

News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Newsletter #19; August 2004

Edited by Kevin Forde (feedback to k.forde@unsw.edu.au)

September edition deadline is 27 August, all items to k.forde@unsw.edu.au

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1. Research Publications

The research publications of staff in the School during 2003 have now been added to the SPHCM website at:

<http://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcm.nsf/website/aboutus2.reports&publications.researchpublications2003>

Of all the papers published in the prestigious journal "Medical Education" in 2003, a paper by Leah Bloomfield, Peter Harris & Chris Hughes was the most downloaded and has now been reprinted in Medical Education's "Most read papers during 2003." The title of the paper is "What do students want? The types of learning activities preferred by final year medical students."

2. More feedback from the Research Retreat

From Linda Kurti:

The research retreat for post-graduate students offered an opportunity for students to present their research in a relaxed setting and to receive feedback from peers and academics. It was also an opportunity to learn from other students and to gain insights into research methods, theories, and analytical processes. The formal presentations were interspersed with leisurely breaks for refreshments and socialising, in a setting providing stunning views of the ocean and coastline, comfortably removed from the demands of the office.

As a research student, I appreciated the investment that the school made in providing the opportunity to meet and interact with other students and academics in an informal setting away from the daily commitments at the university. At each of the two research days held so far, I have met new people as well as spending relaxed time with friends. It has been helpful to be exposed to other research methods and paradigms that are different from my own, and to be challenged sometimes to look at topics in a new light. The comments and responses that I received after my presentation have helped me to think about my own work differently as well, and to consider new ideas. The dedication of the academic staff of the school in making the commitment to attend also was affirming as a commitment to taking seriously post-graduate research and the contribution that it makes to the life of the school. All in all, I felt that this was an excellent learning opportunity and a positive contribution to the experience of being a research student within the school.

From Anton Clifford:

Many thanks and congratulations are owing to the organisers of the Postgraduate student retreat. The venue was first class, the scenery breathtaking- although I missed the pod of whales, and the food delicious.

The breadth and quality of student presentations and the ability of presenters to critique their own research and respond intelligently and thoughtfully to questions from the audience was most impressive. As a recently enrolled PhD student I appreciated the opportunity to connect with fellow students, exchange ideas and briefly share in their doctoral journey.

3. Upcoming conference

HUMAN RIGHTS: A PACIFIC AGENDA - Partnerships and Perspectives will be held on 4-5 September 2004, Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, South Brisbane.

This conference is now viewable on the SPHCM website at:

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

4. Not so new staff member

Anton Clifford is a Research Fellow in the Indigenous Health Unit. He has B.Ed, QUT and a M.Med Sc, University of Newcastle. Previously, he worked as a lecturer in Aboriginal health at the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health, University of Western Australia and the School of Indigenous Health Studies, University of Sydney. Anton is also enrolled as a PhD student within the SPH&CM and will be working with two NSW Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to determine the feasibility of implementing an Aboriginal specific healthy lifestyle intervention.

5. The School has made a contribution of \$250 to Randwick Boys and Randwick Girls High Schools to assist their entry in the 2004 Rock Eisteddfod. The Rock Eisteddfod is usually held over several nights in November at the Sydney Entertainment Centre and is well worth attending.

6. Postcard from Cambodia – by Danielle Butler, Masters of Public Health Student, UNSW.

I have been working in Cambodia now for almost four months, as part of year long assignment with Save the Children Australia, though the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development programme and in collaboration with the University of New South Wales.

Save the Children Australia (SCA) is a rights based, non-governmental organisation, which has provided humanitarian relief and development assistance in the health, education and community development sectors, since 1979. Currently, their focus is on the health sector with a large majority of their activities implemented in the rural area. Their activities include general health initiatives such as, technical assistance and training to health professionals, community-based disease prevention and health promotion activities; community nutrition; and TB DOTS. The HIV/AIDS programme includes: prevention and education with peer educators, advocacy working in collaboration with Buddhist monks, and support for orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS. Just recently, a project for HIV/AIDS prevention and life skills training for juveniles in conflict with the law has been initiated.

In my role here, I have been involved in research, developing and strengthening links between the projects SCA implements, and building networks and linkages with NGOs and government services complementary to SCA activities. In the future, I will be assisting with clinical training of Medical staff and training for community-based education and behaviour change.

This has been an incredible learning experience and both personally and professionally challenging. From living and working in another country and culture, to developing a greater understanding of international aid and development, through to working in public health in Cambodia. The enthusiasm, tenacity and commitment of the staff I've had the opportunity to work with has been truly inspiring. I look forward to the next eight months with great anticipation, my only regret is that it now seems to short a time.