

“The establishment of the new National Institute of Complementary Medicine promises to provide research outcomes directly relevant to many National Health Priority areas as well as increase Australia’s capacity to contribute to the world’s knowledge of many widely used medicines and therapies.”

Prof Marc Cohen MBBS (Hons), PhD (TCM), PhD (Elec Eng), BMed Sci (Hons), FAMAC, FICAE President Australasian Integrative Medicine Association, Professor of Complementary Medicine, RMIT University

National Institute of Complementary Medicine N.I.C.M.

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The NICM is beginning to take shape.

Over the past month the interim management and consultative groups overseeing the development of the institute have made some significant progress on a number of key areas. The purpose of this newsletter is to share with you the activities of the Interim Consultative Team.

An Update from the Consultative Team

Being a part of the interim consultative group overseeing the development of the NICM is an enormous privilege, as well as an overwhelming challenge.

The creation of the first truly national research institute dedicated to furthering evidence based research into complementary medicine represents a significant milestone in having complementary medicine and complementary medicine researchers appropriately recognised in the Australian scientific and healthcare communities.

Over the last few weeks each of us have heard of a greater abundance of potential research projects than we had ever imagined. However, our organisation is still at a stage where we are developing strategies to research and communicate the vast potential of complementary medicine. Our mission thus far has been to articulate the vision for the future and to start to develop some potential organisational structures that can help achieve that vision.

We are also now able to articulate some of the core philosophies which will underpin the vision for the NICM and start to shape this organisation.

Some key elements are:

- The NICM sees itself becoming a highly respected leader in complementary medicine research both in Australia and internationally. We see the initial funding as only the beginning.
- The NICM is an organisation designed to facilitate projects of a larger scope through fostering greater co-operation across institutions.
- The NICM will take a leadership position in many matters pertaining to raising the profile of complementary medicine. One of these areas is to articulate national priorities for research themes and activities.
- To be truly effective, the NICM must be a truly national organisation – and it must facilitate collaboration across complementary medicine disciplines as well as with the already established medical research community.
- One of NICM’s primary aims is helping to create opportunities for the researchers of the future. We must ensure that we can train and develop the researchers to support the sector’s needs as it expands nationally and internationally.

- Another of the NICM’s stated aims is to play a core role in the dissemination of complementary medicine information, through research data reviews, research protocols, and research findings to medical and health practitioners as well as the general public.

And finally we recognise that to achieve our long term vision – the institute needs to be financially sustainable, and we are starting to look at ways we may be able to achieve this.

Consultant Stephan Wellink joins the team

The organisational structures are still in development, and will be finalised after we have had the opportunity to receive as much input as possible from the researchers around the country, the complementary medicine practitioners, and industry leaders. To assist the team to develop the framework for the research structure, we have engaged Mr Stephan Wellink of SJ Wellink & Associates to manage the development of the research framework for the NICM. SJ Wellink & Associates is a business consulting company that provides services to a number of sectors including research and development, education,

creative industries and philanthropy. Stephan has a strong background in the development of research organisations and frameworks, both through his consulting activities and through former positions as Director of Research and Innovation at the University of Technology, Sydney, CSIRO, and the University of Newcastle. Stephan has already started to make contact with many researchers around the country to canvas views on the priorities for the NICM; how you feel you would like to work with the NICM to strengthen your output and how we can best facilitate national collaboration. This process will continue over the next few weeks and will ultimately be consolidated into some potential structural models which will be presented for discussion at the upcoming stakeholder forums (see details below).

In parallel with the research structure, we are also working with independent experts and the university to develop appropriate governance models, and policies that will ensure we have an effective national organisation.

We look forward to your input and participation in the development of the NICM.

The NICM Consultative Team Members

Professor Marc Cohen is currently the Foundation Professor of Complementary Medicine at RMIT University, and President of the Australasian Integrative Medicine Association. He has a medical degree along with degrees in physiology and psychological medicine and PhDs in both Chinese medicine and biomedical engineering. Prof Cohen plays an active role in the teaching and research of complementary medicine with involvement in many clinical trials and basic science research projects. He is an Expert Advisor to the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) Complementary Medicine Evaluation Committee (CMEC) and sits on the Editorial Board of 4 international journals. Prof Cohen has written, edited, and contributed to many highly regarded text books on holistic health and natural supplements and is currently working to develop a postgraduate Wellness Program within RMIT's School of Health Sciences.



Ms Suzanne Pierce is the Manager Policy and Operations at the NSW Office for Science and Medical Research. Suzanne has extensive government experience at State and Commonwealth levels, in a range of social justice, human service and administrative review agencies and, over the last three years, science and medical research. Suzanne originally trained as a nurse, has an honours degree in anthropology and has previously undertaken the NSW Executive Development Program. In addition to strategic policy, Suzanne has particular expertise in corporate planning and performance measures. Significant recent initiatives include facilitating the establishment of the National Institute of Complementary Medicine and associated complementary medicine projects, establishment of the NSW Clinical Trials Business Development Centre, and supporting the passage of amendments to the NSW legislation regarding the use of human embryos in research.



Professor Stephen Myers is currently Director of the Natural and Complementary Medicine Research Unit (NatMed-Research) within the Department of Natural and Complementary Medicine at Southern Cross University. He initially qualified as a naturopathic practitioner and later in western medicine, and has a PhD in clinical pharmacology. Professor Myers has been extensively involved with naturopathic education in Australia, and is actively engaged in research in herbal medicine, therapeutic foods and in public health issues in complementary medicine. Professor Myers is also an Expert Advisor to the TGA's CMEC, and has acted as consultant to industry, government and educational institutions. Professor Myers has published widely, and is a member of the editorial panel of several national and international journals on complementary medicine and nutrition. He is currently a senior editor of the American Naturopathic Foundations Project creating the definitive textbook on Naturopathic Medicine. In 2004 he was awarded the prestigious Lady Cilento Award by the Complementary Healthcare Council for a sustained contribution to the field.



Professor Basil Roufogalis is Executive Director of the Herbal Medicines Research and Education Centre at the University of Sydney. After obtaining his PhD in medicinal chemistry he was awarded the DSc in 1996 for work on the regulation of cellular function by calcium. Following 18 years in Canada, leading to appointment as Professor at the University of British Columbia, he returned to Australia as an NHMRC Senior Research Fellow and Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Sydney. He established the Herbal Medicines Research and Education Centre in 1997. Professor Roufogalis has undertaken research and education activities in development and safety of new herbal medicines. He Chairs the Scientific Committee of the upcoming 3rd International Congress on Complementary Medicine in Sydney 29-31 March 2008 – <http://www.iccmr2008.com/>. Funding from national competitive and industry grants has resulted in more than 200 publications in international journals.



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Important Information...

The NICM is seeking stakeholder input in its establishment phase for its first major report to government by 30 September 2007. To that end, National CM Stakeholder Forums will be convened in Sydney on Monday 20th August for the CM Researchers and Organisations and on Monday 27th August for the CM Industry and Practitioners. These forums will be held at the NSW Department of State and Regional Develop-

ment Offices (MLC Centre) in the city in Sydney. The registration form for these forums accompanies this newsletter. These forums will provide a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to convey their views in person to NICM. If you know others who may be interested in either the forums or the newsletter, please forward this newsletter on to them, or invite them to contact NICM@uws.edu.au