

Meeting Report: Research Grants Forum

Meeting	Research Grants Forum, Sydney University
Date	23 rd November 2005
Attended by	Donna Waters, Manager Research and Projects
Outcomes	<p>The meeting was hosted by The College of Health Sciences, University of Sydney.</p> <p>Professor Judy Black, Chair of the NHMRC Research Committee outlined proposed changes to the NHMRC which will be phased in over the next 6-12 months. The review was prompted by recommendations from the Wills Review.</p> <p>There were also presentations from representatives on other NHMRC committees (see attached agenda) and information on ARC and NIH funding opportunities.</p> <p>The new NHMRC structure is aiming for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater cross-referencing between committees; 2. More discussion about transfer, policy and practice and; 3. To identify gaps in knowledge for prioritizing research. <p>Main changes to structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The NHMRC will become an independent statutory body within the health portfolio ➤ This will require an amendment to the current Act and new administrative arrangements ➤ The organization will have separate mechanisms for appropriation, reporting & staff appointments ➤ There will be a new CEO from January 06, but other committee members have been asked to extend their terms for 6 months (until June 06) to give some continuity while the changes occur. Most have agreed to remain. ➤ All resources will be transferred from the Dept to the NHMRC ➤ An NHMRC Academy will be formed ➤ Chairs of principle committees will no longer automatically have a position on the management committee ➤ There will be a smaller management advisory committee ➤ Existing committees to continue: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Australian Health Ethics ii. National Health Committee – will have broader reference to government, council, community, health services, quality of care and health outcomes. As per Wills Review, will continue funding same sorts of research but will increase emphasis on directing research into policy and

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practice and development of clinical practice guidelines for research transfer.

iii. Research Committee

iv. Expert Committees

➤ New committees added:

○ Human Genetics

○ Licensing Committee (human embryo work etc)

HEALTH STREAMS

These will be introduced to link research activities directly with outcomes. The structure around the health streams is designed to make it easier for the community to identify links between health care and research. The nine streams are:

➤ Heart and Lung

➤ Cancer

➤ Mind and Brain

➤ Bone and Muscle

➤ Metabolism and Nutrition

➤ Reproduction and Development

➤ Infection and Immunity

➤ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

➤ Science and Systems for Health and Ageing

Initially, the streams will be historically funded. Each stream will develop a strategic plan which will determine where resources are to be directed within the stream (see below). This is scheduled to occur by July 2006. Full integration of the health stream model is expected by Jan 2007.

Within each stream there will be a research strategy to address:

Emerging and urgent health challenges

Health services and policy

Population health

Commercialization

Clinical issues

Fundamental science

GRANTING STRUCTURES

These remain essentially unchanged. The Research Committee is hopeful of a doubling of funding next year (from government) but is unsure at this stage.

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1. **Program Grants:** for established researchers
2. **Project Grants:** for new research ideas
3. **PhD Scholarships and Fellowships:** for early career researchers
4. **Capability – Enabling Grants:** for registries, databanks etc.

There will be some streamlining and simplifying of the grants in that more generic forms will be used and applicants will be required to complete an “Intent to Apply” form for Program and Project grants and an EOI for CCRE and Enabling grants. This is to assist the NHMRC with preparing appropriate reference panels.

There will be more spokespersons per grant and eventually, they hope to introduce a more iterative process (feedback to applicants) to support/mentor researchers and encourage them to reapply (described as a change in ‘mindset’).

Because of changes to the system – the usual call for grants in January will be delayed until May.

Points of note from other speakers:

- The ARC Linkage grants and the US NIH grants would still seem to offer the best chance of success for health services/nursing projects.
- Practitioner fellowships would suit nurses wishing to combine research and clinical practice. This avenue of funding is currently underutilized.

Disclaimer: This report represents an overview of the main points of the meeting as noted by Donna Waters. It does not reflect the opinion or views of The College of Nursing. For further information and to keep up to date with changes to the NHMRC you should visit the NHNRC website: www.nhmrc.gov.au