



President's Report

Dr Robert Ramsay

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*From the perspective of medical research we can reflect upon 1999 as a stellar year. In so many ways, so many people combined to bring a successful outcome to the Health and Medical Research Strategic Review. The general consensus is that Mr. Peter Wills, Dr. Michael Wooldridge and Prime Minister John Howard delivered to us an accurate review of our sector of the community and responded with the greatest level of support we have encountered. The five-year plan to increase the NHMRC allocation reflects upon two important advances. Surely the money is very important but the concept of longer term planning for NHMRC funding is a real milestone. Remember too in 1998 the actual base for medical research funding was around \$118M, in 2000 it will be around \$210M. In 2004 it will be around \$340M. A great result. *Gentlemen, take a bow.**

However, this does not mean the war is won. It certainly doesn't mean that ASMR has had its day. Rather the game

has changed and the medical research community's obligations have increased. In



three years time the bean counters will judge us very harshly if our only argument for the next wave of increases are the same arguments we used in Wills' Review Mark I.

We, and I mean the Universities, particularly the Institutes and State Health Departments sang the same tune that "the economy will grow and Australia's health profile will improve" if government funding is increased. Peter Wills and his committee articulated the arguments for us but they also set them down as a record of promises. *We have to be vigilant in collecting data on our new successes.*

On the commercialization front it now seems that County Investments and NHMRC driven-MRIF (Medical Research Investment Fund) is evolving in to a form not originally proposed or promised.

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Many of you will have noticed that was one section which could be ignored in the latest round of son of grant-net forms down loaded off the web. The latest view of the MRIF leaves a distinct sense of picking winners. Furthermore, the size of the portfolio of research activity is a lot smaller than envisaged. This is a great pity and partly a reflection of our risk adverse culture and the hard-nosed reality of the business world. The attitude of Academe that maintenance of complete ownership of unrealized intellectual property is more important than royalty flows stemming from partnerships with the private sector has not helped either. This general problem of the cultural cringe affecting research commercialization will be one of the topics revisited this year in the form of RICH2000 to be held during ASMR's Medical Research Week. Last year's Research Investment in Commercialization of Health was a great success. Dr Louis Schofield and his committee have put together a very strong one-day program that will address "overcoming the hurdles to research commercialization" on the 8th of June at the Hotel Sofitel in Melbourne. If you are in the business of looking to start your own Biotech company or wish to hear from those who advise the venture capitalist it will be the place to be. Check out the ASMR home page for details.

The recognition of Prof. Sir Gustav Nossal as the Australian of the Year had to be a great way to start the year 2000. Gus Nossal, a life member of ASMR, the patron of the ASMR Research Fund and one of the founding group of young Australian scientists who formed ASMR is the most worthy of recipients of this award.

Famous for his questions in three parts at WEHI seminars, admired as the master of the positive attitude and for his work as a World Health Organization mover and shaker. Congratulations Gus and good luck in your other important roles including Aboriginal Reconciliation.



NSC

The basis for successfully translating medical research discoveries into patient and health outcomes is to be aware of the problems in the first place. The National Scientific Conference to be held in Melbourne on November 26-28th will highlight solutions to this problem. The NSC theme of "bench to bedside" represents ASMR's strong move to embrace objectives of basic through to public health research. The core topics this year will be -

Diabetes
Colon Cancer
Mental Health
Asthma
New Therapies

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President's Report

Continued

Your NSC is quite unique in its structures that encourages presentations by our young research scientists in an environment of scientific excellence.

If you cannot attend this years NSC give your students an opportunity to present their work at the meeting.

Finally, congratulations to the medical researchers and educators who received awards on Australia day -
Dr Don Cameron (Qld), for services to medicine, particularly in the fields of endocrinology and diabetes research, and as a clinician teacher and administrator.
Prof David de Krestler (Vic), for service to medicine, particularly in the field of male reproductive biology, and as a researcher, educator and university administrator.
Prof Mark Lawrence Wahlqvist (Vic), for service to medicine, particularly in the field of human nutrition and public health.
Prof Robin Marks (Vic), for service to medicine, particularly in the field of dermatology, and to public Health, particularly the promotion of skin cancer and melanoma awareness and Assoc Prof Peter Blake Marshall (SA), for service to medicine, particularly through the development of the Centre for Perinatal and Neonatal Medicine at Flinders Medical Centre.

Robert Ramsay, President

ASMR Research Fund

Dr Bruce Lyons

Call for applications for the ASMR Research Award.

The ASMR Research Fund was started in 1990 as a seed fund to support the research activity of members. The fund is now in a position to allow the presentation of "The ASMR Research Award".

This award of \$2000 will support a postgraduate student member nearing completion of their studies or a recently-graduated postdoctoral ASMR member to undertake research in a laboratory outside their home city.

Applicants for "The ASMR Research Award" -

- must have been members of the Society for at least 12 months before the year in which the Award application is to be considered
- must be not more than three years post their highest degree.

The closing date is Friday September 29th.

Copies of the application form and conditions can be downloaded from the ASMR website (www.asmr.org.au/resfund/intro.html)

Bruce Lyons, Hon. Treasurer

ASMR Board of Directors 2000

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ASMR Medical Research Week

Year 2000

Dame Bridget Ogilvie - ASMR Medallist 2000

The Board of Directors of ASMR are delighted to announce the tour by Dame Bridget Ogilvie for ASMR Medical Research Week (June 2-10) 2000.

Dame Bridget Ogilvie is the immediate past-director of the Wellcome Trust, a charitable organisation that is the major source of funds for medical research in the UK. She was born in Australia, growing up in northern NSW. She studied at the University of Queensland, the University of New England and was awarded a Commonwealth scholarship to Cambridge University Veterinary School, completing her PhD on immunity to intestinal nematodes. In a distinguished scientific career, Dame Bridget Ogilvie spent 17 years studying intestinal parasites in the Division of Parasitology at the National Institute for Medical Research in London. During this time she received numerous honours and awards and published about 100 papers on parasites and the immune response in international refereed journals, book chapters and reviews.

In 1991 Dame Bridget Ogilvie became Director of the Wellcome Trust. Under her direction, the Trust set up the Sanger Centre, which has become a key

organisation internationally in the support of human and pathogenic genome analysis. The Trust also became very involved in improving public understanding of science and its social and ethical implications. She was made a Dame of the British Empire in 1997 and retired as director of the Wellcome Trust in 1998.

Dame Bridget Ogilvie is currently resident in London and is on the board of 2 large public companies, a Trustee of the Science Museum and the National Endowment of Science, Technology and the Arts, a member of the National Council of Science and Technology, Chairman of the governing body of the Institute of Animal Health and Chairman of the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science. She is also very familiar with the issues confronting health and medical research in Australia, serving as a member of the Health and Medical Strategic Review committee in 1998.

Dame Bridget Ogilvie will be speaking at ASMR Medical Research Dinners around the country. ASMR extend to her a very warm welcome.



Dame Bridget Ogilvie
ASMR Medallist 2000

Cassandra Lawson,
Director, ASMR

ASMR Health & Medical Research Congress

Year 2002

Each year it's becoming increasingly difficult to attend all the meetings in your field let alone those in which you might have a peripheral interest but are nevertheless important for the type of lateral science most of us aspire to perform. The ASMR Health and Medical Research Congress is an attempt to bring together scientists both within and between fields for a multidisciplinary FASEB style meeting in Melbourne in 2002 at The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The advantages of this style of meeting are self evident with respect to the calibre of international speakers, the potential for scientific interactions, the economies of time and money for participants and the ability of such a forum to attract sponsorship. The first meeting of the local organising committee was held

in early March. At present up to twenty societies have expressed interest in participating. The tentative dates for the Congress are November 25-29th, 2002 with future meetings being conducted every three years. To ensure appropriate planning expressions of interest for participation by societies should be made as soon as possible to:

Dr Bronwyn Kingwell
H&MR Congress 2002 Convenor
C/- Baker Medical Research Institute
PO Box 6492
St Kilda Rd Central
Melbourne 8008
Tel (03) 9276 3261
Fax (03) 9276 2495
Email b.kingwell@alfred.org.au

ASMR National Scientific Conference 2000

**"From Bench to
Bedside"**

**Nov 26-28 2000 Hotel Sofitel,
Melbourne**

Bringing together basic research, clinical application and public health.

■ Plenary sessions on NHMRC priority areas of diabetes, asthma, colorectal cancer, mental health and tracing the translation of research discoveries from the lab through to their impact on patient treatment.

■ Public health sessions focussing on lessons from around the world.

The Firkin Oration - "Medical Genomics" by Peter Goodfellow, recently Professor of Genetics, Cambridge University and now Senior Vice-President Research of the

newly merged pharmaceutical giant Glaxo SmithKline.

The Edwards Oration by Dr Rob Moodie, CEO of Vic. Health who will talk about working with the Nobel Prize winning organisation "Doctors without Borders."

Students are encouraged to attend with awards and travel grants, oral presentation opportunities, workshop sessions and career advice from ASMR directors.

The social program will feature a cocktail party at Melbourne's newest (and wettest) entertainment attractions plus one of the best views of the city will be had by all that attend the conference dinner.

Convenor: Dr. Andrew Sinclair

The following summary of tabled amendments to the NHMRC Act 1992 have been provided by the ONHMRC.

Streamline the process of public consultation

Sections 12 to 14 of the Act have been amended to require the NHMRC to conduct consultation as follows:

■ *Two stages of consultation whenever it makes a regulatory recommendation or engages in a prescribed activity*

■ *One stage of consultation whenever it seeks to issue guidelines.*

NHMRC to approve guidelines developed by other bodies

This new provision enables NHMRC to approve guidelines developed by other bodies, *provided* NHMRC is satisfied that the development process included public consultation identical to that required when NHMRC develops and issues guidelines.

Change in Committee Name and Operations

The name of the Medical Research Committee is formally changed to the “Research Committee”. There has also been an amendment to the functions of the Research committee adding “health and medical research” - this is in recognition of the broader role of the Research Committee.

Delegations

Delegation of Council powers has been extended to include the Chairperson of NHMRC.

Appointment of Deputy Chairperson

Inclusion of a formal mechanism to allow Principal Committees to appoint a Deputy Chairperson.

Appointment of Working Committees

Council now has the power to appoint working committees.

Chief Executive Officer

New provisions abolish the position of Secretary to the Council to be replaced by a Chief Executive Officer. Consequent upon this amendment is the requirement that staff supporting the NHMRC report to the Chief Executive Officer.

Strategic Plan

The Council’s strategic plan, and any variations to a strategic plan, must be submitted to the Minister for approval prior to tabling.

Grant processing procedure

Council will publish information each year detailing the procedures and timetables for grant applications. In addition, the Chief Executive Officer must adhere to the dates in the timetable for notifying applicants of the outcome of their application.

From the Office of NHMRC

The Commonwealth Government announced enhanced funding for medical genomics in the 1999 Budget to ensure that Australian medical genomic research projects can be better supported to help build the biotechnology base, which is essential, if Australia is to capitalise on the genomics revolution. To this end the NHMRC is introducing a Program in Medical Genomics. The NHMRC is now calling for expressions of interest for funding in 2000 through the Program in Medical Genomics. Full details of the Program and the format for submitting an expression of interest are available at <http://www.nhmrc.health.gov.au/research/2000/genomics/index.htm>

Closing date for submission of expression of interest is 21 April 2000.

The 38th National Scientific Conference of the Australian Society for Medical Research was held at The Fairmont Resort, Leura, November 27-29, 1999, and was by all accounts an outstanding success. The theme of the meeting was "Cutting Edge Technologies in Medical Research". The NSC highlighted state-of-the-art biomedical research being carried out locally and abroad that have furthered our understanding of the mechanisms underlying health and disease. Symposia were concerned with Genetics, Model Organisms, Protein and Carbohydrate Structure, Macromolecular Interaction Analysis, State-of-the-Art Therapeutics and State-of-the-Art Imaging. Among the 'hot' technologies covered were DNA microarrays, lessons from yeast and mouse genetics, gene therapy, biosensor technology, fluorescence and cardiovascular imaging. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of our many commercial and institutional sponsors whose assistance helped make the 1999 NSC a great success.

Levon Khachigian
Convenor, 38th ASMR NSC

Editors Note: Whilst organising the NSC, Levon had a paper published in Nature Medicine which was also the subject of a commentary in Science and generated considerable local media interest. He also was appointed to an NHMRC Research Fellowship. Apart from impeccable organisation, Levon also oversaw a financially successful meeting. Levon is thus an excellent role model for those who say they don't have time for ASMR activities!

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:
Dr A. G. Bolt
Tel: (02) 9654 1623 Fax: (02) 9654 1754

NSC 1999 - Prize Winners

Campion-Ma-Playoust Award
Nicholas Shackel (Centenary Institute)

NARE Postdoctoral Award
Robyn Starr (WEHI)

ASMR Award
Louise van der Weyden (Sydney Uni)

The Glaxo Wellcome Award
Alexander Guminski (Westmead Hospital)

The Bio-Rad Award
David Adams (Sydney University)

The Australian Vascular Biology Society Award
Marina Zaitseva (Monash University)

Dr Michael Wooldridge, the ASMR Board and Immediate Past President, dining informally in Melbourne



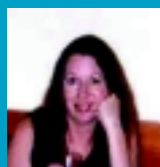
Events

**ASMR
Medical Research Week
June 2 -10
www.asmr.org.au/mrw**

**RACP Annual Scientific Meeting
Adelaide Convention Centre
May 2 -5 2000
www.racp.edu.au/asm**

**International Congress on Differentiation and Cell Biology
Gold Coast, Qld
www.celldiff.unsw.edu.au**

**ASMR NSC 2000
"Benchtop to Bedside"
Hotel Sofitel
Melbourne Vic
November 26 - 28 2000
www.asmr.org.au/conferences/**



**ASMR's new directors
Dr Bronwyn Kingwell, Dr Cassie Lawson, Dr Lyn Griffiths**

ASMR Welcome the following organisations as Affiliate Members

**Royal Australasian College of Physicians
Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
Royal A & NZ College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists
Australian College for Emergency Medicine**



**SPF Mice and Rats
SPF Chickens
SPF Fertile Chicken Eggs
Mouse Embryo Freezing
Custom Breeding
Importation**



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