

# Royal Australasian College of Physicians

**Health and Medical Research Strategic Plan 2014-18**

## Purpose

The purpose of the College's Health and Medical Research strategic plan is to provide a blueprint to guide the development of our research investment and policy framework through articulating clear direction and priorities for the years 2014-18.

## College Profile

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is a diverse and energetic organisation responsible for training, educating and representing over 14,300 physicians and 6,500 trainees in Australia and New Zealand.

The RACP is responsible for the training and assessment of doctors who have completed their primary medical degree and prevocational hospital training, and who aim to achieve recognition as specialist physicians (in one or more of a wide range of disciplines). This further training is administered through the RACP, and includes supervised employment in hospitals and

other professional settings, written and clinical examinations and workplace based assessment. The College also administers a program of continuing professional development for Fellows following completion of training. (Refer to 'Training Pathways' and Continuing Professional Development on the College website for more information).

The RACP represents physicians by advocating on their behalf to governments and regulatory agencies, health organisations, other medical colleges, consumer groups and to the general public.

The RACP seeks to better the health of all Australians and New Zealanders through development of health and social policy and advocating for its implementation. (Refer to Policy and Advocacy for more information).

## Context for the Planning Process

The safe and effective practice of modern medicine draws ever increasingly on the outputs

of health and medical research. Over the past 40-50 years the scale and breadth of medical research has grown exponentially to include a broad and diverse range of activities from large-scale molecular and cellular research conducted at a basic or discovery level, to clinical and population research, through to health services, health systems and implementation research.

Over the past decade there has been a growing emphasis on research translation and dissemination. This includes taking the outcomes of research and moving the findings through to new treatments, improved decision-making, effective policy formation and greater patient safety.

For these reasons physicians need to be research literate more than ever before. In addition, greater numbers of physicians should aspire to being active in research. Policies and funding models should encourage and support the involvement of physicians in research throughout their careers.

Given this context in 2013 the College formed a College Research Committee as one of the key subcommittees of the Board. One of the Research Committee's first tasks was to develop a strategic Health and Medical Research Plan.

## Role of the Research Committee

The Committee has five objectives:

- Determine the direction and priorities of research in the College through strategic planning;
- Consider and review the needs of the College in commissioning research to fulfil strategic objectives across the College including but not limited to research, policy and education;
- Direct the funds raised by the RACP Foundation or otherwise to support medical research (basic and clinical) and medical education, health services research and population health research in accordance with the College strategic plan:

- To take into account any specific conditions and requirements of the donations and bequests when determining funds for research awards, with such determination of funds to be in accordance with the College strategic plan and also in accordance with any procedures determined by the College Board for the allocation of funding for research and education; and:
- Work with other appropriate College bodies to support the purposes of the College Research Committee

## Vision

**That the RACP is widely recognised and respected as a supporter and enabler of high quality health and medical research that is sustainably funded and has a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the broader community.**

## Desired Plan Outcomes

The College seeks to achieve the following high-level outcomes through the Strategic Plan:

- That greater financial support and career options are available to research active physicians throughout the health system
- That research is embedded at all levels of physician training and practice
- That research is embedded at all levels of the College's activities, decision-making and policy formation
- That emphasis is given to research projects that are of the highest quality and impact
- That research conducted by physicians increasingly contributes to improved individual and community health and health outcomes – especially for marginalised and low socio economic populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Maori

- That when RACP funds are to be utilised, priority is allocated to research projects that are Investigator driven
- That growing numbers of researchers and physicians are members of productive research networks and collaborations
- That the College establish itself to be seen as a valued, independent voice for the role of research in supporting and enabling efficient and effective health services

## Key Collaborators and Partners

Key collaborators and partners include:

- College Fellows and Trainees
- The RACP Foundation
- State and Federal Governments
- Health Services and the broader health system: public, private and not for profit
- Research funders such as the NHMRC
- Patients, families and the broader community
- Universities and Medical Research Institutes
- Philanthropic donors
- Health Insurers
- Disease groups and charities
- Industry
- Affiliated Special Societies in the subspecialties of Internal Medicine

## Operating Principles

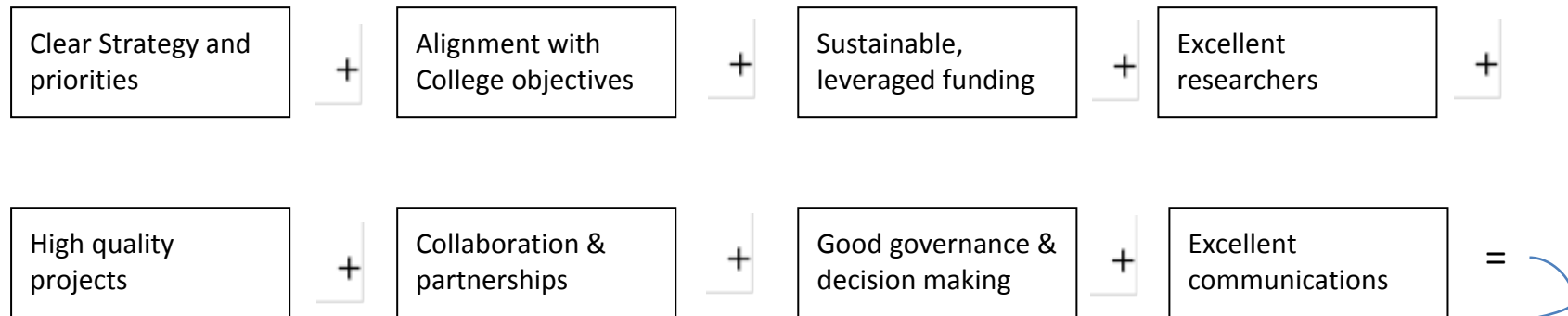
The following Principles guide our decision-making:

1. **Excellence** – the research and research policy that the RACP supports must be nationally and internationally competitive and promote excellence
2. **Focus** – the College’s investment in research will focus on four key areas (Clinical Research; Early Career Researchers; Education Methodology Research; and: Health Services and Health Systems research
3. **Impact** – research should: contribute to plausible improvement to health outcomes; create useful knowledge; have positive impact on individual and populations; create IP or a commercial product; be achievable; be relevant to the career stage of the individual physician
4. **Alignment to College strategy and policy** – That is, the focus and direction laid out in this plan and other policy documents
5. **Equity** – the portfolio of funded research should balance over time across issues such as researcher gender including women with career disruption; geography; indigenous issues; career stage; disease groups; cultural groupings
6. **Leverage** – maximise the impact of any College financial investment; build research networks; contribute to individual CVs and career sustainability for researchers
7. **Collaboration and partnership** – work actively with disease groups; funders; research networks; Universities; Medical Research Institutes; hospitals and health services; insurers etc.
8. **Investigator driven** – lessen vested interests; ensure independence of methodology

9. **Innovation and originality** – reward excellence, focus and impact
10. **Sustainability** – maximise sustainable support for researchers across the career span

## Drivers of Success

The following 8 “drivers” underpin the success of the College’s research strategy:



**The RACP is widely recognised and respected as a supporter and enabler of high quality health and medical research that is sustainably funded and has a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the broader community.**

## Research Foci 2014-18

Through an extensive process of consultation and reflection the College has identified four key research foci which will be our priorities.

### 1. Clinical Research

The National Institutes of Health defines “clinical research” as research conducted with human subjects (or on material of human origin such as tissues, specimens and cognitive phenomena) for which an investigator (or colleague) directly interacts with human subjects. The College’s Fellows, Members and Trainees are all credentialed medical practitioners so it is appropriate that research focussed on human subjects is a priority. It is recognised that many College Fellows conduct basic and laboratory research and the Research Committee's focus on clinical research should not be seen to detract from the importance of basic research efforts. . Indeed, Fellows should consider clinical research projects that build on the excellent basic

research across Australia’s MRI’s, universities and hospitals.

### 2. Early Career Researchers

It is increasingly difficult for clinicians to establish and maintain a research career and it has been noted around the world that the “clinician-researcher” is a dying breed. In addition, there is a growing shortage of academic clinicians. Our focus will be on supporting early career researchers to establish and develop their research careers during and following completion of higher degree research training. The current Research Establishment Fellowships are in alignment with this objective. Support may include practitioner researcher support for stipend and project costs including travel. The College will continue to offer a range of research entry scholarships for those undertaking research higher degrees (Masters, PhD or other equivalent research higher degrees) but as a lesser priority.

### 3. Education Methodology Research

The College is a large scale provider of highly targeted professional education and training. It is therefore essential that our programs have an academically defensible underpinning based on evidence. There is, however, a paucity of research in this field. Our efforts in this area of research will focus on building a high quality evidence base for effective and efficient physician training and re-validation in line with the College education strategies. It is also essential that we invest in capacity building to ensure we have available a sustainable pool of world-class adult education researchers. It is likely that this focus area will be conducive to research partnership funding applications such as ARC Linkage grants.

### 4. Health Services and Health Systems Research

Physicians have a clear role to play in providing valuable perspectives on the organisation and delivery of health services. The health sector must become more adept at driving innovation and change more quickly through health practice

in a safe and cost effective manner. It is recognised that health services and health

systems research is a very broad area including population health and implementation research.

Careful consideration will be given to defining the College's focus in this area of research focus.

## Strategic Objectives and Initiatives

### 1. Clinical Research

Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Priority Actions, Initiatives and Timing
<p><b>To encourage and support College Members, Trainees and Fellows to conduct high quality clinical research throughout their careers.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More and higher quality research projects funded</li> <li>▪ Greater numbers of physicians engaged in research across their career span</li> <li>▪ Research embedded in all levels of training and practice</li> <li>▪ Improved research literacy amongst physicians</li> <li>▪ Members and Fellows better able to interpret and apply research results</li> <li>▪ Strengthened research networks</li> <li>▪ Funding leveraged from within and outside the RACP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alignment of all College Foundation research funding including bespoke grants and scholarships</li> <li>▪ Nominal allocation of all current College awards (Grants, Scholarships and Fellowships) against one of the four research foci</li> <li>▪ Further development of award structure with particular focus on research and trainees</li> <li>▪ NB the above initiatives are dependent on future fundraising success</li> </ul>



## 2. Early Career Researchers

Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Priority Actions, Initiatives and Timing
<p><b>To support and enable early career researchers to establish and develop a sustainable research career and to encourage health services employers to creatively resource the role of the clinician-researcher.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greater number of funded research positions and scholarships for early career physicians.</li> <li>▪ Protected time for more physician researchers</li> <li>▪ Increased leverage for College financial support</li> <li>▪ More researchers able to establish a post PhD research career</li> <li>▪ Closer, productive relationships with research funders such as NHMRC and research providers including Universities and Medical Research Institutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure alignment with NHMRC and other key funding bodies</li> <li>▪ MoUs with key disease charities and other funders</li> <li>▪ Establish close alignment with University MD programs and U/G medical programs with a research component</li> <li>▪ Encourage SACs that no longer permit a year of doctoral research training during Advanced Training to reconsider in light of deleterious consequences for training research leaders in their subspecialty</li> </ul>

### 3. Education Methodology Research

Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Priority Actions, Initiatives and Timing
<p><b>To promote and foster research in educational methodology that informs the College's educational role which ensures that the College's education and training programs are based on the best possible academic evidence.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Better understanding of how physicians learn most effectively</li> <li>▪ A defensible body of academic evidence to underpin program structure, curricula and learning approaches</li> <li>▪ Evidence-based best practice approaches embedded in all the College programs</li> <li>▪ Enhanced and sustainable medical education research capacity in Australia and overseas</li> <li>▪ More effective programs for trainees and re-validation processes for Fellows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build database of top academic medical education researchers based in Australia and key overseas jurisdictions</li> <li>▪ Establish joint educational methodology research priorities with the College Education Committee</li> <li>▪ Establish RFP process for education methodology research</li> </ul>

#### 4. Health Services and Health Systems Research

Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Priority Actions, Initiatives and Timing
<p><b>To enhance the capacity of physicians to conduct high quality research in health services, health systems, population health and implementation research that has a positive impact on health systems, patient and community well-being.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More physicians conducting and participating in high quality health services/systems research</li> <li>▪ Enhanced capacity of Physicians to lead and facilitate innovation and health system/service improvements</li> <li>▪ Improved patient and population health outcomes</li> <li>▪ Faster and safer uptake of research outcomes and innovation</li> <li>▪ Strengthen research networks and collaboration</li> <li>▪ Stronger relationships between the College and health services</li> <li>▪ Increased comparative research between Australia and New Zealand health systems and populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop environmental scanning processes to ensure the College is well positioned to respond to key government research policy or funding initiatives in Australia and New Zealand</li> </ul>

5. *Plan implementation, governance, communications and administrative support*

Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Priority Actions. Initiatives and Timing
<p><b>To provide the necessary implementation planning, governance frameworks and administrative support to ensure that the strategic plan priorities and initiatives are efficiently and effectively implemented across all of the Colleges activities and with key partners.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness of the Research Plan across all key College bodies</li> <li>▪ Clear and effective internal College governance and decision-making frameworks</li> <li>▪ Sustainable funding for the research strategy</li> <li>▪ Alignment with College Foundation and Education committee</li> <li>▪ Strong awareness externally of the College’s strategy and position on key health and medical research issues</li> <li>▪ The College is seen as a reliable, independent voice and source of policy and strategy solutions for health and medical research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentation of strategic plan to RACP Board</li> <li>▪ Development of formal communication plan following formal release of Research Strategy</li> </ul>

## Appendix 1: Stakeholder Benefits Matrix

The benefits or outcomes key stakeholders would value from the research strategy.

Stakeholder	Benefit	Stakeholder	Benefit
<b>RACP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy/focus for research</li> <li>▪ Profile as a research supporter</li> <li>▪ Key issues addressed and improved</li> <li>▪ Effective use of money and other resources</li> <li>▪ Consolidated approach to Fellowship and post Fellowship support</li> </ul>	<b>Patients and Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved health outcomes</li> <li>▪ Well trained and research informed physician workforce</li> <li>▪ Research response to local health issues and challenges</li> <li>▪ Maximised clinical outcomes</li> <li>▪ Access to clinical trials and new treatments</li> <li>▪ Participate and contribute to research</li> </ul>
<b>Fellows</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NB not all Fellows will receive a personal benefit from research</li> <li>▪ Research support post Fellowship</li> <li>▪ Research networks to work with</li> <li>▪ Research relevance to practice challenges</li> <li>▪ \$s well spent</li> <li>▪ Opportunity to participate in research</li> <li>▪ Evidence-base for education and re-certification</li> </ul>	<b>Governments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As per patients and community</li> <li>▪ Cost effective health treatments</li> <li>▪ World class research informed workforce</li> <li>▪ Ideas and innovative approaches</li> <li>▪ Independent, expert advice on health and medical research issues and challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Trainees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding for training and building a research career</li> <li>▪ Awards and scholarships</li> <li>▪ Move evidence based education</li> </ul>	<b>Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriate partnerships of equals</li> <li>▪ Access to investigator ideas</li> <li>▪ Credibility</li> <li>▪ Expertise of Fellows</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Benefit	Stakeholder	Benefit
<b>Health services/system/hospitals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well –educated work force that is research literate</li> <li>▪ Better treatments</li> <li>▪ Improved health outcomes</li> <li>▪ Clinical academic workforce</li> <li>▪ Capacity to use research to address specific, local and global health issues</li> <li>▪ Ways of embedding research in healthcare settings</li> </ul>	<b>Research funders (NHMRC, ARC, disease groups, private insurers etc.)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research and research translation workforce</li> <li>▪ College leverage for research funding allocated</li> <li>▪ Focus on specific clinical and population or health system/service issues</li> <li>▪ Advice and an independent view</li> </ul>
<b>Universities, medical research institutes and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to Fellows as HDR supervisors and co-supervisors</li> <li>▪ Publications and research productivity</li> <li>▪ Clinical academics</li> <li>▪ Access to hospital/health system</li> <li>▪ Access to patient populations and research materials</li> <li>▪ Health systems/services research</li> </ul>		
<b>Philanthropy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well organised policy and Governance framework to address research issues</li> <li>▪ Access to the RACP Foundation processes and administrative systems</li> <li>▪ Prestige of the College</li> <li>▪ Access to the expertise of the College Fellows</li> <li>▪ Possible leverage to own donations via College partnerships e.g. NHMRC</li> </ul>		

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