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## Evaluating National Health And Medical Research: International Bench-Marks And Evaluation Issues.

### Abstract

There has been growing pressure on research funding agencies in most countries through the 1990s to report on the outcomes of publicly funded national research investments. These pressures have come from national governments, tax paying communities, the funding agencies themselves and the institutions and research communities that undertake such research. The imperatives to report regularly to government have become institutionalised in some countries through legislation such as the US Government Performance and Reporting Act (GPRA). Recent experience in Australia has been the requirement by the Federal Department of Finance and Administration to conduct output pricing reviews of government agencies including research organisations such as CSIRO and ANSTO.

As a consequence there has been considerable effort in many countries to develop evaluation methodologies to underpin national research reporting. Health and medical research, while generally regarded as important public good research, is now pressed by the same demands as other research fields to account for public investments in terms of value of outcomes and value for investment from the institutions that fund health and medical research

While national health investment and patterns of research investment vary considerably across countries, there are growing efforts for research funding institutions to 'bench-mark' their performance against similar agencies in overseas countries. The Australian NHMRC has recently commissioned some research in this area of benchmarking outcomes performance. This paper reports on current trends in Australia and a range of other countries toward international benchmarking of research performance. Comparative data from overseas uncover some unique and interesting aspects in the Australian health and medical research funding system.

The authors present this work in the context of their analyses of mechanisms for evaluating Government research programs in Australia and overseas over the past decade. The paper suggests possible future routes for carrying out health research evaluation in Australia.

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