

News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Newsletter #16; May 2004

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1. Update from Head of School
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The last month has been filled with major events for the University. We bade farewell, sadly, to the Vice Chancellor, Professor Rory Hume, and hope that this will end the bloodletting and commence a period of consolidation and promotion of Research excellence and probity within the University.

The exciting news from UNSW was about the establishment of UNSW Singapore

<http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2004/apr/Singapore.html>

– a major initiative bringing UNSW into Singapore with the full support of the Singaporean government. Although the Medical Faculty is not formally engaged as yet, we will be seeking opportunities for our postgraduate courses to be offered from a strong base in Singapore. I envisage us building on this to develop partnerships around research and teaching with a focus on the Asia-Pacific and we will work closely with the Dean to explore and develop these opportunities. I would like to hear from any staff, students and conjoint staff about links they have with Singapore – please email me through Ellie Castro (hos-sphcm@unsw.edu.au) as your involvement will assist in moving our School's contribution forward.

Last week saw a major international conference on health promotion – with the very active involvement of the School in its organisation and numerous sessions. It was wonderful to see staff and students so engaged in issues of the day – “Reinventing health” and debating cutting edge issues.

Congratulations to Jan Ritchie and Anne Bunde-Birouste who have been elected to regional positions of the International Union of Health Promotion and Education.

Anthony Zwi
Head of School

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2. From the Frontline
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The Learning Centre

The new workshop timetable for Academic Skills Workshops is available on their website:

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/ttable.html> workshops include:

Conversation Practice, Pronunciation, Oral Presentations, Avoiding Plagiarism, Writing a Critical Summary, PowerPoint, Excel, Referencing, Reading and Note-Making, Grammar Editing, Critical Thinking, Reading Critically, Listening and Note-Taking, Reflective Writing, Skills for Honours Students, Developing Critical Arguments Using Evidence, Talking About Tutoring, Report Writing for Postgraduates, Talk, Exchange, Listen and Learn (TELL) for postgrads, Academic Writing for Postgraduate ESL Students, Thesis Proposals, Essay Writing for Postgraduates, Advanced Writing Program For PG Research Students.

Gender Equity Study

Over the last 2 years considerable work has been done to collect information about the experiences of women and men working within the School - as many of you would know from having participated in this study.

The Equity and Diversity Unit have now compiled this information, along with statistics about the location of women and men in the school, into a draft report "Gender Equity Study of Staff in the SPHCM", and are inviting comments and feedback from us about the findings and the recommendations of the report. Please note that this report includes both academic and general staff women and men.

A meeting will be held for all staff on June 17 from 10-12 to discuss the report with Rachel Gray and Sybille Frank from the Equity and Diversity Unit - please come along! If you'd like a copy of the paper, email Ellie Castro (elizabeth.castro@unsw.edu.au).

A great outcome of this Report is that the School has been successful in getting a UNSW Equity Initiatives Grant to support us to improve the representation of academic women in the senior academic levels. As you may be aware, the SPHCM has a high representation of women academic staff (around 60%), but the majority of these are located at Academic Levels A and

B. A project team has been set up to explore the particular issues outlined in the Gender Equity report and to develop and implement strategies that might improve the location and experience of academic women - and hopefully bring benefits to all staff as well!

Jan McLean (email: jan.mclean@unsw.edu.au)

3. Rural Health Unit goes west..... and south a bit....

Cristina Colella and I were overcome with joy on the morning of Friday, 21st April with the thought of sitting on a bus for 8 hours with 35 3rd year med students. Why did we do this I hear you ask? We had the task of chaperoning, entertaining, babysitting Med students on their visit to the Greater Murray towns of Albury and Wagga where 4th year Med students can study for 18 months at the School of Rural Health.

Fast forward.....Friday evening we have made it, after settling in the students at their plush accommodation, so plush that I had one student asking where she could buy a toothbrush as she thought the rooms would supply them!!! Where did she think we were staying the Taj Mahal? We were at a pub in Albury....

After a lovely meal with academics and current 4th year med students, what else do you do on a Friday night in Albury? Yes, karaoke and no, not all med students are musically gifted. As I opened the door to my room, after sneaking away from the bouncing ball, I stop in mid-step, is that Cristina I can hear singing 'Like a Virgin?', oh joy, my room is above the karaoke bar!

After waking and realising that I had fallen asleep? we were on the bus to check out Albury and the clinical school. Following the tour of the hospital, Dr. Peter Vine, campus coordinator of Albury made a presentation on the curriculum of 4th year med and the amazing things you can do in the area. He was so convincing that after his talk I wanted to move there, job swap anyone? It was interesting to note that students who attend the School of Rural Health at all campuses have actually performed better on average than their city counterparts in their exams. Go the COUNTRY!

After a tour of Albury (there are so many cafes, very impressed) and a visit to the Albury Weir (only 11% full, not good) we hit the frog and toad to Wagga. Now we sort of got a little sidetracked, somehow we were on a back road, but the scenery was amazing, I have never seen it so dry down there, I hope they get rain soon. I was instructed that we had to stop at the 'Rock' (not THAT rock, a smaller wee one) where one of the staff from the Wagga clinical school was going to meet us to hand over two trays of caramel slice that she had baked for us, how good is that?? Country people being country people are just sooo nice and friendly. I did manage to get the bus driver lost as I really didn't listen to the instructions on where to meet her, hey it is a country thing to do laps of the main street, just showing the urban kiddies how it is done...

Finally after going the long way to Wagga, we pulled up at a lovely establishment called Romanos (the Queen stayed there in 1954 you know! Nothing but the best for our Med students). We were entertained again by the lovely Wagga staff, more presentations and food... I think it is all about food you know..

The students seemed quite impressed by this country thing, I think we managed to convert some urbanites in to thinking about spending their 4th year in a Rural Clinical School.

What else do you need? You are getting the best education, lovely friendly staff, patients that want to see you, ski field close by, wineries, (forgot to tell you, visited Charles Sturt winery and cheese shop, on Sunday morning and made a few purchases) Melbourne only a highway away and the lifestyle. It's all about the location really.....mmm perhaps I could study Medicine.

Justine Brindle



4. People

Niamh Stephenson - I am joining the school as a senior lecturer in social science in July this year. After undertaking my PhD in the interdisciplinary setting of the National Centre for HIV Social Research, I am really interested in developing my research and future projects with others in a context of interdisciplinary exchange at the SPHCM.

My work has involved addressing the role of medicine in the politics of everyday life. Most recently, I have been working at the Bankstown campus of the University of Western Sydney, teaching social science, health science and psychology students how to analyse everyday life (principally through courses in qualitative research methods). I am currently writing a book about applied social research and socio-political change, to be published by Palgrave/MacMillan. This book draws on an ongoing research project, funded by NSW Health, about the impact of treatments and developments on the individual and collective experience of being HIV positive in NSW today.

Between now and when I start in July, I can be found in the Samuels building room 226 on Tuesdays, and I look forward to the chance of getting to know you and to orientate myself towards life in the school.

5. Research news

The University has accepted the Joint NHMRC / AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice and is required to publish its own procedures and policy in this area. The Academic Board approved the UNSW Code of Conduct for the Responsible Practice of Research on 2 March 2004. The Code is located at -

http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/acboard/approved_policy/3_04_Code_of_Research_Practice.pdf

The Code will also be available on the Research Office website in due course. This Code provides guidance on what constitutes accepted standards of conduct for all staff and students engaged in research. All research activities are covered by this Code and all staff and students are expected to abide by the Code. Within the School copies will be distributed to all staff with a request that they sign acknowledging the Code and agreeing to abide by it. Anthony Zwi, as Head of School, is required to report to the Faculty on who has and has not signed their agreement to the Code.

All staff and students are expected to read the revised Code and refer to it whenever in doubt about the appropriate course of action in relation to their research activities. In particular, issues relating to recording and storage of data and authorship of papers need to be considered at regular intervals during the course of a research project.

Within UNSW, the Head of School is available for advice on these issues, as are the Associate Dean (Research) and other members of the Committee on Research.

6. Conference reports

At the World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education, the 18th conference held by the International Union of Health Promotion and Education, in Melbourne 26-30 April 2004, Anne Bunde-Birouste was elected to the Global Board of Trustees of the Union and Jan Ritchie was appointed Regional Director for the South Western Pacific Region for the next three years. In the next newsletter Jan and Anne will explain the mission of the Union and what these positions will do for the School in strengthening our international networks.

7. Upcoming events

Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service

Dr Cara Frame and an Aboriginal health worker from the AMS will be hosting a talk for the student Rural Health Club, RAHMS. They will speak on Aboriginal Health issues, how the AMS works and various other issues that are pertinent to Aboriginal Health and culture, in particular the stolen generation. All SPHCM staff are invited to come along.

Where: Athol Lykke Theatre, Museum of Human Diseases,
5th floor Wallace Wurth

When: 6pm, 11th May

Supper will be provided after the talk. If you are interested please email

Justine Brindle: Justine@unsw.edu.au

The Global Forum for Health Research announces its 2004 annual meeting organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of Mexico City,
16-20 November 2004:

Forum 8, Health research to achieve the Millennium Development Goals MGDs - meeting held in conjunction with the World Summit on Health Research, organized by the World Health Organization, and the Mexican Ministry of Health - see

<http://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcm.nsf/website/forstaff.conferences>

Program for the 36th APACPH Conference 'Public Health Networks and Alliances: Building Capacity in the Asia-Pacific Region' - 30 November-3 December 2004 see: <http://www.apacph.org/conf2004.asp>

Confirmed keynotes include Professor Alan Lopez from the School of Population Health at the University of Queensland, Professor Richard Southby, Professor of Global Health at George Washington University, Professor Anuar Zaini, Professor and Consultant in Internal Medicine at the University of Malaya and Professor Le Vu Anh, Dean, Hanoi School of Public Health. Deadline for Call for Abstracts 31 May 200 - forms can be downloaded from the Conference website under 'Call for Abstracts'

<http://www.apacph.org/conference.asp?ID=10>

Registration forms can be downloaded from the website

<http://www.apacph.org/conference.asp?ID=11>

If you have any problems with

registering please contact Sonja Firth Tel: +61 (0) 7 3864 3372 Fax: +61

(0) 7 3864 9693 Email: sonja@apacph.org

8. Postcard from Wellington – Dennis McDermott

3pm: time for that coffee. I come off-line, pull the plug on August's Scenario Group Session 3 (Pregnant at 15), on how to evaluate New South Wales' move from injury prevention into an Aboriginal Safety Promotion Strategy, and on today's helping of spam (spam, spam ...). The lap-top goes into the backpack and I'm off down Happy Valley Road (true) to the grey pebbles of Owhiro Bay, left at The Esplanade and along a short expanse of Cook Strait to The Bach. This is all weathered timber, windows and trestle tables, only distinguishable by its size and furnishings from the real weekenders now being joined, mostly higher up these abrupt hills, by tri-level architectural prize-winners.

This city's windy reputation is deserved and yet a slur. When the nights are cloudless, the Milky Way shimmers: when the day's still and sunny, as it often is, the sea turns Pacific blue below an indigo seam. Yesterday, I thought I was watching one of the all-white, high-prowed versions of the people and car carriers that connect the two islands but, somehow, further back than usual on that horizon, indistinct. The image gradually remade itself as the Sydney Opera House, sailing backwards (odd, I thought), before sharpening into a tall ship, with its handkerchiefs out, looking for that breeze.

The white crests across the road mark, not only rocks, but rubbery tentacles of seaweed breaking the surface. After a storm, conveyor belts and giant squid carcasses seem everywhere. Kids on school holidays throw stones towards an orange buoy, but the learner divers, below, are safely out of range. Across the strait, those ivory facets atop those big hills couldn't be snow, in April, could they? They could. Those hills turn out to be the coastal Kaikouras, their peaks higher than the Australian Alps.

The national radio news, this pm, was followed by an analysis of New Zealand's ACC. The Accident Compensation Corporation, which provides NZ citizens - and the odd Australian: as you'll see - with a no-fault accident compensation scheme, was marking its 30th anniversary. The midwife, Sir Owen Waterhouse, outlined the original shape of the scheme and how it was looking after thirty years of political buffeting. He reminisced about Gough calling him to Canberra, for wisdom on how the personal, and community, burden of 'injury' could be extended to 'sickness'. Then on came the Minister and her opposite number. The latter's dual greeting, "Good morning, Linda ... Good morning, Ruth", was the second time in two days that I'd noted a political rival getting the human acknowledgement usually reserved for the programme host in Australia ... Something strange is still alive here: people, all over the city, shout out "Thanks, driver!" from the rear exit of the bus, in a way I haven't heard since Tamworth in the '50s ...

The two opposite numbers debated whether the vision of protecting all New Zealanders from the consequences of injury was still intact and whether the 'social contract' limiting the right to sue was worth the undoubted increase in everyone's security.

This postcard's based on a fraud: I know bugger all about the ACC, its aspirations and success, or lack of it, in preventing social damage from personal injury in Aotearoa. I can report that, based on an 'n' of one, it appears to offer a different patient experience to what we've become used to, perhaps injured to, in New South Wales. Let me explain by beginning with what I'm presuming is another fraud: yet another urban myth recycled on a slow news day as really happening in China (reported in the South China Morning Post, regurgitated by a wire service and repeated uncritically by Wellington's Dominion Post). The story was headed (yes) "Man Bites Dog" and reported (or, so the story goes) that a man coming home from a night on the turps was so annoyed by a barking dog nipping at his ankles, that he grabbed it and proceeded to bite it, to death.

Whereas, the prosaic reality is that if you try to separate two dogs that are fighting, you get bitten, which I did, on my second night in Wellington. Too late for the local doctor, off to the main Wellington hospital with me ... and I enter an unfamiliar world. I'm sure a sizeable proportion of NSW Emergency Departments must have carpets and central heating on a chilly night: it's hard to put your finger on the difference. Whatever it was, it became more obvious once I was called through to the serious side of the counter. Yet it wasn't just the contemporary timber floors and cubicle cladding, nor the quietness, good humour and lack of haste with which my tetanus shot was delivered and sliced knuckle and freshly-ploughed joint of right ring and middle finger was cleaned and dressed. Obviously, I'd landed before the drunks, the car accidents and the midnight concerns of a hundred households, but I was still, identifiably, in another system, where the differences, although hard to pin down, were more than moving from stretched to strangled vowels.

Was it just the smaller-city phenomenon? The reality of how much easier it is to retain grace and humanity, despite the same-old restraints on funding and the inevitable stresses of that line of work? It was more. They're doing something different, these Kiwis, and something larger than the hospital itself, something not unconnected to those calls from the center door of a Wellington trolley bus ... to a driver they can barely see.