

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

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6 July 2007

Issue No. 1

Welcome to N.I.C.M.

Welcome to this first edition of NICM News, the newsletter that will connect you with the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM). This newsletter is intended to act as the initial conduit between the NICM and stakeholders in complementary medicine across Australia. While distribution is initially via database contacts the newsletter will be posted on the official NICM website once it becomes operational. In the meantime please forward this newsletter to interested colleagues.

Complementary Health Care Comes of Age

The National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) arose from the Federal government recognising the increasing importance of complementary medicines (CM) in Australia. Its establishment was announced on Friday 15 June by the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Honourable Tony Abbott MP. Initial funding for the NICM over the next two years includes \$4 million from the Federal government together with an additional \$600,000 from the New South Wales Office of Science and Medical Research (OSMR).

The establishment of the NICM follows the 2003 recommendation by the Expert Committee on complementary medicines in the Australian Health system that the government had a social responsibility to fund CM research given the high community use of complementary medicines and therapies. Since then, there have been concerted efforts by leading complementary medicine researchers, industry bodies including the Complementary Healthcare Council and the NSW Office of Science and Medical Research (OSMR). This latest Government initiative complements the announcement in late 2006 of

\$5 million in National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Special Initiative Research Grants for complementary medicine. The scheme drew an overwhelming response with 141 applications from 37 institutions demonstrating the high level of interest in the field.

Whilst Australia has one of the highest levels of CM use per capita in developed nations, to date it has invested little in related research. Australian research capacity in CM is of high quality but currently lacks critical mass, national coordination and collaboration and clear priorities. 'Preventative healthcare' and 'ageing well' are national research priorities and given the number of Australians using complementary medicines and therapies for these purposes, we need to understand to what extent these medicines and therapies can make a significant, cost-effective contribution to public health.

The NICM will help address these issues by developing programs that build links across the sector and also build human capacity in the field. It will be the vehicle for developing critical mass and shared infrastructure,

establishing basic and translational research priorities and helping to achieve international recognition and commercialization of Australian research activities in this important and growing field. Australia can provide strong complementary medical research expertise at relatively low cost, which is attractive to overseas companies interested in having CM products researched. There is also major potential for developing links with China and other countries within the Asia-Pacific region.

The administrative hub of NICM will be headquartered at the University of Western Sydney, Campbelltown Campus and will operate as a virtual institute linking the major CM groups in the country. The administrative hub will comprise a small group of core staff that will ensure the optimal use of Institute funds to facilitate capacity building, coordination and collaboration between centres of complementary medicine excellence across the country. The four core areas of activity are to:

1. Set **National Research Priorities** for CM research.
2. Coordinate **National Collaboration** including shared

infrastructure to enable better value from our research investment.

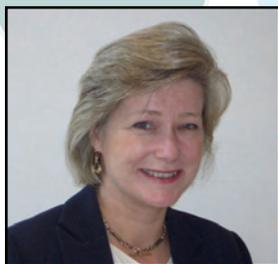
3. Support **Capacity Building** through postdoctoral training in order to extend the breadth and depth of Australian CM research and to ensure adequate numbers of appropriately trained complementary medicine research personnel into the future.
4. Disseminate **Research Findings** to health practitioners and the general public to ensure that Australians have access to the information they need to make well informed decisions about their health.

The NICM is an exciting opportunity for collaboration and capacity building across the CM sector at the national level.



The Hon Pat Farmer (Member for Macarthur) and The Hon Tony Abbott (Minister for Health and Ageing) following announcement of \$4m Government funding for set up of NICM. Announcement made at UWS Campbelltown Campus on 15 June 2007.

An Interim CEO is Appointed



The NICM is pleased to announce the appointment of our Interim Chief Executive Officer, Ms Shelley Evans. Shelley brings an extensive background in research based healthcare industries including prescription pharmaceuticals, nutrition, diagnostics and biotechnology. She has held senior business management roles with multinational companies including Wellcome, Glaxo Wellcome and Wyeth as well as previous CEO roles in the biotechnology and medical devices sector. Shelley holds qualifications in Pharmacy, Business and Law.

Interim Structure of NICM

The Federal Government is eager for the NICM to progress speedily and to that end it has requested a major report by 30 September 2007. This report will indicate how NICM intends to address each of its four core areas of responsibility. In order to meet this tight reporting timeline an interim management structure has been established to operate during the initial six months of the NICM's operation. The interim management team will also identify strategic funding options and the most appropriate management and governance structures to ensure long-term viability of the NICM following the initial six months of operation.

The interim management team comprises of:

CEO (Ms Shelley Evans)
Director (Prof Alan Bensoussan)
Exec Officer (Dr Phillip Cheras)
Project Officer (Ms Ros Priest)
Admin (Ms Natalie McCarthy)

The Interim Director and CEO are advised by a consultative team comprising of Prof Marc Cohen (RMIT), Prof Stephen Myers (SCU), Prof Basil Roufogalis (USyd) and Suzanne Pierce (OSMR).

Additional support to the senior Executive is provided by an In-

terim Advisory Panel comprising individuals with expertise appropriate for the initial six month period.

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Important Information...

The NICM will be seeking early stakeholder input in each of the four core areas 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 on Monday 27th August for the CM Industry and Practitioners. These forums will be held at the NSW Dept of State and Regional Development Offices in the City in Sydney. Further information will be provided in the near future. These forums will provide a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to convey their opinions in person to NICM. **Please contact Natalie McCarthy to register your interest by email at:**

n.mccarthy@uws.edu.au

and provide the following:

- Full name (include title)
- Contact No (work/mobile/fax)
- Email address
- Sector (Industry, Academia, Government etc)
- Special Interest (Naturopathy, WHM, Osteopathy, TCM etc)

This will put you on the Newsletter mailing list. For those who are unable to attend the National Stakeholder Forum personally we will provide an electronic template to enable your suggestions to be considered.

For further information please contact:

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