

President's Report

In the current financial climate, the maintenance of NHMRC funding in May's Federal budget was good news for our sector. Of course, this is taking a 'glass half full' perspective as, with an increase of just under 2%, this still equates with a decline in available funds for research when inflation is taken into account. However, in the current financial climate and with many other sectors facing cuts in this Budget, I think we can be pleased that our case to Government has been recognised and acknowledged.

This recognition is timely as the Government moves into the implementation phase of its health reform agenda — now facing the difficult task of implementing an effective, self-improving healthcare system robust enough to deal with the unprecedented challenges of an increasingly ageing population, the escalating burden of chronic, lifestyle-related diseases and a disproportionate disease incidence among our indigenous population. Addressing these future healthcare needs will not be easy — it will require a broad and encompassing long-term vision and a focus on utilising the nation's resources, particularly our human capital, more effectively while exploring novel approaches to alleviate the burdens on the current system. ASMR has used this recent focus on health reform to emphasise to both state and federal government that the efficient and effective delivery of healthcare is critically underpinned by a vibrant and productive health and medical research (HMR) sector.

And just how vibrant and productive our sector is was spectacularly showcased during this year's ASMR Medical Research Week® in June. Health and medical researchers around the country engaged in a whole range of activities — scientific meetings, public lectures, high school careers and rural outreach events, to celebrate and communicate the very best of Australian HMR, and to highlight the critical importance of the sector to our state and federal politicians. This year's ASMR Medallist Tour was indeed a tour de force with Baroness Susan Greenfield, Professor of Synaptic Pharmacology at Lincoln College, Oxford at the helm. The Baroness spoke passionately about her research — *The Future of the Ageing Brain*,



ASMR Medallist Baroness Susan Greenfield and ASMR President Dr Alison Butt

and her views on science policy, including the need to attract and retain women in scientific careers, the need for sustainable funding to allow innovation to flourish and the importance of encouraging scientific discourse in all areas of society, both now and for future generations. She spoke to over 1500 researchers, politicians and dignitaries in all state capitals and the ACT, and also strongly advocated on behalf of the HMR sector in an exhausting round of media interviews, including appearances on Channel 7's *Sunrise*, ABC's *7.30 Report*, and the National Press Club address which was televised on ABC.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the ASMR State Convenors and their hard working committees, Roger Yazbek (SA), Tina Skinner-Adams (QLD), Mary Kavurma (NSW), Michelle Gahan (ACT), Ayan Dasvarma (VIC), Shelley Gorman (WA) and Tracey Dickson (Tasmania), as well as Naomi Rogers (ASMR Medical Research Week® Convenor), Kristen Nowak (Media Liaison), Cath West and Priscilla Diment (ASMR Executive Office) and Maree Overall and Claire Ciantar (ASN Events).

With the close of a hugely successful ASMR Medical Research Week®, ASMR's focus now shifts to another highlight of the HMR calendar, the 5th Australian Health & Medical Research Congress (AHMRC) from 14–18 November, 2010 at the Melbourne Convention Centre. The AHMRC is the largest meeting of its kind in Australasia providing an outstanding multi-disciplinary scientific program bringing together 24 societies and organisations across a wide range of health and medical research disciplines, from basic science through to translational research and a stellar line up of international Plenary speakers.

Tips on Succeeding in Science! from Professor David Sinclair (page 2)



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More details on the 5th AHMRC and the ASMR National Scientific Conference *Infection and Disease*, can be found elsewhere in this edition and on the congress website (<http://www.ahmrccongress.org.au>). We hope to see you there!

As part of ASMR's continued commitment to fostering the career development of the HMR workforce, we will be holding another of our highly successful national professional development workshops in conjunction with the 5th AHMRC. This year's event will be focused on *Fellowships and Mentoring — Steps to Success*. It promises to be another sell-out event and special

deals will be available for those ASMR members wishing to combine attendance at both the workshop and the Congress, so I would encourage you to keep an eye on the ASMR website (<http://www.asmr.org.au/>) for more details in due course.

It was really great to meet so many enthusiastic ASMR members — particularly students, during ASMR Medical Research Week® and I hope to see many more of you during the other exciting events we have planned for the rest of the year.

Alison J. Butt
President, ASMR

Succeeding in Science: **For Dummies**



Professor David Sinclair
and his family

The life of a scientist in training is very stressful. Mainly it is the fear of the unknown: What is in my future? Do I have what it takes to get a job in academia or industry and be successful at it? What choices do I have and will I make the right decisions? As a 40-year old professor at Harvard who graduated 15 years ago from the University of NSW, I am still young enough to remember how this feels, but old enough to know a bit about what works and what doesn't.

The fear and frustration that a young scientist feels is justifiable.

Even before we decide to become scientists, we are aware of the slim odds of making it to the top, and of persistent funding difficulties even if you make it there.

During our education we receive little or no formal training in running a lab, building a functional team, hiring people, firing people, reviewing papers, writing grants, monitoring spending, and balancing budgets. We do know that if we succeed, we will have to deal with other issues, including the politics of science. (The anonymity of peer review brings out the worst in some people). But we have little concept of what that entails because we are shielded from it. There is also the simple fact that you must compete with some of the brightest, driven, and arrogant people from around the world. Today, a young scientist learns these things by osmosis, gleaning what they can by observing and from hearsay. Some scientists are lucky enough to find mentors who explain the rules and give guidance — but most are simply thrown into the deep end, hoping that a few will swim. It has been that way for centuries.

Everyone's experience and opportunities are different but I believe there is a set of general rules, or nuggets of wisdom, that can help a young scientist make the most of their potential and opportunities that arise.

Merck Young Achiever Award 2010 For Medical Research



The ASMR, in partnership with Merck Pty Ltd, invite early career medical researchers with 2–10 years post-doctoral experience to apply for an award that recognises outstanding translational medical research. The Merck Young Achiever will have made significant contributions to the field of medical research, particularly through discoveries made during the past two years. The research findings will have been (or will have potential to be) translated into clinical practice.

The winner of the Award will receive a plaque and cash prize of AUD\$6,000 for travel, accommodation expenses and registration at an international meeting of their choice.

For full eligibility criteria and the application form please visit <http://www.asmr.org.au/Awards.html>

**Applications should be submitted to Dr Rachel Burt (burt@wehi.edu.au)
by 5:00 p.m. Friday 8th October 2010.**

In this short article are the most important lessons I have learned over the past 15 years through trial and many errors:

1. No profession is easy or stress-free.

Don't expect that changing careers or being a big success will lead to happiness. The key to happiness is to do something you think is worthwhile.

2. Being a scientist has many ups and downs.

Yet, besides parenting, I don't know of a more satisfying job. Industry and academic jobs can be just as rewarding — but they are very different. Academia is the Wild West — it is exciting, money is extremely tight, and it can also be lonely: the "winner-takes-all" set up in authorship makes it hard for academics to work as a team. Industry jobs are rewarding especially if you respect what the company does and you prefer working in a team.

3. Life at the top doesn't get easier or more relaxing.

I spent the first 10 years of my career with butterflies in my stomach every day, expecting that one more paper would get me over some invisible line where I could relax. Of course, even before the paper was published I was worried about the next one, or about money running out, or what my opponents were writing about my research, or that an experiment didn't work that day. Accepting that life is always challenging and stressful — no matter what you do or how old you are — is the key to enjoying life. Being bored with no purpose is even more stressful. Trust in your judgment and have a thick skin. There will always be someone to criticize you, and the higher up you go the worse it gets.

4. Getting a postdoc position in a recognized lab is one of the most important steps towards a successful academic career.

The name recognition of your supervisor counts for more than most people might think. What you study as a graduate student is less important than as a postdoc. Apply for many fellowships. Being able to bring your own money to a lab opens doors. Be prepared to go overseas. A city like Boston is the equivalent of Athens in ancient Greece. The experience will be invaluable for the rest of your career — no matter what you do.

5. Hire great people.

People are the key to success. Surround yourself with optimistic, smart, hard-working people. One negative person can bring an entire group down. It is almost impossible to change a person. If you figure out how to hire great people every time, let me know.

6. The optimal size of a research group is 4–15.

Fewer, and there isn't a critical mass for collaboration and scientific discussion. More, and the group doesn't function as a team. Your job in running a lab, besides bringing in money and setting the direction, is to be the glue that holds the team together and forces people to share ideas and reagents. Accept that we humans

are inherently selfish: without attention and strong leadership, a large lab will rapidly descend into anarchy.

7. You must work long hours and hard at it.

I don't know of a worthwhile job that doesn't require you to work hard, but science is especially demanding. I have worked at least a few hours every weekend for the past 20 years. If you want a 9 to 5 job, running a lab is not for you. Enjoy your time off.

8. The best part about being an academic is the freedom.

I am typing this from my home office because I decided to stay at home today. If I want to go to London next week, I can. I have no boss checking up on me. There are few jobs with this much freedom. Enjoy the cities you visit.

9. People cost more than equipment. Animals cost as much as people.

10. You may have to make sacrifices.

My girlfriend and I were on different continents for two and a half years. I see my best friends, my brother, and my parents once a year. Doing work that has a lasting impact is the main reason I continue.

11. Try to find a partner who is tolerant and give them support too.

Tell them how lucky you are to have them. When you are starting your career, you may have to work long and unpredictable hours, and when you become known for your work you will travel a lot. Earn the total trust of your partner and avoid divorce at all costs.

12. As a team leader — act like one.

Give your group encouragement. If you are having a bad day, don't show it. Praise in public, reprimand in private. Respect confidentiality. Never lie.

13. Give out reagents and advice freely.

Slowing down research by hoarding reagents or making people sign lengthy agreements brings resentment from your peers. We make transgenic mice and give them out as freely as plasmids with no agreements required.

14. Stay humble.

Always be generous with attributing credit to those in your lab and in the field. Show respect and be kind to people at every level.

15. Take risks.

Realise that life is shorter than you think. Ten years go by in a blink and you only get one go around. Be grateful you live in a country that gives you choices, and try to make the right ones. Don't worry about making the wrong ones. I've made plenty of them.

David A. Sinclair, Ph.D.
Professor, Harvard Medical School,
Boston, MA, USA

Call for proposals — 2012 National Scientific Conference Theme

ASMR members are invited to submit suggestions for a potential theme for the 2012 ASMR National Scientific Conference (NSC). Please e-mail suggestions to asmr@alwaysonline.net.au with "Suggestion - NSC" in the email subject.



Her Excellency
Ms Quentin Bryce, AC

Commentary — Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Ever since I was a girl, I have marvelled at science, though I've never been brave enough to attempt its scholarship. I am in awe of scientists' discipline and curiosity, sustained in equal and brimming parts across long and demanding careers. I am amazed, time and again, by the coming together of conventional and unprecedented thinking. I love most to hear scientists talk about their work; they do so with such purpose and clarity, passion and humility.

In my role I am enormously privileged to meet and learn from Australian scientists working at the frontier of their disciplines, levering open the unknown, and directing the known to the challenges of our planet.

I am also aware of my responsibility to shine light on their efforts, and, wherever I can, to engage the attention and support of the Australian community. I am always mindful that medical research is an important part of our collective scientific endeavour. Due to the very successful public campaigns run by health and disease groups (and I am proud to be the patron of many of them), Australians are becoming increasingly aware of the genetic and environmental risks affecting our wellbeing and long term health. We are learning about how to take better care of ourselves, particularly our ageing, and we want to know how medical science can help us.

The expertise, commitment and funding needed to drive medical research projects from inception to successful completion are beyond measure. Motivated by a deep understanding of human suffering and a willingness to share knowledge and explore every possibility, scientists provide wise

leadership in the often vexed passage towards ground-breaking solutions.

Discoveries travel from the laboratory to the clinic — and from the clinic to the laboratory — contributing to a lengthy and complex process in health research and care from early detection, to diagnosis, to prevention, to treatment.

As we look after our own health, we need to ensure that we also look after our medical scientists. This means supporting them in their education, training and ongoing professional development, as well as encouraging partnerships between emerging and experienced clinicians and researchers. Most important of all, we must hold onto them. We also need to address the pathways that are open for women to participate fully, and ensure that we utilise the diverse skills and approaches that both genders bring to medical research. Young people should be inspired to look into microscopes, ask endless questions about human life, and absorb our remarkable fund of medical scientific knowledge. We can do this by continually working together — across the government, private and philanthropic sectors — to ensure that we secure the future of medical research in Australia.

The to-do list is ample, but so are the achievements. We have strong foundations and structures, extraordinarily talented people, and vast untapped potential. I am grateful and excited to be part of Australia's movement in medical science.

**Ms Quentin Bryce, AC
Governor-General of
the Commonwealth of Australia**

■ Looking for a career development mentor?

**Are you a mid-career
researcher without
a career mentor?**

The ASMR invites members who are 5–12 years postdoctoral to participate in the ASMR Mentoring Program. Applications are accepted all year round and the program is free to ASMR members.

For additional information and application forms please visit

www.asmr.org.au/mentor.html

**Dr Juliet Taylor and
Dr Roger Yazbek,
Professional
Development
Convenors**

Announcement:

ASMR Professional Development Day

Monday 15th November, 2010, 10am – 5pm (followed by a mixer from 5–6pm)

**Australian Health and Medical Research Congress
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre**

**Further information will be released on the congress web site over the coming weeks:
www.ahmrcongress.org.au**

ASMR Medical Research Week®

ASMR Medical Research Week® 2010 was a marvellous occasion. Celebrated across the country from 4th to 11th June 2010, the week focused the attention of the nation on the work and achievements of Australia's health and medical researchers.

Outreach events such as Trivia nights, Science in the Cinema evenings, the Schools Quiz, and the NSW High School Career Day, helped to promote health and medical research to the general public. ASMR MRW® and the Medallist Tour received bountiful media coverage this year, including radio broadcasts on 3RRR, and television appearances by Baroness Susan Greenfield on Channel 7's *Sunrise* program and the ABC's *7.30 Report*, bringing ASMR and ASMR MRW® to the living rooms of millions of Australians.

A primary goal of ASMR MRW® is to celebrate and acknowledge the breadth of talent amongst the researchers of Australia. The Young Investigator forums, Student Conferences and Scientific Symposia held in many of our capital cities, showcased Australia's medical research and provided fabulous networking opportunities for our scientists. Many awards were presented to worthy young investigators during the Week. As the Baroness noted at the gala dinner in Melbourne, it was particularly thrilling to see so many young women being acknowledged for achievements in health and medical research. Congratulations to all those recognised for excellence in Medical Research this year.

For many, the highlight of ASMR MRW® is the opportunity to attend one of the Gala Dinners held around the country. A chance to swap the lab coat for



Baroness Susan Greenfield is presented with the ASMR Medal 2010 by Professor Warwick Anderson, CEO NHMRC at the National Press Club in Canberra

a bit of glitz saw hundreds of researchers and friends of ASMR wine and dine at glamorous venues such as Sydney's Doltone House, the Melbourne Hilton on the Park, Hobart's Cascades Brewery and the Adelaide Pavilion. The Baroness was captivating in her addresses, alerting us to the importance of research in the area of mental health, and asserting that without radical improvements in this area of medicine, the costs associated with disease will rapidly become unmanageable. Her sentiments echo the ASMR philosophy that medical research is "saving lives and saving money".

Although ASMR MRW® has drawn to a close the State Committees still have many plans for further public outreach activities that will take place over the coming months. Notably, there will be Regional School Tours in Victoria, ASMR participation in Science Alive in South Australia and at the Karratha Science and Technology Fair in Western Australia (to mention but a few!). We encourage you to keep an eye on the ASMR website for further details of these and other events. Thank you to all the state committee members for their dedication and hard work in planning and running ASMR scientific and community events throughout the year.

Naomi Rogers and Rachel Burt, Co-Convenors, ASMR Medical Research Week® 2010

National sponsors of
ASMR MRW® 2010



The Australian Government
Department of Health and
Ageing (DOHA)



Associate Professor Josephine Forbes (Baker IDI) receiving the 2010 Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research from the Honourable Mark Butler MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health

The ASMR Research Awards

Each award (**\$5000 international or \$2000 domestic**) will support a postgraduate student member of the Society 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. Applicants for "The ASMR Research Awards" 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 have conducted no more than 3 years active research post their highest degree (career interruptions will be considered). The Award must be taken up during the first 6 months of the following year.

Applications close 30th September 2010.

Application forms are available from <http://www.asmr.org.au/Researchfund.html>

Congratulations to the Prize Winners from ASMR MRW® 2010

Across Australia numerous prizes for research excellence were awarded as part of ASMR MRW® 2010.

Congratulations to all the winners, some of whom are listed below:

ACT

ASMR Oral Presentation Award

Charis Teh

(The John Curtin School of Medical Research)

ASMR Poster Presentation Award

Fan Wu

(The John Curtin School of Medical Research)

Viewer's Choice Poster Presentation Award

Mitali Fadia

(Canberra Hospital)

Tasmania

Postgraduate Student Award

Dawn Dore

(Menzies Research Institute)

South Australia

Ross Wishart Memorial Award

Natasha Rogers

(Royal Adelaide Hospital and The University of Adelaide)

Healthy Ageing Award (Oral), sponsored by Healthy Ageing Research Cluster

Michelle McDonnell

(University of South Australia)

Most Outstanding Oral

Lisa Akison

(University of Adelaide)

Early Career Research Award (Oral), sponsored by Flinders University

Denise Furness

(University of Adelaide)

Honours Research Award (Oral)

Jean Winter

(Flinders University of South Australia)

Victoria

Victorian Premier's Award for Health and Medical Research

Winner:

Julia Archbold

(Monash University)

Commendations:

Dr Mark McKenzie

(Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research and St Vincent's Institute for Medical Research)

Dr Radwa Badawy

(Florey Neurosciences Institute and Austin Health)

Dr Benjamin Howden

(Austin Health and The University of Melbourne)



Queensland Health and Medical Research post-doctoral prize winner Kate Schroder with Professor Robin Mortimer (OHMR)

Queensland

Queensland Health and Medical Research Awards

Clinical Researcher Category

Maher Gandhi

(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

Senior Researcher Category

Richard Clark

(University of Queensland)

Post-Doctoral Researcher Category

Kate Schroder

(University of Queensland)

Post-graduate Student Category

Kimberley Jones

(Queensland Institute of Medical Research)

Conferences

XI International Congress in Reproductive Immunology
August 15–19, 2010
Novotel Palm Cove Resort, Cairns

Further information:
www.icri2010.org

ISEH Society for Haematology & Stem Cells

September 15–18 2010
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

Further information:
<http://iseh.org>

Bootes Course on Translational Medicine

August 17–20 2010

Further information:
<http://jcsmr.anu.edu.au/conferences/bootes/index.php>



ASMR MRW® Victorian Student Research Symposium award winners

New South Wales

NSW Industry and Investment Award for Excellence in Medical Research

Dr Joanne Tan

(Heart Research Institute)

Dr Mai Tran

(Centenary Institute)

University of Sydney Medal for Best Overall Presentation

Jessica Siegle

(University of NSW)

Garvan Institute Award for Best Post-Doctoral Poster Presentation

Dr Nigel Turner

(Garvan Institute)

UWS School of Medicine Student Presentation Prize

Ria Arnold

(SOMS/POWMRI)

UNSW Award for Best Student Oral Presentation

Jeffrey Chan

(CVR)

Western Australia

Department of Health, Government of Western Australia Prizes

An Qin

(University of Western Australia)

Jasmine Tay

(Royal Perth Hospital)

Curtin University and Western Australian Biomedical Research Institute Prize

Eleanor Drummond

(University of Western Australia)

UWA

Angela Fuery

(University of Western Australia)

NCARD

Tahmina Anwari

(University of Western Australia)



ASMR MRW® Western Australia prize winners



ASMR President Alison Butt with Professor Simon Foote (Director, Menzies Research Institute), ASMR Medallist Baroness Susan Greenfield, and ASMR Tasmanian Convenor Tracey Dickson

49th Annual ASMR National Scientific Conference — “Infection and Disease”



The Australian Health & Medical Research Congress

14–18th November 2010

Australian Health and Medical Research Congress

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

The 49th ASMR NSC will focus on cross-cutting themes in microbial replication, immunity, pathogenesis and ageing. Highlights will be joint symposium topics with ASHM, ASID and ASI, a rich list of international speakers and an exciting Workshop on “Cutting Edge Approaches in Visualising Microbes and the Immune Response”.

The **2010 ASMR Firkin Orator** is **Professor David Sinclair**, Professor of Pathology and Co-director of the Paul F. Glenn Laboratories for the Biological Mechanisms of Ageing, Harvard Medical School. Professor Sinclair will present his seminal work on the role of “sirtuins” in the ageing process. The **2010 ASMR Edwards Orator** is **Professor Alan Cowman**, an NH&MRC Australia Fellow, Howard Hughes International Research Scholar and Head of the Division of Infection and Immunity at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research. Professor Cowman will present his seminal studies on how the malaria parasite, *Plasmodium falciparum*, invades human blood cells and evades the host immune responses.

Register online at www.ahmrccongress.org.au

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

Call for nominations

Terms of Office for five ASMR Directors expire at the November 2010 AGM

To nominate download the "Call for Nomination" form from <http://www.asmr.org.au/Nom10.pdf>

Affiliate Members of ASMR

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National Association of Research Fellows
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Society for Free Radical Research (Australasia)
Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia and New Zealand
The Australian College of Ambulance Professionals
The Australian Medical Students' Association Ltd
The Australian Society for Parasitology
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
The Society for Reproductive Biology
Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand
Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand
Western Australia Biomedical Research Institute

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