

SRHMRA Submission 85 —Nicholas Wong

I am an mid-career medical researcher based at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. I believe medical research is an important part of the Australian economy and there is much evidence for this in terms of the return on investment dollars. However, as I have progressed there is a significant gap in research funding and support for myself and colleagues at my level of experience in the current NHMCR funding system. To enhance health and medical research in Australia, there needs to be more support and acknowledgement for the mid-career researcher who are unpinning most of the current and cutting edge research output. As mid-career researchers we rely heavily on the reputation and track record of the principle investigator to garner project funding so much so that I am aware of a number of examples of mid-career researchers "ghostwriting" project grants for principal investigators because of less than stellar track record.

There are new investigator and career development schemes which are a step towards bridging the mid-career divide, however, these schemes are supporting researchers who's career has "developed" with extraordinary track records worthy of research fellowships. Moreover, I feel that fellowship schemes that fund researcher salaries should also have funds available for the research proper. Some of the philanthropic bodies have recognised this and are offering attractive fellowships that also include support for research consumables. Today's mid career researcher are tomorrow's research leaders. I have seen many talented colleagues leave academia because of the lack of funding and limited choices to apply for funding at their level. This is not because they are rubbish researchers but that the gap between early research training to independent research (up to 17 years or more) is so great, with very few levels of support available.

There needs to be additional support for mid career researchers as the level of financial uncertainty and job security is currently such that many of my colleagues have left science for more stable careers.