

News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Newsletter #22; November 2004

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December edition deadline is 7 December, all items to k.forde@unsw.edu.au

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1. Visiting fellows

Congratulations to the following Visiting Fellows who have recently come onboard to SPHCM:

Dr Prabodh Agarwal was appointed as a Visiting Fellow on 1 June 2004

Dr Jeffrey Steinweg was appointed as a Visiting Fellow on 1 May 2004

Ms Kate Anderson was appointed as a Visiting Fellow on 1 May 2004

Dr Jennifer Saunders was appointed as a Visiting Fellow on 1 May 2004

2. News from the Rural Health Unit

The Rural Health Unit held the Rural Student Entry Scheme interviews for Medicine in early October. 80 applicants were interviewed. 40 applicants are being interviewed in January for the 2nd round. In total 45 places are being offered to rural applicants in the 2005 intake for the Medicine program.

Two rural students presented papers at the National Rural Health Conference in the Barossa Valley in October. The first presentation was on the RAHMS (Rural Allied Health and Medicine Society) annual trip to Kempsey. The paper was titled 'Indigenous Health through personal experiences'. The trip to Kempsey provides many great opportunities for students with no previous exposure to Aboriginal people and Indigenous health issues. Cultural issues were discussed and students returned with more of an idea about the challenges that face Indigenous communities and primary care physicians; as well as the different approaches that can be used to deliver better health outcomes in these areas.

The other presentation was 'Health in the midst of other complexities: discovering another side of Australia'. This paper involved a student who participated in an immersion and school holiday program in a remote community in the Top End. The paper looked at the health service and policy/government response to the needs of 10-15 year old boys in the community and comparing those with that of the community members and other service providers.

The RHU funded two 1st year students to attend crocfest in Alice Springs last week. Crocfest hosts seven festivals across Australia each year in which over 12,000 students attend. The festival aims to teach in a positive reinforcing way that excellence is achieved through application of creativity, hard work, enthusiasm and cooperation. The festival focuses on Indigenous and remote high school students.

RAHMS is in the process of facilitating a formal relationship with UNSW and Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service. Some examples of future activities are:

- Students from the early years in Medicine (a group of 20-30) visit the AMS for the day. This visit would occur 2-3 times a year.
- Students on a volunteer basis involve themselves in community events and in the clinical setting. This would be seen as an extra-curricular activity.
- 4th year population health term at the AMS.



3. Achievements

In *In the Eye of the Needle* by Ingrid van Beek (Conjoint Lecturer – School of Public Health and Community Medicine) traces the story of the first 30 months of Australia’s first legally sanctioned medically supervised injecting centre and the battles to justify its existence. It introduces the harrowing world of injecting drug users, their tragedies and successes and the outstanding efforts of a group of health professionals dedicated to saving lives.

In the Eye of the Needle provides a unique insider’s account of what remains one of the most controversial public health approaches of today.

Dennis McDermott, senior lecturer in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, has had a significant achievement in a very different field. He was short-listed for the Prize for Indigenous Writing in the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards, which were held in Melbourne on 18 October.

Dennis’s first book of poetry, *Dorothy’s Skin*, was one of the three finalists in the category. The book, which was published by Five Islands Press in August last year, was also short-listed for the inaugural Brencorp Prize for Poetry at the 4th Australian Poetry Festival.

Dr Brahma Putra Marjadi, co-supervised by A/Prof Mary-Louise McLaws and A/Prof Mike Whitby, won the Public Health & Community Medicine oral paper presentation prize for his presentation of "Infection Control in Rural Indonesian Healthcare Facilities: the Challenges (a Pilot Study Report)" at the Faculty of Medicine Research Student Day.

Tessa Ho and Lisa Jackson Pulver have been invited to join a University working party to make recommendations on staff development strategies.

Belated congratulations to Ilse Blignault for completing the Masters of International Health at Curtin University.

4. Guidelines for smoking cessation in Australian general practice

These guidelines were developed by Professors Nicholas Zwar and Robyn Richmond in collaboration with the Cancer Council Victoria, Flinders University and GP Education Australia. The Smoking Cessation Guidelines aim to provide an evidence-based and practical approach to smoking cessation in general practice. They were launched by the Commonwealth Minister for Health in June 2004.

While these guidelines have been developed for the general practice setting, the evidence upon which they are based makes them relevant to many health professionals. The Guidelines are available at

<http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/publicat/tobacco.htm>

5. Staff comings and goings

Sue Christian-Hayes recently left the Centre for Clinical Governance after working more than 11 years with the University. We all wish Sue the best for her future.

Congratulations to Tessalonica Ho for her recent promotion and a belated welcome to Susannah Waters who has been appointed to Tessalonica's previous position.

6. GPET Innovations Forum

Suzanne McKenzie attended the GPET Innovations Forum in Canberra last week. This was an opportunity for GPET to showcase the projects that had received Innovations grants from GPET last year. The content of each presentation is on the GPET website (under What's New) -

<http://www.agpt.com.au/praxis.php/content/view/25>

The Innovations scheme funded 22 projects focused on Vertical Integration, better communication across GP training generally and "sorts of GP skills needed in the future and how to get these".

GPET have a document titled- "A Framework for Vertical Integration in GP Education and Training" which is also on the website under "Publications".

7. The talking pots – a Chinese tale

A Water Bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for which it was made.

But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side?"

That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house"

Moral: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them.