

# National Institute of Complementary Medicine: an Update

## \$2.9 million committed to complementary medicine research sector

National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) was established at the University of Western Sydney in 2007 after a decade of agitation by researchers and industry to have a coordinating, oversight agency that could contribute to policy development, national research priorities, clinical guidelines development and many other aspects that were desperately needed in the field. NICM was seeded with two years of funding in a joint, bipartisan support from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments.

During its first three years of operation NICM established three Collaborative Centres with additional industry funding, demonstrated the cost effectiveness of a range of complementary medicine interventions in collaboration with Access Economics, funded several integrative healthcare pilot studies (two with the National Breast Cancer Foundation) and galvanised a \$75 million strong Cooperative Research Centre bid. The Institute has provided the vital link between researchers, practitioners, industry and government.

The Collaborative Centres have supported the professional development of 13 PhD students and 21 postdoctoral fellows and research associates. NICM has made significant progress in advancing a collaborative approach to complementary medicine research aligned with national health priorities. It has also established a reputation as an independent, authoritative voice for the complementary medicine sector.

In a major boost to the complementary medicine research sector the NICM has received \$2.9 million in funding from philanthropic and industry supporters.

This funding will ensure NICM can continue to drive the complementary medicine research sector in Australia and provide a vital link between researchers, practitioners, industry and government.

The major part of the funding has been received from the privately owned Jacka Foundation of Natural Therapies (JFNT). Their \$2 million bequest will be used to establish The Jacka Foundation Chair in Complementary Medicine in partnership with the University of Western Sydney (UWS). UWS has committed to endowing the Professorial Chair to support research undertaken by NICM. The Chair will oversee NICM operations and provide clear, expert support for research development and integration of evidence-based complementary medicine into healthcare services.

Leading companies Flordis, Blackmores and Catalent will become supporting partners of NICM, each committing additional financial support.

According to NICM's interim executive director Professor Alan Bensoussan, the landmark donation from JFNT combined with industry and university support will secure NICM as a strong, national agency for Australia.

'Our primary goal will still be to increase the integration of well-evidenced complementary medicine into routine healthcare by enabling translation of evidence into clinical practice and relevant policy to benefit the health of all Australians,' Professor Bensoussan said.

Over the next three years (2012–14) NICM will focus on sector reform, including creating better incentives to invest in research and improved integration of evidence-based interventions into mainstream practice. The Institute will continue to refine national research priorities, contribute to the development of clinical practice guidelines and work alongside government, consumers, industry and other stakeholders to strengthen relevant policy.