



NSW Office for Health and Medical Research

Boosting the commercial returns from
research
Office for Health and Medical Research
(OHMR) Submission

November 2014

Introduction

The NSW Office for Health and Medical Research (OHMR) is part of the NSW Ministry of Health and supports the State's health and medical research efforts. OHMR works with the health and medical research communities, the higher education sector and business to promote growth and innovation in research to achieve better health and economic outcomes for the people of NSW.

In 2012, a ten year strategic plan for health and medical research was launched.

The NSW Government's ten year Health and Medical Research Strategic Plan sets out a number of initiatives to support and build health and medical research capability in NSW including:

- Establishment of the Medical Devices Fund (MDF)
- Establishment of the Medical Device Commercialisation Training Program
- Initiatives for Research Capacity Building
- Development of a Research Hub Strategy
- Increasing research infrastructure support through the Medical Research Support Program (MRSP)

The main goals of the plan are to:

- enhance collaboration between research organisations
- implement a priority-driven approach to research, and
- facilitate innovation and translational of research to improve patient care and health outcomes.

Summary of Key Issues

The following issues were identified in the Commonwealth discussion paper in order to improve the commercial outcomes from publicly funded research:

1. *Creating stronger incentives for research-industry collaboration*
2. *Supporting research infrastructure*
3. *Providing better access to research*
4. *Increasing industry relevant research training*
5. *Measurement of outcomes*
6. *Capitalising on the Medical Research Future Fund*

The Commonwealth Government aims broadly to identify opportunities to adjust funding mechanisms to provide greater incentives for collaboration between researchers and industry.

NSW Office for Health and Medical Research position

OHMR supports the better translation of research into clinical practice and commercial outcomes. Through the Health and Medical Research Hub Strategy, OHMR drives state-wide capacity building, collaboration and implementation of research.

The NSW Health and Medical Research Hubs draw together geographically proximate research groups including independent research institutes, clinical research networks, major hospitals and community organisations including Medicare Locals. Hubs have a strong

translational purpose, with nodes of excellence in state-wide frameworks for the development and implementation of health and medical advances. The Hubs coordinate research efforts and make best use of a highly skilled workforce to drive innovation.

The OHMR approach to boosting returns from research and building commercialisation capability is to link universities, research institutes, teaching hospitals and commercial companies through the Hubs.

The hubs serve a number of functions in pushing innovations through the research and translation continuum. They:

- ✓ promote the relevance and uptake of research in clinical practice
- ✓ encourage links with academic teaching and commercial development
- ✓ make the best use of a highly skilled workforce
- ✓ facilitate large scale and/or complex studies that are outside the capacity of any single institution to undertake

The Hub strategy established the Hub Council. The Hub Council is currently chaired by the Director, OHMR with representatives from each of the Hubs and the rural and remote hub (listed below). Initiatives under the ten year health and medical research plan will be developed and implemented with the sector through the Hub Council.

The Council, together with the hub members create an ethos that embeds research into health care delivery that:

- ✓ Helps develop a culture of enquiry, innovation and evidenced based practice
- ✓ Encourages engagement, knowledge transfer and collaboration among clinicians, researchers, commercial companies, health services and other key stakeholders including consumers
- ✓ Assists the hub and its members to attract and retain leading scientists and clinicians
- ✓ Underpins the dissemination and implementation of research findings and evidence into clinical practice and health service policy and decision making

This ethos supports innovation driven by need and informed by practice, to boost returns from research.

Current initiatives

The ten year health and medical research strategy includes initiatives to support early stage venture capital, particularly medical device development and commercialisation. Together with knowledge brokering through the Hubs and infrastructure support, NSW is well placed to boost commercial returns from publicly funded research.

Health and Medical Research Hubs

The Office for Health and Medical Research (OHMR) launched the NSW Health and Medical Research Hub Strategy in July 2014. It aims to promote research collaboration and translation in NSW.

(<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/ohmr/Documents/OHMR-Hubs-Strategy-web.pdf>).

Research Hubs are defined as geographically proximate medical research institutes, local health districts, universities, Medicare Locals and other health and medical research organisations.

The Hubs encourage dynamic interactions between these groups to enhance clinical practice, new treatments, improved clinical and population health outcomes as well as improving health system decision-making. These interactions and programs of OHMR, promote collaborations that inform the development of medical technology and encourage translation; including commercialisation.

There are eight health and medical research Hubs and one rural and remote network in NSW. The Hubs are located as follows:

1. Sydney
2. Darlinghurst
3. Hunter
4. Illawarra - Shoalhaven
5. Northern Sydney
6. South Western Sydney
7. South Eastern Sydney
8. Western Sydney

Knowledge Brokering

A Hub Council has been established to drive strategic initiatives to enable health and medical research in NSW. OHMR and the Hub Council effectively broker knowledge exchange in the hubs to ensure links between clinicians, universities, commercial organisations and researchers are enriched.

The following strategic state-wide projects are currently being progressed through the Hub Council and are relevant to commercial return on research:

1. Embedding quality research into local health districts
2. Development of a commercialisation framework and guidance on the management of intellectual property
3. Establishment of a state-wide frame work for the evaluation of returns on research investment

Commercialisation Capability

OHMR is leading initiatives to build commercialisation capability in NSW are listed below.

Medical Devices Fund

The Medical Devices Fund (MDF) is a \$5 million per annum, competitive technology development and commercialisation program run by the Office for Health and Medical Research. The Fund was established in 2012 to support individuals, companies, public and private hospitals, medical research institutes and universities, to take local innovation to market and increase the uptake of NSW medical devices by the health system. Since establishment the fund two rounds of funding have been undertaken with a total of \$16.4 million allocated to medical devices companies.

Improvements in Round 2 of the MDF, ensured that a clinician was engaged to sit on the Expert Panel. Engagement of a clinician early in the commercialisation process was beneficial for grant applicants in order to progress their device successfully.

Medical Devices Commercialisation Training Program

NSW in partnership with the Rosenman Institute in San Francisco has established a Postdoctoral fellowship program in medical device commercialisation.

NSW-QB3 Rosenman Institute Scholar Program is a postdoctoral fellowships program for medical device researchers. The aim of the program is build medical device commercialisation expertise and capacity in NSW. The training program bridges the skill gap between medical device research and the commercialisation of innovative technologies in NSW.

This program will be conducted in two stages:

1) NSW Training

A 3 month intensive pre-selection program will be run in NSW. Participants gain skills in entrepreneurship, medical device design, development, and commercialisation. training program is also the selection process for two candidates to attending the NSW-QB3 Rosenman Institute Scholar Program in the United States.

2) US Fellowship

The top two candidates from the pre-selection program will be offered the opportunity to travel to California. The program brings together clinicians and local organisations recognised for their expertise in medical device innovation and translation. Successful candidates will be supported with a salary and stipend during their two year stay in California.

Conclusion

OHMR agrees that it is important to leverage state and federal opportunities to translate research and boost commercial, healthcare and health system outcomes from research. Leveraging initiatives will enhance productivity and competitiveness of Australia's research sector and augment efforts to build research capability and workforce skills.

OHMR's current program of work aligns particularly with the principles of supporting research infrastructure, providing better access to research and increasing industry relevant research training.

OHMR is keen to work with the Commonwealth Government to ensure that the Strategy going forward sets out mechanisms to facilitate collaboration and a framework to put results into practice. OHMR looks forward to having a role in engaging with federal bodies and linking with Commonwealth government agencies on behalf of the NSW health and medical research community. OHMR, through the Hub strategy, is well placed to assist with the translation of research into commercial outcomes that that will benefit Australia in the long term.