

News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Newsletter #13; November 24 2003

Edited by Karin Banna (feedback to k.banna@unsw.edu.au)

Please note: There will be one more newsletter before year end – contributions to Kevin Forde (k.forde@unsw.edu.au) by December 10th at the latest.

1. Update from Head of School
2. From the Frontline
3. Reports from School Committees
4. Upcoming Seminars
5. People
6. Postcards from the edge – Gallia in New Zealand

1. Update from Anthony Zwi, Head of School

Establishment of a School Executive Advisory Committee (SEAC) – I have established SEAC to assist in managing the School and its strategic direction. Members have been appointed on the basis of their key responsibilities within the School – Research strategy and capacity building (Liz Harris), Postgraduate Coursework Coordination (Alan Hodgkinson), Research Degree Students (Mary Lou McLaws), Undergraduate Program (Mark Harris), International partnerships and activities (Deborah Raphael), Service, Relationships and Centres (Anna Whelan), School Executive Officer (Paddy Fitzgerald) and myself.

The Committee meets regularly to review key challenges facing the School, to develop strategies, and to advise me on key policy issues. Minutes will be made available in the For Staff area of the School website. If you wish to get an item onto the agenda please speak with any of the members of the Committee, Ellie Castro, my new Executive Assistant, or directly with me. Membership of the Committee will change over time as responsibilities for the activities identified above are transferred to others (we might work on a two year rule, after which many of these roles would be reassessed, and a person endorsed to continue or new leaders identified). Providing opportunities for others to contribute in this way will facilitate our own capacity building and career development opportunities. A review of how the Committee is functioning will take place by mid-year 2004. Additional members will be invited to join to take account of key emerging areas relevant to the School and its functioning. Any comments would be greatly appreciated (hos-sphcm@unsw.edu.au).

Recent research successes – there are numerous research highlights to report. Key among them are the Career Development Awards from the NHMRC to A/Prof. Lisa Maher and A/Prof. Johanna Westbrook (Centre for Health Informatics). These are extremely valuable 5-year awards and give recognition to exceptional research talent. Elizabeth Comino, Elizabeth Harris, Mark Harris, and Dennis McDermott have received a prestigious NHMRC grant to examine early childhood in a cohort of aboriginal people in South West Sydney. Sally Nathan and Lisa Jackson-Pulver have been appointed to NHMRC committees. Recent recognition has also been given to Lisa Maher who has won a prize for Social Science Research and also to her student Hien Ho who was awarded the best prize for an oral social science presentation at the Australian Society for HIV Medicine annual conference. Academics in the Centre for Clinical Governance Research have received a recent ARC grant. Derrick Silove (Psychiatry), Michael Humphrey (Sociology), and I (plus other colleagues) have obtained a research grant from AusAID to look at health, conflict and peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific. Mark Harris and Gawaine Powell-Davies have netted multiple recent contract awards for research activities in primary care.

Our investments in research activity appear to be bearing fruit. Conjoint and Centre staff wishing to collaborate on research should contact Liz Harris (e.harris@unsw.edu.au), Ilse Blignault (i.blignault@unsw.edu.au) or myself (hos-sphcm@unsw.edu.au) to explore options. Please note that unless publications specifically note the School of Public Health and

Community Medicine, The University of New South Wales as the affiliation of the researcher, the School derives little benefit from research success.

Centre staff are asked to list both their Centre and School affiliations on conference presentations and publications. It would also be helpful for staff to list the School website on any publications (<http://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au>) as this draws people to the School website and the data about our programs, research activities, and associated Centres.

Occupational Health and Safety – the School was audited by the UNSW Risk Management Unit, with a focus on our ability to respond to hazards effectively ('corrective action'). The audit noted a high level of activity and our commitment to setting up effective health and safety processes and procedures within the School. A number of areas for improvement were noted – in particular in relation to increased information about Occupational Health and Safety within the School, knowledge of how and to whom to report hazards, and the development of systems to ensure that hazards are dealt with effectively and that they do not recur. As a result of the Audit, we have developed a number of responses which include informational and procedural activities.

Bullying - We have informed all staff of the UNSW policy on bullying in order to promote a more positive work environment. Bullying of any form is not acceptable – there are established University mechanisms for dealing with it. Within the School or associated centres, if you have concerns please contact one of our Ombudsmen Paul McNeill (paul.mcneill@unsw.edu.au) or Tessa Ho (tessa.ho@unsw.edu.au) or you can contact me confidentially (a.zwi@unsw.edu.au).

As the year winds down, we're still gearing up, with lots more to do.

Anthony Zwi
Head, School of Public Health and Community Medicine

2. From the Frontline

Congratulations to Sally Nathan for her active participation in the NHMRC!

Sally has been appointed for a second triennium to the Health Advisory Committee of the NHMRC (National Health And Medical Research Council). This committee provides health advice to the community in particular it is involved in the development of evidence based guidelines for clinicians and associated information for consumers.

Sally has also been appointed as a member of the NHMRC Evaluation and Outcomes Working Committee, which is assisting the NHMRC to prepare a research strategy strategic plan. On both committees she is responsible for bringing a consumer perspective and providing advice on ensuring effective consumer participation in the work of the NHMRC.

Hospital Infection Society Philanthropic lecture tour

Australia hosted delegates from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Scotland and Singapore, attending the Australian philanthropic lecture tour by the UK "Hospital Infection Society (HIS)". The expert delegates from HIS and Australian counterparts spoke in Perth, Darwin, Sydney and Hunter Valley seminars. The event drew infection control professions from intra- and inter-state and none were charged for attendance – how was this possible!?? A lecture theatre on campus mid session could not be found for 'love', although 'money' could have secured the Scientia but even pharmaceutical companies don't have that kind of money!

Using our innate Australian ingenuity Iain and I begged - and lecture theatre, food and wine were all given at no cost! The lectures were held at Sydney Hospital – an historic location, and in 1816 it began servicing the new colony and was the sight of the first surgery performed in Australia (and probably the home of Australia’s first hospital-acquired infection!). The NSW Infection Control Association came up trumps and donated exceptional food.

The HIS and Australian delegates spoke on issues of infection control importance ranging from challenges of the built environment within, often, decaying hospitals and the associated risk of infection to patients to the hot “late-breaker” topic SARS in Asia. Many late nights of dinners and showing off Sydney (I’m definitely too old for mid week late nights!) The tour continued on to the Hunter Valley, organised by the School’s visiting professor, Mike Whitby and Assoc Prof David McGeachie of Fremantle Hospital, with an exciting program of infection control surveillance in UK and national surveillance in Australia (yes I got to speak on a favourite topic of mine!), MRSA and hVISA (nasty bug you wouldn’t want your grandmother to catch) in UK and Australia (Iain’s brilliant MD thesis) and concluded on an exciting note - “Infectious diseases Quiz”!

Mary-Lou McLaws & Iain Gosbell (Director Microbiology, Liverpool Hospital, UNSW)
Organisers of the Sydney Conference

Lights, camera, action!

On behalf of the School, Anna Whelan attended a briefing session by the ABC Catalyst program at the UNSW campus. They have had only 1 out of 90 programs emanating from UNSW, so our "strike rate" is not great. For our purposes, while they are a "hard science" program they do cover social science stories (a recent one coming up on early onset of puberty relating to the father). The key "selection criteria" for their program are a strong story-line, relevance, dramatic elements (eg some controversy, obstacles to overcome), compelling character/s, human angle, about discovery or the wonder of science and relatively exclusive (ie not covered by a competitor in depth). Timing is everything and they like to work when a particular story would have maximum impact. The audience is general and 900,000 (Top 10 ABC program) 8pm on Thursdays. I am sure that there are a number of great research stories in our School that are waiting to be told.

If you want to discuss this Anna would be delighted to discuss this further and can be contacted on a.Whelan@unsw.edu.au . Alternatively, you can contact Louisa Wright (an ex MPH graduate) at the UNSW Media office (l.wright@unsw.edu.au); or contact Catalyst researchers directly on: catalyst1@your.abc.net.au or phone Paul Grocott (senior researcher) – 8333 3626 (grocott.paul@abc.net.au)

3. Reports from School committees

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

4. Upcoming Seminars – November!

The School would like to take this opportunity to invite you to the exciting upcoming events of 26 Nov and 2 Dec. We hope to see you there!

To register for these and for further information on the seminar program please contact Jacqui Miller on jacqui.miller@unsw.edu.au or 9385 1925

Strategies for Collaboration and Internationalisation in the Classroom
Wednesday 26 November 2003
Presented by: Dr Susan Helmundt, University of Wollongong

The Leading Edge: Current Challenges and Critical Debates in HIV/AIDS

Tuesday 2 December, 2003

Presented by: Prof Susan Kippax and Dr Heather Worth (National Centre in HIV Social Research, UNSW); Prof John Kaldor (NCHECR, UNSW); Prof Maurice Eisenbruch (Centre for Culture and Health, SPHCM); Mr Don Baxter (Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations); Mr Edward Reis (Australian Society of HIV Medicine)

Interested in putting in a new NHMRC or ARC Application for 2004?

The School of Public Health and Community Medicine has been providing support for staff in School or Centres interested in applying for NHMRC or ARC Grants in 2004. This process is well underway, but for further information please contact Elizabeth Harris on e.harris@unsw.edu.au. In addition, the Staff Development Unit is planning a series of seminars to support staff - keep an eye on their website <http://www.staffdev.unsw.edu.au/>

Staff development: Look at the staff development website:

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5. People

Dr Suzanne McKenzie

I have joined the SPHCM as a Senior Lecturer in General Practice. I have been a general practitioner in Galston (on the north-west edge of Sydney, near Dural) for the last six years and prior to this have worked in a variety of practices in Sydney and Melbourne. I will continue to work in Galston one day a week, which has made my patients happy (to some degree anyway), and will hopefully keep me "grounded" (also to some degree).

Over the last 12 years, I have held a variety of positions in the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. These have included medical educator roles, research positions, management positions and project development roles. Most recently, I have completed research projects in the areas of measuring patient outcomes in the management of osteoarthritis in general practice; and influences on both patients' and doctors' (GPs) exercise behaviour. Other research interests include preventive care, chronic conditions management in primary care, accessibility of health care, evidence-based care and critical thinking in clinical decision making.

On a personal note- I have two very special "babies" who are white and small, aged 6 years and answer to Lucy and Oscar. They are West Highland White Terriers and absolutely the center of the family. I also like photography, traveling, gardening (out of necessity), going to the gym (every day as gym-junkies do) and spending time with family and friends.

I am looking forward to meeting and working with you all in the SPHCM. At the moment I am located on the second floor in Room 206 and would welcome some "distracting hellos".

Hien Ho wows them in Cairns

SPHCM PhD student Hien Ho has been awarded the prize for Best Oral Presentation (social science stream) by the Australian Society of HIV Medicine (ASHM) at its annual conference in Cairns. Hien's paper was entitled 'Cultural Influences on HIV Risk Behaviors among Vietnamese- Australian Injecting Drug Users' and her presentation included findings from both the ethnographic component of her study and preliminary quantitative results from

the survey component. The prize includes a framed certificate and a cash award of \$500. Hien is sponsored by AusAID and is supervised by A/Prof Lisa Maher and co-supervised by A/Prof Nicholas Crofts from the Burnet Institute.

Hien said "The conference was a great opportunity for me to present what I have done and I gained more experience and had a chance to meet other colleagues in the field. I would like to thank the School, A/Prof. Lisa Maher for her enthusiastic support, my co-supervisor A/Prof Nicholas Crofts and our research team in South Western Sydney: Steve Pham, Tram Nguyen, Heidi Coupland, Duy Le Khanh, Anna Bates and Jarliene Enriquez".



Picture: Hien giving her presentation at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Australian Society for HIV Medicine.

6. Postcards from the edge – Gallia in New Zealand!

A message from Gallia who has arrived safely in New Zealand!

Dear All

Greetings from NZ, yes I'm actually here, my things arrived from Australia last week so am gradually unpacking and finding places for things. My cat is a kiwi already, very settled.

I want to say THANK YOU to everyone for the wonderful gifts and good wishes I received, it was hard to leave but you all made me feel most appreciated.

My contact details if you are coming this way are:

g.therin@xtra.co.nz

Ph 64 6 7574084

8 Longview Drive, New Plymouth, New Zealand

I would love to see you.

Thank you everyone

Warm wishes

Gallia