



NICM

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THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

Message from the Executive Director

In July the NICM General Manager and I travelled to Victoria and Queensland for a series of stakeholder meetings. We appreciate the time taken by people in government, the mainstream and complementary research sector, industry and clinical trial centres to meet and discuss key issues, our current projects and forward plans. We were heartened by the keen interest and opportunities for collaboration on projects in key areas.

I am pleased to advise that the NICM Advisory Council and Scientific Advisory Committee are now in place. The first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) was held on 2 September, with the Council due to meet in October. We are indeed fortunate in the considerable skills and experience being brought to bear on the issues and challenges facing our sector.

A major discussion item at the SAC was developing priorities for re-

search over the next five years. The process and timeframe for this project will feature in our next newsletter.

The NICM Collaborative Centres have started their first phases of activity and we are already seeing a major impact on capacity, with 13 PhD student positions and 21 post-doctorate or research associate positions being created. To help develop relationships and further collaboration across the Centres the inaugural NICM Collaborative Centre Networking Forum will be held on October 9 in Sydney.

As part of our broader capacity building efforts, NICM also sponsored a dozen places for complementary medicine researchers in the August 2008 Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) Professional Development Program as well as ASMR membership to support researchers interested in applying for a place in the ASMR mentoring program. The mentoring program will

assist complementary medicine researchers to develop their skills and to strengthen their research applications in nationally competitive grant rounds.

Information for consumers and professionals about complementary medicine has been very much in the news, and NICM has developed an options paper on the co-ordinating, development and information dissemination roles it might undertake going forward, having regard to national and international efforts in the field. An initial forum with science communicators and consumer representatives is planned for mid-September. Still on the information front, this is the last time this newsletter will come to you as an attachment – future newsletters will be in HTML format as part of the website redevelopment process, which will take effect from November.

Professor Alan Bensoussan
Executive Director

Researcher Audit Update

NICM has completed the 2007-2008 complementary medicine researcher audit, which will be on the website from 16 September.

This audit is an update of findings by a report commissioned by the (then) NSW Ministry for Science and Medical Research to review complementary medicine research in NSW.

The report highlights a number of promising developments since the 2003-2004 survey.

These included:

- 24% increase in total funds in CM research
- 79% increase in the number of CM research workers across the country
- 167% increase in the number of

CM post-graduate students with scholarships.

During this triennium the focus of research has been largely on nutritional supplements (27%), western herbal medicine (26%) and traditional Chinese medicine (22%).

Foundation partners

NICM is an Australian Government initiative, supported by the NSW Government and hosted by the University of Western Sydney





Scientific Advisory Committee

NICM is pleased to acknowledge the following members of its Scientific Advisory Committee, who bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise in both complementary and mainstream health and medical research.

The committee includes:

Emeritus Professor John Chalmers AC (Chair)

Professor David Briggs

Professor Marc Cohen

Professor Richard Day

Professor Stephen Myers

Emeritus Professor Anthony Smith

Associate Professor Luis Vitetta

Professor Stephen Clarke

Associate Professor David Colquhoun

Professor Stephen Leeder AO

Professor Basil Roufogalis

Professor Con Stough

Professor Charlie Xue

ABS—Australian Social Trends

The Australia Bureau of Statistics recently released some significant figures on the increasing relevance of complementary medicine in their annual snapshot of Australian society. The ABS report draws on data from the Censuses of Population and Housing and from the ABS 2004-2005 National Health Survey. Key findings included:

- The number of people visiting a complementary health professional increased by 51% in the ten years to 2005
- The number of people working as complementary health professionals nearly doubled from 4,800 to 8,600 in the ten years to 2006
- 3.8% of the population had consulted one of seven selected complementary health therapists in the previous two weeks compared with about 2.8% in 1995.

To view the entire report visit www.nicm.edu.au.

CACMS—MOU

On September 22 a special event is being held in Sydney to mark the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between NICM and the China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences.

The five year agreement between NICM and CACMS focuses on the enhancement of scientific understanding of traditional Chinese medicine through the facilitation of collaborative research projects and joint academic and scientific activities. It also includes the exchange of researchers, teachers, students, publications and materials of common interest.

Diary Note

Blackmores Research Symposium 2008, Exploring a Lifestyle Prescription for the 21st Century is being held in Sydney 10-11 October.

This two-day event will provide educational, networking, and knowledge-sharing opportunities for healthcare professionals, industry, regulators, researchers, scientists and retailers. Blackmores are offering NICM newsletter subscribers a special \$495 rate for any registrations. For more information or to register call Blackmores 1800 151 493 and reference NICM.

Keep watching out for NICM's soon to be redeveloped website which will include a list of key upcoming complementary medicine events.

CM around the Globe

US Cancer Study

A study published in the Sept 1 issue of *Cancer*, collected data on 4,139 cancer survivors who participated in a *Population-based study of prevalence of complementary methods used by cancer survivors: a report from the American Cancer Society's studies of cancer survivors*.

Of the 19 CMs included in the survey, the CMs most frequently used were prayer/spiritual practice (61.4%), relaxation (44.3%), faith/spiritual healing (42.4%), nutritional supplements/vitamins (40.1%), meditation (15%), religious counselling (11.3%), massage (11.2%), and support groups (9.7%).

Among these 19 CMs, the least used were hypnosis (0.4%), biofeedback therapy (1.0%), and acupuncture/acupressure (1.2%). Survivors more likely to use CMs were female, younger, white, higher income, and more educated. The people were interviewed 10-24 months after diagnosis

To view the report visit - www.cancer.org

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