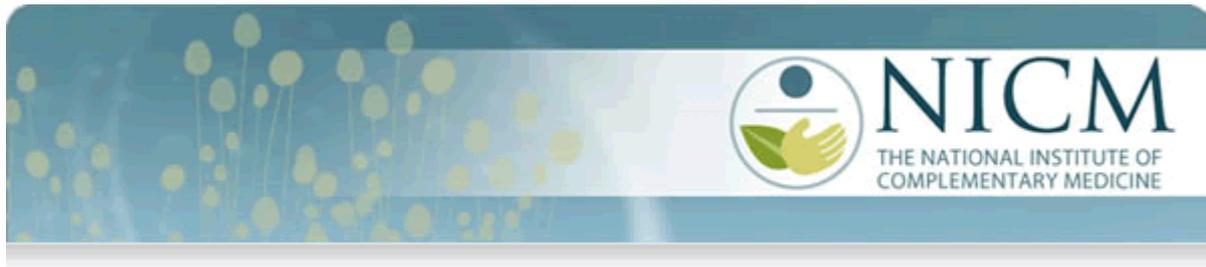


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Newsletter 7, December 2008

Message from the Executive Director

2008 has been a significant year for the complementary medicine (CM) research sector, with a number of CM projects succeeding in the latest NHMRC project grants round. This follows on from the announcement of the NHMRC CAM (special round) grants round and establishment of the NICM Collaborative Centres earlier this year. The combined funding will have a major impact on increasing research activities and capabilities around the country.

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) has undertaken substantial surveys and focus group studies aimed at better understanding the information needs of consumers, medical practitioners and pharmacists in choosing to use or recommend complementary medicines. The NPS has just released the outcomes of this work, which identifies some of the approaches and challenges faced by consumers and professional groups surveyed in making decisions around use of complementary medicines. We look forward to reviewing the reports and anticipate that further work will be undertaken with CM practitioners.

With the assistance of the NICM Collaborative Centre researchers and the Scientific Advisory Committee, the Institute continues to progress the refinement of CM research priorities. This is a challenge common to all research and funding organisations that inevitably need to be selective about the best use of available resources. However, it is particularly challenging to the field of CM, which comprises a wide canvas of practices and therapeutic claims across the spectrum of health, prevention and disease management. The Institute will be seeking broad input to this process early in the new year, which will be announced through our website.

We held our first NICM Advisory Council meeting in November and benefited from the input from the new members on the broader issues facing the sector. The full list of our Advisory Council and Scientific Advisory Committee members (including our two new International Advisors) is now available on our website.

2008 has also seen the establishment of review bodies that will have a major bearing on the broader health system, including the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the Preventative Health Taskforce. It is important that the sector continues to engage with these processes as they unfold in the coming year.

I would like to thank all the people who have been so generous with their time and knowledge to help make 2008 a highly productive year for the Institute. We have recently submitted and presented our vision and budget for the next five years to the Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing. We will be working hard in the coming months to ensure the importance of maintaining support for and strengthening research in CM, and the health and economic benefits it offers are well communicated to and recognised by Government.

This is our final newsletter for 2008 and our first HTML newsletter. I hope that you are able to readily access the newsletter in this format and we welcome any feedback you may have. The NICM website redevelopment is moving forward and we hope you enjoy the changes as they roll out over the next month.

The staff at NICM wish you all a very restful and peaceful holiday break. Thank you for your kind support through 2008.

Professor Alan Bensoussan
Executive Director

NPS complementary medicine survey

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) has released reports on research it has undertaken into the complementary medicines information needs of consumers, GPs and pharmacists. Preliminary findings released by NPS show that health professionals expressed a need for easily accessible, independent and evidence-based information.

NICM supports the view that there is a need for improved access to reliable, evidence based complementary medicine information for consumers and healthcare professionals and looks forward to reviewing the content of the reports over the next few weeks. The reports are available on the NPS website www.nps.org.au.

International Advisors

NICM is please to announce the appointment of two highly distinguished international scientists as International Advisors to the NICM Scientific Advisory Committee.

Professor Gerard Bodeker

Professor Gerard Bodeker researches and advises UN agencies, governments and NGO's on international health policy pertaining to traditional and complementary medicine. His work includes the health and economic potential of traditional medicine for helping rural communities, women, and refugees in managing communicable diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS and common ailments, particularly skin conditions.

Based at the Oxford University Medical School in Public Health, Professor Bodeker is also chair of the Global Initiative for Traditional Systems (GIFTS) of Health, an international policy and research collaborative on traditional medicine and healthcare, is former Chair of the Commonwealth Working Group on Traditional & Complementary Medicine, and is Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia University, New York.

John (Jack) Killen, Jr., M.D.

Dr. Killen is Deputy Director of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), performing a wide range of functions in support of the Director and the entire NCCAM organisation. Dr. Killen's 26-year career at NIH has centred on the design, implementation, and management of multi-disciplinary clinical research programs and on the ethics of clinical research, beginning in 1980 when he joined the National Cancer Institute. In 1986, he left NIH to serve as Medical Director of the Whitman-Walker Clinic, a community-based HIV/AIDS services organization in Washington, D.C. He returned to the NIH in 1987 to join the Division of AIDS in the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) where he served as Deputy Director (1987 to 1993) and then as Director (1994 to 2001).

Dr Killen has received multiple awards including the NIH Merit Award, the NIH Director's Award, the U.S. Public Health Service Special Recognition Award, the PHS Superior Service Award, and the Senior Executive Service Meritorious Executive Rank.

Training and Development

2009 complementary medicine research grant development support

As part of its capacity building role, NICM is inviting Expressions of Interest from complementary medicine researchers intending to lodge a grant application (e.g. to the NHMRC or ARC) to 'pitch' their grant proposals to a panel of 3-4 mainstream health and medical professionals with a strong track record in securing competitive grant funds.

Applications and more information on this program are now available on our website www.nicm.edu.au. Registration closes in January and the program will be run early February 2009.

Funding Opportunities

Seed funding for integrated care research initiatives

NICM objectives include facilitating appropriate integration of complementary medicine within the Australian health system. There is growing interest by government, clinicians and the public in the health and economic benefits offered by integrated care. Following an initial scoping exercise earlier this year, the Institute is seeking to support projects designed to demonstrate the value of integrated healthcare practice and to ensure relevant and consistent approaches to health outcomes data collection.

NICM is therefore seeking applications from individuals and teams seeking to undertake research into integrated care and associated data collection to demonstrate safety, clinical efficacy and cost-effectiveness. Guidelines and application forms on this program will be available on our website www.nicm.edu.au from December 22.

NHMRC Funding 2010

The call for applications for NHMRC funding commencing in 2010 opened on 8 December 2008 for:

- Research Fellowships and Practitioner Fellowships (applications close 6 February 2009)
- Australia Fellowships (expressions of interest close 3 March 2009).
- Project Grants (applications close 17 March 2009).

For more information go to the NHMRC website <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/>

NCCAM

The National Institutes of Health and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine have announced a grant, "CAM Approaches in the Management of HIV Disease and Its Complications". The application submission deadline is March 27, 2009 and is open to international applications.

The Funding Opportunity Application seeks applications proposing research on complementary interventions that are frequently used and hypothesized to be effective in the management of HIV disease and the complications associated with antiretroviral therapy (ART). CM interventions anticipated to be of greatest relevance in HIV are dietary supplementation and mind/body interventions.

For more information visit <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-AT-09-001.html>

New NCCAM Centres

The National Institutes of Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), has added four new Centres of Excellence for Research on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CERC's) to its research centres' program. The new centres are:

- Wisconsin Center for the Neuroscience and Psychophysiology of Meditation
- Metabolic and Immunologic Effects of Meditation
- CAM as Countermeasures Against Infectious and Inflammatory Disease
- Centre for Herbal Research on Colorectal Cancer.

The grants provide five years of support and bring the total number of CERCs to 11. To learn more about NCCAM's research centres, please visit <http://www.nccam.nih.gov/training/centers/>.

Strategic Developments

NHMRC Strategic Directions

Complementary Medicine is currently a strategic priority in the 2007-2009 NHMRC Strategic Plan. Submissions for priority areas in the 2010-12 Plan will be sought by the NHMRC in the coming months, and it is particularly important the sector engages in this process.

Beijing Declaration

The World Health Organisation (WHO) held its first WHO Congress on Traditional Medicine in Beijing in 7-9 November. WHO issued a Beijing Declaration at the end of the congress to promote the safe and effective use of traditional medicine and to integrate traditional medicine into primary health care systems.

The Australian Government has been an active participant in the development of the Beijing Declaration, which was drafted on the 30th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration that called upon countries to include and recognise traditional medicine (TM) in their primary health systems.

The Beijing Declaration commits Australia to:

- Respecting, preserving and promotion TM
- Developing relevant policies and regulations to ensure appropriate, safe and effective use of TM
- Integrating TM where feasible
- Undertaking relevant research and innovation in the field
- Establishing systems for practitioner accreditation and licensing
- Strengthening relevant communication and training for all health professionals.

Preventative Health Taskforce

The Taskforce released a discussion paper, 'Australia: the healthiest country by 2020', in October which is the first step in developing the National Preventative Health Strategy and addressing key issues. The Taskforce is calling for submissions on the discussion paper. The closing date for submission is Friday 2 January 2009. For details, go to www.preventativehealth.org.au.

National Health & Hospitals Reform Commission
Reports from national consultations undertaken in 2008 are now available, and the Commission's progress report is expected before Christmas. For details go to www.nhhrc.org.au.

Co-operative Research Centres

Following the release of reports on the National Innovation Review and Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) review earlier this year, new guidelines for funding CRCs have been released. For details, go to www.crc.gov.au.

Foundation partners

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

