

Woolcock Institute Celebrates 25 Years of Medical Research

The Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, Australia's leading respiratory and sleep research centre, will celebrate its 25th anniversary this Wednesday with a testimonial dinner to mark its achievements and honour the work of its founding director, Professor Ann Woolcock, AO.

The occasion will be marked by a special speech by Professor Jeffrey M Drazen, Editor-in-Chief of the New England Journal of Medicine and the Distinguished Parker B. Francis Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Professor of Physiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, and Senior Physician at the Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Professor Drazen has long been a supporter of the Institute, describing it as one of the top six such medical research institutes worldwide.

The dinner will also be attended by Her Excellency, the Governor of NSW, Marie Bashir, The Minister for Science and Medical Research, the Honourable Frank Sartor and Ms Jane Halton, Secretary for the Commonwealth Department of Health.

The Woolcock boasts a world-class network of specialised researchers dealing with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of respiratory disease and sleep disorders.

It has over 50 research projects in progress and in 2005 achieved an income of \$6 million from an inaugural operating budget of \$73,000.

Professor Woolcock, who died of cancer in 2001, is recognised in Australia and internationally as a pioneer of asthma research. She was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1989 and in 1992 was the first woman in clinical medicine to be elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.

Professor Woolcock established the Institute in 1981 (then called the Institute of Respiratory Medicine) and played a pivotal role in ensuring its ongoing success.

Her work across the many and diverse fields of asthma research made Professor Woolcock a truly international expert. Among her many achievements, she became a driving force in asthma epidemiology and was the first in the world to introduce the idea of a standardised approach to asthma management and the establishment of an asthma action plan.

Initially research activities within the Institute focused mainly on asthma and allergy, however in recent years the scope has broadened. Research groups now exist in areas such as physiology, imaging, cell biology, molecular medicine, epidemiology, sleep and upper airway disorders, circadian rhythms and chronobiology, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, allergy, cystic fibrosis, smoking cessation and a clinical trials unit.

The Woolcock Institute also has engineering capabilities, using the latest technology in electronics, software and analysis to make devices in support of research.

Located in buildings across the University of Sydney and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital campuses, the Woolcock Institute has grown from humble beginnings to employ over 150 researchers and support staff.

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Jeffrey M. Drazen, M.D., editor-in-chief

Jeffrey M. Drazen, M.D., joined the New England Journal of Medicine as editor-in-chief in July 2000. At the Journal, Dr. Drazen's responsibilities include oversight of all editorial content and policies. His editorial background includes service as an associate editor or editorial board member for the Journal of Clinical Investigation, the American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology, and the American Journal of Medicine.

A specialist in pulmonology, Dr. Drazen maintains an active research program. Dr. Drazen has published more than 300 articles on topics such as lung physiology and the mechanisms involved in asthma. In 1999, he delivered the Amberson Lecture, the major research address at the annual meeting of the American Thoracic Society. In 2000 he received the Chadwick Medal from the Massachusetts Thoracic Society for his contributions to the study of lung disease.

Dr. Drazen is the Distinguished Parker B. Francis Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Professor of Physiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, and Senior Physician at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. In 2003, he was elected as a member of the Institute of Medicine. Dr. Drazen has served on numerous committees for the National Institutes of Health: the Respiratory and Applied Physiology Study Section; the Lung Biology and Pathology Study Section; the Pulmonary Disease Advisory Council; and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Advisory Council. He currently serves on the National Institutes of Health Public Access Working Group, the Veterans' Administration National Research Advisory Committee, and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Division of Lung Disease Executive Planning Committee.

Dr. Drazen earned his bachelor's degree and graduated summa cum laude from Tufts University. He received his medical degree from Harvard Medical School and completed his internship and residency at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. Dr. Drazen received honorary degrees from the University of Ferrara, Italy, and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.

A native of Missouri, Dr. Drazen lives with his wife in Winchester, Massachusetts. They are the parents of two grown sons.

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