



Princess
Alexandra Hospital



**Queensland
Government**
Queensland Health

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Dear Simon,

Thank you for the invitation to provide a written submission on the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research. Please see outlined below my responses to the questions.

1. Why is it in Australia's interest to have a viable, internationally competitive health and medical research sector?

The spin offs for Australia for having a high international standing in this sector

- ensures that the Australian community is served by an efficient and quality health care system
- maintains a highly skilled workforce that sustains a culture of conducting the most efficient and effective research programs and translating research evidence into clinical practice

An internationally competitive sector

- helps the economy across the work force sectors of biomedical research, pharmaceutical and health care by generating ideas, products and employment.
- brings the best brains to Australia
- brings kudos and economic benefits as a preferred destination for education, training and investment

2. How might health and medical research be best managed and funded in Australia?

Research funding by government should be modelled to a long term strategic plan (beyond a political term) aimed at being the best in the world. Lessons can be learnt from strategies adopted by Japan and Singapore to position their health and research sectors at the forefront internationally. An analysis should be conducted of the top performing countries to ascertain how the management and funding models differ from ours and use this information to shape the course for Australia.

There is a structural flaw in the funding of medical research and health that drives a divide between the two. These two elements need to be integrated in the work place. The current system of research rewards discoveries but not health care outcomes, which is necessary to complete the loop of discovery and application. This is a weakness in the way research support is managed. We need a radical change in the structure of funding such that local networks or centres can create positions that integrate research with clinical care as new employment models of health care. Academic Health Science Centres, are models of health care that integrate teaching, research and clinical services based on partnerships between hospitals, universities and research institutes. They have been successfully established in the US and UK and are models for managing and funding health and research.



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3. What are the health and medical research strategic directions and priorities and how might we meet them?

The directions should be determined by what is confronting Australia in the next decade; lifestyle-related chronic diseases and the morbidities of an ageing society as life expectancy increases. Many of the current national health priority areas are relevant. The strategic direction should focus on

- Preventative programs eg educational, dietary or interventional programs to reduce obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cirrhosis, frailty
- Personalising treatment through the application of genomics
- Developing models of quality assessment by creating data registries, developing data standards for common clinical conditions including standardizing definitions, nomenclature to facilitate accurate comparison of outcome measures. Ensuring long term support and viability of such programs.

4. How can we optimise translation of health and medical research into better health and wellbeing?

Optimisation can be achieved by

- Funding the establishment of Clinical Research Centres (CRC), similar to what is available in the US and the UK for the conduct of human-oriented research. This is a glaring deficiency that has impeded the competitiveness of clinical research in this country. Medical Research Institutes in Australia are structured to support wet lab research and there is no equivalent for the conduct of human research. Presently most clinical research is conducted in ad hoc situations, frequently in unused space in a hospital. A CRC can also serve as a domain for training clinical researchers. Such centres should be funded under a competitive program such as the Clinical and Translational Science Awards Program in the US.
- Provide funding for implementation grants to support clinical practice change.
- Provide support for multidisciplinary and discipline-specific Clinical Networks to identify best practice in relation to prioritised clinical questions and then champion changes to clinical practice.
- Timely dissemination of research results to the clinical community (e.g., investigate on-line publication options).
- Dedicated research positions and fellowships which are based in the clinical environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Ho'.

Professor Ken Ho FRACP, FRCP (UK), MD
Chair
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