

Nicola Smith



Hello and welcome to the September edition of the ASCEPT newsletter. We've got a few exciting things to look out for in the newsletter this month. The first thing is we'll be announcing our theme-based online student symposia. It's going to run over four days. You choose the themes that represent the SIGs that you're part of or the areas that you're interested in, and you sign up for free. And you'll be able to either meet in hubs in various locations around Australia and New Zealand, or just listen from the comfort of home or at your office. So look out for a call for student abstracts, as well as more details as they become available.

We will also be calling for new board members. Come and join us on the ASCEPT board. We're a very friendly bunch and there's lots of great opportunities to meet new people.

When we're putting out the call for the board members, we'll also be putting out the call for some of our really big prizes. The first, our bumper prize, the Australian Medicines Handbook ASCEPT Felix Bochner Award, which is worth up to \$10,000 for a mid-career researcher to travel overseas or to a meeting here and support their team to attend ASCEPT or something else that's really going to advance their research. This can be for education, for basic research or clinical researchers.

We'll also have a call for the Tony Smith Quality Use of Medicines Prize and the Gillian Shenfield Early Educator Award. But to learn a bit more about the Felix Bochner Award, I'd like to introduce Senior Lecturer Mouna Sawan from The University of Sydney. Mouna, lovely to have you join us today.



Mouna Sawan

Thank you, Nicola.



Nicola Smith

And now, you won the very first Felix Bochner Award. I'd love you to tell us a bit about what you did with the money and how you made the most of that opportunity.



Mouna Sawan 1:59

I was definitely honoured to be receiving the first inaugural Felix Bochner Award. And yeah, so my plan really is to make the most out of the award, to make sure it's impactful, not only for my research career, but also make an opportunity to showcase

how great we do well what we do as Australian researchers internationally. So it was basically a kind of a prolonged process. I started my first international visit in March and then I basically extended the opportunity to continue those opportunities to disseminate my research to an international audience by attending the World Pharmacy Congress. So I managed to basically link both together within the same year. So I started off with my first visit to Paris, where I was invited to speak at the Paris Brain Institute, which is an affiliation of Sorbonne University. And it was an opportunity to really talk about Australian medicine's policy around shared decision making and how that would possibly apply within the context of the French population.

So we gained really interesting insights. And then following on from my visit at Sorbonne University, I went to the Alzheimer's Disease International Conference, which was in Lyon. And international conferences around dementia has a special place in my heart because the conferences are really kind of organised around to ensure the lived experience participation of consumers, as well as researchers. So I really got an opportunity to really sort of connect with both worlds, to talk to your research and also see how it applies to the end users, so the people that have been impacted by dementia. So it was really rewarding in that regard. And it also has a special place because at international conferences around dementia, I met with colleagues from NYU. So there's an opportunity to sort of rekindle those connexions again. And also, interestingly, and I think other Australian researchers might find this, you get to meet other Australian researchers abroad.



Nicola Smith

Yes, that happens all the time. We come out of the, we come out of the woodwork.



Mouna Sawan

We do. So I did that. I did Alzheimer's Disease International. And then following right after that, I went to London and I was invited to do a visit at a research institute called the Academic Centre for Healthy Ageing. And I met amazing international researchers around with a geriatrician, so Professor Dr. Adam Gordon, as well as Liz Sampson. And together they're pretty much a mighty team and it was a newly established research institute. So it really was just off the ground in a few months and I got to visit them at the early stages.

And it made me really think about the importance of incorporating person-centered care and try to align that with medicines management.



Nicola Smith

So I wonder, I might actually kind of talk about your role as a board member, because you actually came onto the board at the start of this year. And one of the things I think you've been really valuable, the experience that you've brought to the board is your passion and focus on people with lived experience and involving consumers or whatever your preferred label is, to include people with lived experience from the very start with research. So I wonder if you could tell us a bit about, you know, what made you decide to nominate for the board and what your experience so far has been?



Mouna Sawan

So previous to thinking about being nominated for the board, I was a co-chair of a really important SIG out there. Shout out to PharmacoEpi SIG out there. It was pretty hands-on. So Edwin and I, we would organise webinars.

And you know, we would connect with early career researchers around, you know, pharmacoepi to talk to about new methodologies and training them up. And it was just an opportunity to give back. And because I did it for a solid two years, I felt that I was ready for the next kind of opportunity to sort of build my capacity in terms of my service role.

And I just felt like, you know, ASCEPT is a place where, you know, people's feedback and ideas is just, you know, it's open. I, you know, I felt, yeah, I felt it was just a very welcome kind of platform. And so I put my hands up and lo and behold, I got nominated.

So I do really feel like my ideas and suggestions are welcomed, thanks to the previous leader of Bridin and now yourself, Nicola. And, you know, it's no easy feat kind of trying to sort of change the way we do research, right? But, you know, I felt like it was just right time, right place.



Nicola Smith

Yeah, I agree. It's really important with the changing funding landscape, but also our changing understanding of research and a focus on the fact that we really need to be

making an impact on the people who are involved and it's affecting. And the best way to do that is by asking them what they need and what their expectations are.

MS Mouna Sawan

Yeah.

Exactly.



Nicola Smith

So I want to just take the moment to congratulate you again on being our inaugural AMH ASCEPT Felix Bochner Awardee and also for joining the board and your contribution so far. You've got another year and a bit to go and you've been a really valuable addition. Hopefully this is inspiration for people to nominate for the award but also to think whether they're ready to put their hand up to join the ASCEPT board. So thank you very much, Mouna.

MS Mouna Sawan

Thank you.