



FIRST ASTN OPEN FORUM (Perth)*

The first ASTN Open Forum meeting was held in Perth on Wednesday 4 October 2006, as part of the Annual Australasian Sleep Association and Australasian Sleep Technologists Association Scientific meeting. The aim of this first meeting was to let people know how the Network came into being, what progress has been made to date, how processes and meetings would work in the future, and to allow clinicians and researchers from a variety of areas within sleep health to talk briefly about the key ideas and issues within those areas. Below is a brief summary of the speakers and discussions. Individual speakers' presentations are available in PDF format on the website.

Session 1: The ASTN so far

Ron Grunstein explained the background to the Network, including NHMRC funding and the roles of the Chief Investigators. He outlined the Mission Statement as well as the Aims and Objectives of the Network. Specifically, the ASTN aims to enhance collaboration in clinical sleep research, improve design, planning, biostatistics and health economics, establish large scale investigator driven trials, and improve Australian and New Zealand marketability for industry-sponsored research.



Ron Grunstein addresses the first ASTN Open Forum

Doug McEvoy explained the progress made so far in 2006. Since the commencement of funding, we have appointed Melanie Harris as National Project Officer, and held several planning meetings, mainly to evolve ideas using the ANZICS model. We have developed the website and are distributing regular newsletters. We are currently finalising ASTN policy, processes and committees for assessing and approving studies, as well as developing an appeals process. We are currently seeking a consultant biostatistician and health economist. Doug also outlined the Sleep Apnea cardioVascular Endpoints (SAVE) study, which will be run in China.

Rob Pierce gave a brief overview of the PSG concordance project, which currently involves sleep laboratories at the Austin (VIC) and Royal Adelaide (SA) hospitals. The aim of the project is to work towards consistent training, scoring and reporting for sleep studies, and to develop a rule-based scoring manual which will be used by multicentre clinical sleep trials.

Melanie Harris, the ASTN National Project Officer, outlined the current organisation of meetings and processes for the network. This was then open for discussion from the floor, as we are aiming to develop the network with input from the sleep health community in general. We aim to hold regular, open meetings alongside the annual TSANZ / ASA scientific meetings which are held in March and October.

Session 2: Ideas for the ASTN

Sutapa Mukherjee talked briefly about the importance of *Genetics* in modern sleep research, and the potential for use in large-scale clinical trials.

Leon Lack outlined the key issues for *Insomnia* research. Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder, affecting 5–10% of individuals, rising to 15–20% in old age.

Sally Ferguson and **Philippa Gander** talked about the key questions in *Sleep Deprivation, Circadian Rhythms and Health*.

Kurt Lushington discussed *Sleep and Young People*, including educational issues about sleep for children and their development.

Mary Carskadon also commented on this, highlighting the importance of *Mood and Depression*, and the need for research into *Childhood Obesity*.

David Hillman outlined the main issues in *Obstructive Sleep Apnea Diagnostics*, and working towards simplifying them.

Craig Hukins talked about *OSA Treatment Strategies*, highlighting a need for research into reliability of CPAP titration.

John Sweica discussed *Movement Disorders* and the need for research in this area, in particular with a genetic component.

Main discussion points

How does funding/sponsorship work?

Projects must attract their own funding, although small amounts of seed funding may be available. We aim to start with a high impact study – our current focus is to lay down tools and infrastructure and to assist researchers to attract funding by improving applications and increasing subject numbers.

Is the ASTN for large/experienced labs only? Is the ASTN solely for clinical trials?

The ASTN is for EVERYONE – all can bring ideas to the Network to work on and improve. We also aim to help to identify and bring together collaborators. We are not solely focused on large trials; the Network can also help develop protocols and provide infrastructure for smaller studies. We anticipate a broad range of studies will be included – some may not be completely 'clinical' in nature.

What does the Network plan to achieve in the next 5yrs?

We believe that *sustainability* is key – the NHMRC will be interested in *progress*.

Therefore, we aim to have 3 high impact projects with funding and ready to start in 5 years.

What is/will be the NHMRC view on the Network?

There is no need for all sleep-related proposals to go through the Network. Theoretically there would be no negative effect on proposals going through the NHMRC which are *not* endorsed by the ASTN. We aim to *build capacity* for major studies – *not* become a gatekeeper for all sleep research funding.



Kurt Lushington and Philippa Gander



Leon Lack, Philippa Gander, Kurt Lushington and Sally Ferguson discuss key issues in sleep research at the first ASTN Open Forum

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