and research relationships”.

Maria Kavallaris

Plenary Speakers:

Claude Bouchard (USA, Genetic basis for health and human performance)

Judah Folkman (USA, Angiogenesis)

Matthias Mann (Denmark, Proteomics and genomics)

Jeffrey Robbins (USA, Animal models of disease)

Roger Davis (USA, Signal transduction)

- *An additional 30 invited international speakers will be presenting.*
- *28 research societies - daily keynote plenary by distinguished speakers*
- *Free communications and poster sessions*

**21-26th November, 2004
Darling Harbour, Sydney**

ON-LINE REGISTRATIONS

Online abstract submission deadline:
9th August, 2004

www.ahmrcongress.org.au

Maria Kavallaris, Convenor,
m.kavallaris@unsw.edu.au

**Levon Khachigian, Scientific Program
Convenor**

l.khachigian@unsw.edu.au

ASN Events, Secretariat,
03 5983 2400,

congress@asnevents.net.au

NHMRC Enabling Grants Announced (cont)

associated clinical databases for the past three years. The NHMRC Enabling grant will provide crucial additional support for the next five years to further develop this network into a national core facility

Prof. Judith Clements,

www.apccbioresource.org.au

Australasian Biospecimen Network (ABN) - Oncology

The availability of ethically consented, clinically annotated human cancer tissue is a key determinant of the international competitiveness of Australian biomedical researchers. ABN-Oncology, partly funded by a NHMRC Enabling Grant, will provide a structured national network to collect, process and disseminate tumour tissue; strategically target specific tumour types such as mesothelioma and rare paediatric tumours that can only be collected in substantial numbers through the formation of such a network and provide infrastructure that can be contracted by clinical and translational researchers.

Lisa Devereux.

Lisa.Devereux@petermac.org

Australian Phenome Bank

will establish a frozen sperm bank, database, and training program to enable access by the research community to new strains of genetically modified mice. Efficient access to diverse strains, provided by the APB, will be critical for translating the human genome sequence into an understanding of specific mechanisms regulating all the body organ systems in health and disease and for developing new disease prevention and treatment approaches.

Prof Chris Goodnow,

www.apf.edu.au

Cell Bank Australia

Cell Bank Australia will be a cell culture facility that operates at the level of an international cell culture repository. It will acquire cell lines developed by Australian researchers, ensure that they are of the highest quality, and cryopreserve and distribute them at moderate cost on request to researchers from within Australia and overseas. It will also acquire cryopreserved stocks of commonly used cell lines from overseas repositories that will be

available to Australian researchers at moderate cost and within a few days of request. The facility will provide infrastructure for high quality cell culture projects, which underpin most areas of contemporary biomedical research.

Dr. Roger Reddell,

reddel@cmri.usyd.edu.au

**The 43rd ASMR
National Scientific
Conference**

This year a component of the ASMR initiated
**Australian Health and Medical
Research Congress**
Darling Harbour
November 21 - 26

Student Travel Grants for ASMR
Members

www.ahmrcongress.org.au

ASMR National Scientific Conference

The ASMR National Scientific Conference (NSC) is undergoing some exciting changes beginning in 2005. The board recently reviewed the structure of our NSC as a result of the success of the Congress and our commitment to conduct one every alternate year. The goal of the Congress is to bring together a large number of scientists from a broad range of disciplines in order to promote cross-pollination of ideas and unique collaborations. While the Congress is successfully achieving these goals, there is also considerable merit in smaller focussed meetings. It is important that ASMR achieve a balance in the style of meeting offered to members. It is for this reason that the NSC in the 'in-between' Congress years is a smaller, high calibre meeting which complements the Congress. To achieve this goal, the board believe that the NSC requires a more themed focus than in previous years.

There are sound precedents for the success of focussed meetings including the US based Gordon conferences and Keystone meetings. These conferences typically attract high calibre speakers and expert delegates, while also being of broad appeal to those working in related fields. The scientific exchange at such meetings is normally more robust than at more general meetings. This is a key element to a successful meeting and an important pre-requisite for training students in communication of their work.

Location is another key element to the success of a meeting. While major cities are often viewed as more convenient and accessible, there are many distractions which may draw delegates away from the meeting. Smaller more exotic locations can be less convenient with respect to travel but may work as an enticement to increase registration. Such venues are also conducive to focus and ensuring delegates remain at the meeting. Participation in social activities is usually higher at exotic locations and may be as important in promoting scientific exchange and collaboration as formal sessions.

While a more focussed meeting may to some extent be of less relevance to some members in a given year, we aim to rotate the theme across topics which encompass the spectrum of scientific interests of ASMR members. The advantage of the proposed change is that a broader cross-section of the Australian scientific community will be exposed to ASMR, our ideals and activities.

The board aim to use the NSC as a mechanism to promote our activities and grow our membership base.

Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, President-Elect

ASMR NSC 2005 Hormones, Fertility and Cancer

The 2005 NSC will be held at Couran Cove Resort, QLD, from November 21st-24th.

This unique island resort is a particularly beautiful and isolated venue, which will maximise networking opportunities and interaction between participants not only during scientific sessions but also through social activities including cruises, bushwalking and rock climbing. The meeting will be modelled on the Gordon style of scientific conference pioneered in the USA. There will be a focus on high quality science, discussion and registrant participation, while preserving ASMR's commitment to development of early-career scientists.

The convenor and deputy Convenor of the conference are Dr Lisa Butler from the University of Adelaide/Hanson Inst. and Dr Moira O'Bryan from Monash Uni. Inst. of Reproduction & Development.

The scientific programme of the conference will be developed by a national committee of researchers, all of whom have extensive expertise in fertility or cancer, under the direction of Dr Kate Loveland and A/Prof Chris Ormandy.

Program Grants

The results of this year's Program Grant round were announced by the Health Minister in Perth on July 5. Twenty teams shared in the \$115 million awarded over 5 years with grants ranging from \$4.6 m to \$8.7 m.

Details of successful programs can be found at www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/safcsyn.htm. They cover most areas of medical research including grants with a primary focus in public health, clinical medicine and/or basic biomedical science. Several also address National Research Priorities. The NHMRC priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research is also addressed. The breakdown by State was Vic (9), NSW (5), Qld (3) and one each to SA, WA and NT.

A major consultation process is underway to obtain feedback from the research community about some perceived limitations in the current Program Grant scheme. Feedback is sought specifically on some of the evaluation criteria including 'CI averaging'; the roles of chief, principal and overseas investigators; processes for dealing with entry to and exit from Program Grants; and the degree of access of Program team members to Project Grants. An additional major issue for consideration is the possibility of introducing a 'Single Investigator Program-Style Grant' for high-performing researchers whose style of research does not conform to the current team model. Any other general comments about the Program scheme are very welcome.

The consultations in major cities will consist of public presentations of the major issues followed by an opportunity for discussion as well as formal documents and questionnaires available at www.nhmrc.gov.au/research/revfell.htm. This is a real opportunity for the research community to contribute to Program Grants policy and the NHMRC hopes that innovative solutions to the limitations described above will be put forward.

Prof. Nic Nicola, NHMRC

Affiliate Members of ASMR

A & NZ Soc for Cell & Dev. Bio. Inc
Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
A S S Hypertension in Pregnancy
Aust. College for Emergency Medicine
ANZ College of Anaesthetists
A'asia Faculty of Occupational Med.
A'asian Soc of Clin.Immun & Allergy
A'asian Society for Blood Trans.
A'asian Gene Therapy Soc Inc
A'asian Society for HIV Med Inc
A'asian Society for Infec. Diseases
A'asian Society for Psychiatric Rsh
Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes
ANZ Bone & Mineral Society
Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists
Aust & N Z Society of Nephrology
Aust Atherosclerosis Society
Aust Physiol. & Pharmacol. Society
Aust Soc for the Study of Obesity
Australasian Menopause Society
Australasian Society for Immunology
Australian Assoc of Neurologists
Australian Diabetes Society
Australian Neuroscience Society Inc
Australian Rheumatology Association
Australian Society for Parasitology
Australian Vascular Biology Soc
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Clinical Oncological Society of Aus
Endocrine Society of Australia
Fertility Society of Australia
Haematology Society of A&NZ
High Blood Pressure Rsh Cncl of Aus
Human Genetics Society of A'asia
National Association of Research Fellows
Paediatric Research Society of ANZ
Perinatal Society of ANZ
Soc for Free Radical Res (A'asia)
Royal Australasian College of Physicians
RCof Pathologists of Australasia
RANZ College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
The Society for Reproductive Biolog.
The Aust. Med. Students Ass. Ltd.
Thoracic Society of A & N Z
Transplantation Society of ANZ
Vic Pble Hlth Rsrch & Educ Council
Western Aust Biomedical Res Inst

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Election of Directors

Call for Nominations

There are five director positions available this year (November 2004 to November 2006).

You must be prepared to accept portfolio responsibilities and attend three board meetings a year in March, September and at the NSC in November.

Nominations close September 3rd.

Forms are available at
www.asmr.org.au/news/



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ASMR Directors 2004

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Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, Pres. Elect/Hon. Sec.

Dr Rohan Baker, Hon. Treasurer

A/Prof Levon Khachigian, Business Dev.

Dr Alaina Ammit

Dr Lisa Butler

Dr Maria Kavallaris

A/Prof Mike McGuckin

Dr Moira O'Bryan

Dr Jacqueline Phillips

A/Prof Christopher Semsarian

Setting up your own lab?

Here's an article not to be missed

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/reprint/304/5678/1717.pdf>