

May 2004

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

WAIMR has now been established for five years and this experience has included many highs, with some lows, but now the highs are continuing to dominate.

Professor Peter Klinken's initial contract as Executive Director will conclude on 20 May; however, I am pleased to formally announce that the Board has offered Professor Klinken a further term of employment for five years, and he has graciously accepted. This will serve to establish WAIMR on a most stable and positive footing. We all appreciate very deeply Peter's openness, enthusiasm, commitment and energy as Executive Director of the Institute, and we look forward to the future with him.

The Reid report into the future direction of health provision has recently been published, although there was little direct mention of research. It is clearly important that our Institute work closely with the strategic planning and implementation groups directing the public health system into the future to ensure that research activities complement the health priorities of this State. The Board and the Executive will continue to support the Department of Health in this vital aspect of our community's health system.

Last year, this Institute sponsored a major proposal for the establishment of a Centre for Genomic Medicine, in response to the Premier's Science Council Major Research Facility's program. The development of this detailed proposal displayed all of the visions and objectives of WAIMR, bringing together a range of separate research groups within our community to focus co-operatively and efficiently on these important, emerging areas of research.

I am very pleased and proud of how well WAIMR has developed over the past years; the stability and progress achieved by the Institute has been excellent. We now look forward eagerly to the next phase of WAIMR's development




Mr Richard Lester - Chairman

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Another incredibly exciting 6 months has past in the evolution of WAIMR. As part of the Institute's strategic planning, key research strengths in WA were identified in genetic epidemiology, molecular genetics and clinical research. Bringing these 3 areas together to provide better health outcomes is central to WAIMR's philosophy. WA is uniquely positioned if the powerful health records in the State can be linked with our burgeoning strengths in genetics, and translated into increased clinical trials.

The Centre for Genomic Medicine proposal which was submitted to the Premier's Science Council encompasses this 3-pronged approach to take maximum advantage of our State's medical research resources. The application included 72 senior researchers and their teams, and covered all Universities, Hospitals and research Institutes in the State. It is envisaged that this cohesive, collaborative approach will produce a knowledge-based industry built upon medical research strengths, which will provide improved health outcomes for our community.

WAIMR is indebted to Professors John Funder and John Shine for their latest review of the Institute which took place on March 25 and 26, 2004. Once again they have generously taken time out of their extremely busy schedules to examine the developments of the Institute. Everyone involved with WAIMR is extremely grateful to them for their encouragement, support and wisdom, and we trust the Institute will continue to flourish and expand when next they visit us.

I am honoured that the Board has offered me the Directorship for the next 5 years, and am delighted to continue in this role. Over the past 2 years our numbers have increased 4 fold, and funds attracted for research activities has quadrupled. A critical mass is developing and exciting new initiatives are emerging. With the excellent support of the Board, and particularly the Chairman Dick Lester, I am confident that WAIMR will continue to develop into a leading medical research Institute, generating new knowledge to benefit the health of our community.



Prof Peter Klinken - Director

WESFARMERS CONTRIBUTION TO WAIMR



As the founding sponsor of WAIMR Wesfarmers has contributed \$5m over the past 5 years to the Institute. This funding remains one of the largest corporate donation ever made to medical research in Australia. WAIMR could not have developed without this major contribution from Wesfarmers. The Institute is extremely grateful to Wesfarmers for their outstanding corporate philanthropic support.

LOTTERYWEST

Lotterywest has been a wonderful supporter of medical research in this State. It has provided over \$20m to purchase cutting-edge equipment. In November 2003, Mrs Jan Stewart (CEO of Lotterywest) and Mr Mike Daube (Director General of the Department of Health) announced at WAIMR's Nedlands Campus a \$4.4m allocation for new equipment from Lotterywest. The funds were provided to a consortium of the 4 public Universities enabling all researchers access to the new machinery. Medical researchers in WA are deeply appreciative of the continued support from Lotterywest.



WAIMR EXTERNAL REVIEW – MARCH 2004

Excerpts from the report provided by Prof John Funder (former Director of the Baker Heart Research Institute, Melbourne) and Prof John Shine (Director of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Sydney).

This report will celebrate the major successes of the past two years, despite the difficulties that WAIMR has faced and make a series of recommendations to address, at least in part, areas of potential improvement. The overwhelming feeling of those interviewed, a judgement very much endorsed by the committee, is that over the past two years WAIMR has emerged not only as a viable concept but as a success in the making. The allocation of resources for postdoctoral fellows and other laboratory personnel across groups has clearly been very beneficial, the cohesion and collegiality achieved can be expected to persist. Morale is almost uniformly very high across the board, and criticisms explicitly minor. The Director Peter Klinken is universally recognised as having done a very difficult job extraordinarily well. There are other major indices of WAIMR's success. Staff numbers have risen from around 35 to the order of 140, a clear index of the perceived advantages of WAIMR membership – and also a signal of the possible difficulties for further expansion, certainly at this sort of rate. Success in grant applications to NHMRC has increased to well above the unfortunately low national average, testimony not only to the science but also to a much wider recognition of the strength of WAIMR research. There have been half a dozen new, high profile appointments – often jointly funded and auspiced – which have been badged and externally recognised as key additions to WAIMR.

We would very much congratulate all those involved in the re-creation of WAIMR on the outstanding success that it has proven to be over the past two years. This has reflected an enormous amount of goodwill, of commitment and of hard work; in particular by the Director Peter Klinken, very ably supported by his Deputies (Leedman/Goldie/Thompson). We believe that the future for WAIMR, as a national leader in the emerging style of multistakeholder institute, is very bright.



Prof John Funder, Prof Peter Klinken and Prof John Shine

WA RESEARCH TISSUE NETWORK



An exciting new initiative to collect tissue samples for research into diseases such as cancer was launched in April 2003. This tissue bank is the brainchild of Dr Nik Zeps who moved his operations in WAIMR. As part of the Institute's commitment to provide researchers throughout the State with crucial infrastructure, the Tissue Network will enable research teams to study the genetic causes of disease.

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PROFESSOR OF GENETIC EPIDEMIOLOGY



WAIMR is delighted to announce the appointment of Professor Lyle Palmer as the UWA Foundation Chair in Genetic Epidemiology. Prof Palmer is a UWA graduate who has recently made his mark at Harvard Medical School in the USA.

The Institute was fortunate indeed to recruit Prof Palmer back to WA, thanks largely to the vision and sponsorship of a donor. Prof Palmer combines wonderful research skills with boundless energy and enthusiasm. We are extremely excited by the future prospects that his work heralds in the rapidly emerging field of genetic epidemiology.

NEUROTRAUMA



In July 2003 the Hon Michelle Roberts, Minister for Police, announced continued funding of the Neurotrauma Research Program under the auspices of WAIMR. This research program is generously supported by the Road Safety Council for \$500,000 a year.

PROF ROY GOLDIE/PROF PETER THOMPSON

In March 2004, Professor Roy Goldie took up a new position of Executive Dean in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Flinders University. WAIMR is very thankful to Prof Goldie for his years of service as Deputy Director and we wish him well in his challenging new role.



The Institute is delighted to announce that Professor Peter Thompson will be the new Deputy Director. Professor Thompson is a distinguished cardiologist and well-respected clinical researcher, who is the Director of Research at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

WAIMR RESEARCH FORUM



At the end of 2003, WAIMR held a research forum for its excellent group of young investigators. Postdoctoral Fellows and PhD students presented their latest results to a captivated audience which was impressed by the calibre of work presented. These bright young researchers are the future leaders of medical research in WA..

How to find out more information..

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH INC

RPH Campus

Level 5 & 6 MRF Building, Rear 50 Murray Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel: +61 8 9224 0333 Fax: +61 8 9224 0322

SCGH Campus

Ground Floor, B Block, Hospital Avenue, Nedlands WA 6009
Tel: +61 8 9346 3838 Fax: +61 8 9346 1818

Website: www.waimr.uwa.edu.au [We invite you to visit our new Website]

All donations to the Institute over \$2 are tax deductible.