

## The Australasian Society for Dermatology Research: A New Player on the Team

The Australasian College of Dermatologists was formed in 1966, and membership has since grown from a few dozen to more than 350 fellows and 60 trainees. Dermatology in Australia has a strong clinical focus and most dermatologists are in full-time private practice. Australia, with a population of just over 21 million people, has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world, and skin diseases are the second most common group of diseases in Australia.

The promotion of the study of and research in dermatology is a stated aim in the constitution of our college, and support for research has come through the Scientific Research Fund, which awards annual grants of about \$15,000 to \$25,000 (Australian dollars). The discipline of academic dermatology is relatively new to Australia; the first chair of dermatology in the country was established at the University of Sydney in 1988. Before then, there were no dermatology research laboratories and no academic departments of dermatology. The second chair was established in 1995 at the University of Melbourne and the third in 2007 at the University of Queensland.

The Australasian College of Dermatologists has conducted annual scientific meetings since 1966. Attendance is restricted to fellows of the college, except by special invitation or dispensation from the college. Comparatively little laboratory-based research was reported at these meetings until 1988.

In 2003, in recognition that most dermatology research in Australia was conducted independent of dermatologists and that there was a need to foster interaction and collaboration between clinical dermatologists and research scientists, the Australasian Society for Dermatology Research (ASDR) was formed to provide a forum to promote investigative research into all aspects of skin biology and disease. The mission, goals, structural organization, and activities of the Society for Investigative Dermatology

(SID) in the United States and the British Society for Investigative Dermatology (BSID) were studied, along with the model of interaction between the SID and the American Academy of Dermatology. A constitution was constructed, and the resulting entity was registered as a not-for-profit organization. Letters of intent were written to the SID, the BSID, the Japanese Society for Investigative Dermatology, and the European Society for Dermatological Research.

The SID was particularly helpful in assisting with establishing the ASDR through information, advice, seed funding grants, and assistance with the publication of annual meeting abstracts in the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*.

The first president of the society was Ross Barnetson and the second was Rod Sinclair. The current president is Gary Halliday, and Prue Hart is the president-elect. The board was constructed with equal representation of dermatologists and basic scientists and included representatives from all major states in Australia. The board decided to run annual scientific meetings in tandem with the Australasian College of Dermatologists in May of each year. The first meeting of the ASDR was held in Sydney in May 2004 and attracted 100 participants. Since then, the meetings have been held yearly in the Australian cities hosting the Australasian College of Dermatologists meeting: Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, and the Gold Coast in 2009. Initially, the organization of the ASDR meetings was greatly enhanced by Sero Symposia International.

Visiting speakers at the society meetings have included Daniel Sauder (United States) in 2004; Thomas Schwarz (Germany), James Krueger (United States), and John McGrath (United Kingdom) in 2005; Eugene Healy (United Kingdom) and Kristian Reich (Germany) in 2006; Colin Jahoda (United Kingdom) in 2007; George Cotsarelis (United States) and Richard Gallo (United States) in 2008; and Meenhard Herlyn (United States), June Robinson (United States), and Gillian Murphy (Ireland) in 2009.

The yearly meetings have been well attended (80–100 participants), mainly by scientists

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working on skin together with research-oriented dermatologists. The standard of presentations has been high, and the feedback from the meetings has been excellent. A number of participants have come from neighboring countries within Southeast Asia. Each year we have discovered research groups previously unknown to us who are engaged in quality science. Knowledge has been exchanged, new ideas have been generated, friendships have been created, and research collaborations have been established. The benefits of these interactions will become increasingly apparent as the products of these collaborations are published.

We continue to encourage both national and international attendees from neighboring countries, as well as those from farther away. One of our aims is to foster both national and international collaboration and to promote strong ties with other international dermatology research societies. Ultimately, we seek to host an international congress for investigative dermatology in Australia.

Although we are all driven by the desire to benefit our patients through scientific research, the development of the scientific careers of younger researchers, giving investigative dermatology a stronger voice and presence in Australia and New Zealand, and promoting the work of these researchers internationally are all high priorities for the ASDR.

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