



Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

34 Jeffcott Street West Melbourne Victoria 3003, Australia
+61 3 9320 0444 | admin@acem.org.au | ABN 76 009 090 715

7 October 2020

Professor Ian Frazer AC
Chair, Australian Medical Research Advisory Board
Department of Health
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Professor Frazer,

We write to you following the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine's (ACEM) submission to the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) consultation to inform the third Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020-2022. With the inaugural MRFF Strategy 2016-2021 (the Strategy) nearing completion, we commend the overall Strategy and the current Priorities that have been identified to best support the overarching vision and objectives of the Strategy. However, as outlined in our submission, we strongly recommend that certain aspects of the Priorities should be considered in the context of emergency medicine.

Emergency Departments (EDs) manage 10% of all clinical encounters across Australia, with annual ED presentations increasing at a rate greater than population growth since 2011-12. In 2018-19 there were over 8.35 million ED presentations across Australia and, while EDs are associated with critical illness and injury-related presentations, they are also responsible for providing care to a range of vulnerable patients who rely on the ED as their sole interface with the health system. In this regard, EDs have long been recognised as the 'canary in the health care coal mine'. When something is not being properly managed elsewhere in the health care system (for example, mental health and aged care), the problems then show up in the ED.

As outlined in our submission, EDs and emergency medicine research is uniquely positioned to play an important role in addressing many of the 2018-2020 Priorities. Indeed, the healthcare system of the future should be a learning health system: a system in which science, informatics, incentives and culture are aligned for continuous improvement and innovation, with best practices seamlessly embedded in the delivery process, patients and families as active participants in all elements, and new knowledge captured as an integral by-product of the delivery experience. Recognising the important function of emergency medicine in the healthcare system, and that there is a need for adequate investment in emergency medicine research, data, and infrastructure, will play a key role in ensuring the overall Strategy and Priorities of the MRFF are met in the next 12 months and beyond.

While ensuring that Australia has a health system that is fully informed by quality health and medical research is a complex challenge, it is not insurmountable. If you would like to discuss further how ACEM can assist in achieving the overall objectives of the Strategy in 2021 and beyond, please do not hesitate to contact Nicola Ballenden, Executive Director Policy and Strategic Partnerships (Nicola.Ballenden@acem.org.au; +61 3 9320 0479).

Yours sincerely,

Associate Professor Ed Oakley
Chair, Research Committee
Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

Dr John Bonning
President
Australasian College for Emergency Medicine