

Launch of Australian Massage Research Foundation

The launch of the new **Australian Massage Research Foundation** (AMRF) will be announced on 17 May 2008 at the Australian Association of Massage Therapists' (AAMT) 4th National Conference held in Adelaide. The AMRF will contribute to the growing body of research into the health benefits of massage therapy, with positive implications for public health in Australia.

Diana Thompson, President of the United States Massage Therapy Foundation, in launching the foundation, says "Monitoring Complementary Medicine research activity provides important background information to inform national policy development. With the sharing of ongoing research activities both nationally and internationally, it is imperative that Australia has sustained investment in this area. The US government recently announced a \$140 million allocation per annum in complementary medicine research activities".

An initiative of the national peak body AAMT, the sole purpose of the Foundation is to provide funds for research. The Foundation is a separate company with a Board of Directors, plus an Advisory Committee of key health stakeholders, to be appointed to determine the distribution of funds to research.

AAMT President Paula Nutting says "The launch of the AMRF is an exciting time in the massage industry history. We believe that research, both evidence based and empirical, is paramount. We have the resources to correlate some very powerful evidence-based research and within the next two years, we aim to generate significant data that can be used on a global scale. Working collegially with the American and Canadian Research Foundations we can establish greater credibility for the industry as a whole."

The Foundation, through initiating research into massage therapy, reflects the AAMT's priority to develop a research agenda that encompasses contemporary Australian healthcare concerns. Further funding is required to be dedicated to this area of healthcare so, by 2020, Australians can choose and receive treatment through a wholistic and integrated approach underpinned by knowledge, safety and best practice.

Two thirds of Australians use some form of complementary medicine each year, and studies undertaken in 2000 show expenditure on alternative therapies of approximately \$AUD2.3 billion.¹

There is a growing body of evidence to support that complementary medicine can make a significant cost-effective contribution to public health in chronic disease management². However, overall acceptance of complementary medicine by conventional medicine is variable and evidence based studies, including clinical trials, are necessary to strengthen acceptance and integration of proven therapies into the health care system.

AAMT is the peak representative body for massage therapists in Australia formed after the consolidation of five major massage associations across Australia in 2004. Since that time it has continued to develop relationships with government bodies and research universities to facilitate a range of research agendas relating directly to massage and healthcare.

The government's national research priority 'preventive healthcare' specifically targets "new, ethical, evidence-based strategies to promote health and prevent disease through the adoption of healthier lifestyles and diet, and the development of health-promoting products."³ The Department of Health and Aging in March this year allocated \$1.7 million to set up three National Institute of Complementary Medicine collaborative research centres.

Reflecting this priority, The Australian National Health and Medical Research Council has formally included complementary medicine in Australia's overall health and medical research strategic plan⁴.

AMRF is supported by Dr Mellick Chehade, Trauma Surgeon and Lecturer Department of Orthopaedics and Trauma Royal Adelaide Hospital, who will be welcoming delegates to the AAMT 4th National Conference in Adelaide. As the President of the Australian Orthopaedic Trauma Society and with a philosophy of collaborative minds to approaching solutions for patient care, Dr Chehade will be discussing the importance of validating and building credibility for musculoskeletal therapies through research and case studies.

¹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12200102?dopt=Abstract>

² <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/FUNDING/types/granttype/strategic/prevent.htm>

³ http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/national_research_priorities/priority_goals/promoting_and_maintaining_good_health.htm#3

⁴ <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/FUNDING/types/granttype/strategic/prevent.htm>

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Biographies

Paula Nutting, President Australian Association of Massage Therapists

Paula Nutting is a Musculoskeletal Therapist having completed her Bachelor of Health Science MST in 2007. She is also a registered Remedial Massage Therapist and completed her Nursing Registration in 1980 where she specialised in Intensive Care Nursing for 15 years at Australia's largest hospital.

She has lectured in both private college institutions and the TAFE system in Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor Massage and is researching the effects of inefficient muscle firing patterns and human biomechanics. She is the current President of the Australian Association of Massage Therapists residing on both the Ethics and Education and Training Committees.

Diana I. Thompson, LMP – President Massage Therapy Foundation, US

Ms. Thompson is a licensed massage practitioner in the state of Washington. She began her practice in Iowa in 1979, working exclusively with college athletes, and became licensed in Washington in 1984 where she founded Lakeside Massage–The Injury Clinic. Diana has taught at dozens of massage schools throughout the United States, including Bastyr Naturopathic University and Seattle Midwifery School. She has presented at state and national massage, physical therapy, chiropractic and midwifery conventions and seminars, and has been a consultant for several NIH funded research projects, and for regional and national insurance carriers and networks. Her first book was published in 1993 and the third edition, *Hands Heal: Communication, Documentation, and Insurance Billing for Manual Therapists* was published in 2005.

Dr Mellick Chehade, Trauma Surgeon and Lecturer Department of Orthopaedics and Trauma, Royal Adelaide Hospital

Dr Mellick Chehade is a biomechanical engineer, an orthopaedic surgeon at Royal Adelaide Hospital and President of the Australian Orthopaedic Trauma Society. His expertise was enlisted at the hospital to devise artificial bones that behaved exactly like human ones. Tissues and tendons, too, were all tested rigorously so they matched their human equivalents.

AAMT has been invited by Dr Chehade to be involved with the Australian Musculoskeletal Education Competencies project, which is currently developing National Core Competencies in Musculoskeletal Basic and Clinical Science for Australian medical schools. The AAMT membership is excited to be able to participate in this project.