

ATMS Association insights

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04/10/22



5 minutes with Sandra Grace (Australian Traditional Medicine Society)

ATMS Director and Chair of ATMS Research Committee and Academic Review Committee

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What led you to being involved with ATMS?

My involvement with ATMS spans several decades. It began when I established my own college in Sydney. I was keen to develop high quality courses that met the accreditation requirements of professional associations. A number of natural medicine courses were emerging in Australia at that time, and I could see the need for education of a standard sufficient to support the development of quality curriculum, teaching delivery, and assessment. Later, as I took on an academic career and became an enthusiastic researcher of integrative medicine and all things natural medicine, I encouraged ATMS to establish its Research Committee. I'm delighted to have seen both the Academic Review Committee and the Research Committee flourish over the years, and make a significant contribution to the quality of natural medicine education and research.

What are some of the projects that ATMS is working on at the moment?

We have just completed the 2022 National Natural Medicine Workforce Survey. This follows two similar workforce surveys that we have conducted in the past, each ten years apart. The 2022 survey was guided by a sector-wide Steering Committee. It was a wonderful opportunity for collaboration and I hope there are more in the future. We had a total of 1921 natural therapists

respond to the survey.

- Qualifications: 37% hold a Diploma, 22% hold an Advanced Diploma and 30% hold a Bachelor's degree in their primary discipline
- Practice setting: 58% work in solo private practice, 14% work in group practices with other natural therapists and 11% work in group practices with allied health practitioners

The full results of the survey will be published over the coming months.

The ATMS Research Committee is currently accepting applications for [research grants](#) of up to \$10,000, and for a two-year scholarship, with a value of \$32,000 per year, for a Masters or PhD candidate. This scholarship is a first for natural medicine in Australia and a significant contribution to the development of an evidence-base for natural medicine practice. ATMS have also recently launched their annual Natural Medicine Awards for 2022, for the Student, Practitioner and Clinic of the Year. Winners will be announced at our Gala Awards Dinner in November.

This is the tenth year that Chinese medicine practitioners have been Registered in Australia. ATMS continues to campaign on their behalf regarding their incomplete allied health status, private health insurance issues, access to the Medicare Benefits Scheme, restricted registration status of members, and their licence to perform needling.

ATMS is already planning for a Natural Medicine Week in 2023, following a great success again this year, with over 25 industry and education providers, 20 ambassadors and over 82,553 page views. The total outreach was estimated at 3.25 million people. This initiative showcases how much natural medicine practitioners have to offer the Australian public. Next year's Natural Medicine Week will be held from 22-28 May.

What are the benefits of being a member of an association?

There are numerous benefits of being an ATMS member, including access to discounted professional indemnity insurance, a quarterly journal, discounted seminars and webinars, access to health fund rebates (for eligible professions), regular updates on regulation changes (this has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic), and the opportunity to apply for the Simon Schot Education Grants, ATMS annual awards, ATMS research grants and scholarships, and lobbying with state and federal government ministers. Perhaps the most important benefit is having the opportunity to have your say, to be heard and to contribute to the future of natural medicine practice in Australia. For these reasons, my long association with ATMS has been a very rewarding experience.

How can a member get involved with their association?

That's easy. Members can directly contact any ATMS Director, or our Head Office in Sydney, about any matter that affects their clinical practice. They can join discussions on the ATMS' social media pages, respond to surveys, attend webinars/seminars (for CPE and also to network with their colleagues) and town hall meetings, and write articles for our journal. And of course, they can nominate to be elected by the membership as a director or accept our invitation to be an independent member of a committee. ATMS always strives to be member-led: new ideas and

feedback from members are integral to ATMS's ongoing mission and success.

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