

Article from the AICC(WA) Annual Healthcare Event in Perth, Thursday 29 July 2021, featuring Dr Norman Swan presenting on the topic “So you think you know what’s good for you?”

PRINCIPAL PARTNER:



featuring **Dr Norman Swan**
PHYSICIAN, JOURNALIST, AUTHOR AND
ABC RADIO NATIONAL BROADCASTER

speaking on
“So you think you know what’s good for you?”

VENUE PARTNER



EVENT CO-SPONSORS



It is somewhat surreal to reflect on the hosting of many successful years of annual AICC(WA) healthcare events where it had been taken for granted that in-person networking and presentations can simply be scheduled as a normal occurrence.

Even more-so, a year and a half into the pandemic, that some 13 million Australians remain or are emerging from hard lockdown. Amongst them, Dr Norman Swan, who broadcast from his Sydney home to a large and privileged Perth audience, residing in a unique part of the world that has been largely spared the relentless limitations brought by restriction of movement and imposed interpersonal isolation.



A gathering that included the sharing of experiences, companionship and professional exchange amongst some of Western Australia's leading medical practitioners, researchers and members of the AICC(WA).

Through introductory remarks, Mr John Cluer, Chief Executive, AICC(WA) provided the context of bilateral trade and intellectual exchange, and the Chamber's mandate of fostering connections between Israel and Australia.

Mr Cluer said "it is not just the commercial accomplishments of Israel that we need to take note of in Australia. Despite the early adoption of Covid vaccinations, and a rapid response that left many economic & social problems in its wake, it is the resilience and fortitude of the Israeli people that serve as an example. Over the past year Israel has been impacted by political paralysis, military conflict and Covid lockdown. Yet the population remain optimistic, caring, and deliver incredible social and community support. Wellbeing remains a very strong cultural trait. Israel's innovation and entrepreneurship continues at a rapid pace to deliver many of the health and lifestyle benefits that Dr Swan wonderfully promotes in his talks and [via his book](#), to Australian's and around the world."

His reputation as an informed, forthright and entertaining presenter preceding him, Dr Swan provided critical insight into our current Covid experience, management, and social impact.

Providing perspective through the medical history of pandemic management Dr Swan put forward the proposition of "Covid being a reminder that medicine is a social science". Using examples of ancient, middle age and recent pandemic response management, distinct patterns of behaviour and populations control emerge. To medical researchers Covid came as no surprise. "People were expecting a Coronavirus to cause a pandemic and indeed it was even war-gamed two years before it occurred".

What was lacking when the actual pandemic arrived, in Dr Swan's view, was collaborative and responsive global political leadership. The immediate shock and extent to which Covid would be affected by human behaviour was underestimated and misunderstood.

Discussing the impact on the way we live, Dr Swan reinforced his message that a national response broader than medical management is needed. "Unless we think of this in a social and societal context we miss the point. Technology and medical research are only part of the solution."

"We have not learned the lessons yet. Vaccine procurement has to be led from the top. Evidence that you have to go hard and fast has not been well understood in parts of Australia."

Commenting on his role as a journalist, Dr Swan drew a distinction between science journalism and the role of regular media journalists. He noted that when it comes to science, it is about evidence, not necessarily accompanied by a balance of opinions. He saw his role as providing "a balance of the evidence".

On the topic of telehealth, Dr Swan acknowledged both the limitations and opportunities of video and phone based medical consultation. He noted research which linked telehealth to late cancer diagnosis.

Dr Carlo Bellini, Director and Founder HIP Consulting, facilitated further dialogue incorporating audience Q&A. Candid and even controversial in tone, issues were discussed relating to the separation of politics from public health, vaccine rollout amidst the Delta strain, dealing with social complacency, and additional pressure on an already strained public health system. Challenging the structure of Australia's health system, Dr Swan observed that GP's are not incentivised to get the most out of general practice in order to reduce strain on hospital services, and that the Federal Government was not health reform minded.

Reflecting on wellness, alongside excerpts from his recently published book "So you think you know What's Good for You?", Dr Swan shared views that health anxiety is at an all time high, fuelled by the wellness industry.



Mr Royce Vermeulen, Chief Operating Officer, St John of God Midland Public & Private Hospitals, Professor John Mamo, Director, Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute (CHIRI), Curtin University, Professor Chris Moran, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Curtin University, Mr John Cluer, Chief Executive, Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce (WA), Mr Steve Arnott, Chief Executive Officer, Perron Institute, Clinical Prof David Joske, Chairperson, Solaris Cancer Care, Professor Gary Geelhoed, Executive Director, Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN), Dr Carlo Bellini, Founder & CEO, HIP Consulting, Mr Tony Fitzgerald, Managing Director & Co-Founder, Avicena Systems, Ms Elizabeth Chester, Director, External Affairs, Telethon Kids Institute and Mr Jayden Rogers, Chief Executive Officer, Linear Clinical Research

Dr Swan left his audience with a clear and candid message, delivered with good humour, to remember that medical practitioners and researchers are partners in both social science and bioscience. In her vote of thanks, Professor Lyn Beazley, AO, concurred that wellbeing is broader than medical treatment alone and that health consciousness is more important than ever. She thanked Dr Swan's honest and upfront insights which were greatly appreciated, and looks forward to the time when we can welcome Dr Swan back to the AICC(WA) for an in-person presentation.

The AICC(WA) thanks its sponsors, without whom this event could not have proceeded.

Principal Partner



Co Sponsors



Venue



Event Supporter



Mr Jayden Rogers, Chief Executive Officer, Linear Clinical Research and Ms Elizabeth Chester, Director, External Affairs, Telethon Kids Institute



Professor Gary Geelhoed, Executive Director, Western Australian Health Translation Network (WAHTN) and Clinical Prof David Joske, Chairperson, Solaris Cancer Care



Professor John Mamo, Director, Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute (CHIRI) and Mr Royce Vermeulen, Chief Operating Officer, St John of God Midland Public & Private Hospitals



Mr Tony Fitzgerald, Managing Director & Co-Founder, Avicena Systems and Prof Lyn Beazley AO FAA FTSE FACE CIE (Aust), Board Member, AICC(WA) & Sir Walter Murdoch Distinguished Professor of Science, Murdoch University



Mr Steve Arnott, Chief Executive Officer, Perron Institute



Dr Carlo Bellini, Founder & CEO, HIP Consulting





Professor Chris Moran, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Curtin University and Professor Fiona Wood AM, FRCS, FRACS, Board Member, Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce (WA); Director, Burns Service of WA; Clinical Prof with the School of Paediatrics and Child Health, UWA; Co-founder of the Fiona Wood Foundation



Professor Steve Wilton, Foundation Chair in Molecular Therapy, Murdoch University and Professor Peter Leedman AO, Director, Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research