

*****News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine; Newsletter #11, July 2003*****

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1. Update from the Head of School

This Newsletter comes at an important time for the School. Gallia Therin, the School Administrator, and Jenny Heeks, another timeless worker in the School, retire today. The Newsletter contains numerous tributes to Gallia's commitment and support to the School over the years... read on.

Gallia has shown immense dedication to the School and its forebears, the Faculty and the UNSW more generally. She has greatly facilitated the transition from three Schools to a single School of Public Health and Community Medicine, and has been the source of a great deal of institutional memory and advice during this important period of transition. For many people, especially conjoint staff and students, she has been the main point of contact with the School. She has demonstrated an incredibly high level of commitment to service and the glowing comments elsewhere in this newsletter reflect her dedication.

Jenny Heeks has also been an incredible support, a dedicated and tireless worker, and an always enthusiastic and welcoming member of the School. Her level of service, commitment, and humanity have been remarkable and will also be very sorely missed indeed.

Gallia and Jenny hand over their many, many tasks to an exceptionally good Administrative team which they have contributed to building, shaping and influencing over the years and more intensively, in recent months. Gallia's dedication to supporting more junior administrative staff has been rock-solid and the School Administrative team is now extremely strong. Gallia will be leaving Sydney for the calmer shores of New Zealand – on behalf of everybody associated with the School, I wish her well and hope she has a long period of tranquillity which she so clearly deserves. Jenny will be retiring to Sydney's north ... although she apparently says she "may get a job in the local fruit shop". It's hard to see her sitting still...

We are fortunate to have made an excellent appointment to Executive Officer for the School and welcome Paddy Fitzgerald to this exciting and challenging job. We all look forward to working closely with you to further develop and strengthen the School. I would also like to welcome Sonal Bhalla, Diane Mongomerie (see comments below) and Vanessa Anderson to new positions within the Administrative structures within the School, and use this opportunity to recognise the key role which our Administrative and General staff play in the life and health of the School.

Anthony Zwi (a.zwi@unsw.edu.au)

Introductions from new staff members (more to follow in next newsletter)

Sonal Bhalla (Graduate Health Services Management Programs): I arrived in Australia in 1999 and have worked as a primary school teacher at the American Embassy School in India. Since then, I have held positions at the Australian Graduate School of Management and the School of Optometry and Vision Science within UNSW as administrator for Postgraduate Coursework and Research programs and Production Manager of the Journal of Management. My personal interests include cooking, reading and golf. I am pleased to join the School of Public Health and Community Medicine and look forward to new friendships and experiences.

Diane Montgomerie (Postgraduate Coursework Administrator - Public Health): For the past three years I have been working in the School of Chemical Sciences administrating and marketing the postgraduate coursework, research and summer scholarship programs. I have held previous positions within UNSW in the Postgraduate Section and the Protocol and Housing Office. I also have a background in accounting, hospitality and property management. I am a keen traveler, cook and love to sail and race both in Sydney harbour and offshore (eg. Sydney – Hobart) in my spare time.

2. From the Editor

As we start the 2nd session the main news to report is Gallia Therin's retirement from the School on 31 July 2003, after 29 years' service. As the contributions from the previous Heads of Schools, Ian Webster, Peter Baume, and Mark Harris, and from two former students, Guy Marks and Alan Hodgkinson, attest, Gallia Therin has been a most positive and significant influence on our Community's health over the years.

We thank her. And wish her all the best.

3. Achievements

Research successes

Congratulations to the Centre for Health Informatics and Enrico Coiera and his team for winning \$1.5 million in infrastructure support from NSW Health for activities over the next three years. Congratulations are also due to a range of people and Centres (NDARC, CHETRE and National Perinatal Statistics Unit at UNSW), and the School for participation in a Consortium under the auspices of the Institute for Health Research, which has won, along with University of Sydney, NSW Cancer Council, NSW Health, and University of Western Sydney, a grant for capacity building in Population Health Research (\$2.5 million over five years). Double congratulations to Adrian Bauman who has achieved mega-success through winning both an NHMRC program grant and a capacity building grant in public health, for his work on physical activity, along with the University of Queensland.

The School Research Committee, chaired by Elizabeth Harris, is developing a strategic plan to ramp up our research activities and to enhance engagement of the School and our associated Centres in collaborative research. We anticipate more successes in future!

Graduation Reflections

Thesis: Lifetimes of Limitation: a study of women with breast cancer, and human finitude.

13 May 2003 was a splendid and somewhat surreal graduation day, shared with loved ones and my supervisors, Dr Stephanie Short and Associate Professor Peter Sainsbury. As a rich ritual, it marked the completion and conferring of my degree. Since that day I have indeed celebrated further, but have also given some time to reflecting upon my research, and the long process of bringing a thesis to its submission and examination.

My research explored human finitude within the context of life-threatening illness. The research participants were women with breast cancer and breast cancer health care providers. Their significant contributions to my research must always be acknowledged, and I strongly believe that these research relationships must always be granted ethical care.

Since my graduation I have presented a conference paper, a seminar to health care providers, and submitted a journal article for publication. Through these presentations of my research I have come to more fully appreciate both the strengths and weaknesses of my work, and this motivates me to pursue further research and scholarship, particularly within the area of human finitude. I think that the process of completing a thesis illuminates our knowledge and skills. It also illustrates to us that there is much more to know and do. Completing a PhD often is an intensely solitary and isolating experience, and as students we inhabit a strange space within our everyday lives. At the same time there are those around us who give support, even when we are like strangers, or estranged from them. All of these experiences make us better scholars, and wiser people. Likewise, our research supervisors seek to guide and support, and they do get us to the finishing line. So, I have learnt a lot, and received significant rewards. Not the least of this is the knowledge that there is much more to do, and diverse, challenging communities of scholars to enjoy this with.

Bethne L. Hart PhD
Lecturer in Sociology
The University of Newcastle

4. Conferences and Workshops

4.1 Working Together for Mental Health is on Thursday 7 August 2003 at the Masonic Centre, Sydney.

A quick reminder to register for the upcoming NCOSS Conference on mental health. Two keynote speakers will open the conference, Arana Pearson, the Consumer Advocate with the New Zealand Mental Health Commission and David Abello, from the Social Policy Research Centre. Both speakers will be providing a consumer viewpoint on what a whole of government and sector approach means.

The morning session that follows will consist of a panel presentation on different cross sector and cross government approaches that are currently being implemented in a number of areas. This will set the scene for the remainder of the day when we look at mental health across a broad range of issues and through to the intersection of service types. This is a chance for participants to critically discuss cross government and cross sector strategies and develop an action plan for future NCOSS work.

For more information check the NCOSS website at <http://www.ncoss.org.au/conferences> and register at <http://www.hotelnetwork.com.au> or Telephone: 9411 4666.

4.2 Public Health Association of Australia NSW Branch

Invites all PHAA members and guests to the Annual Dinner and AGM Featuring Guest Speaker Dr Sharon Goldfield, Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. 'Public Health Approach to Child Health', and Announcement of the Winner of the PHAA Public Health Impact Award 2003

When: Thursday 7 August 2003 6.00 p.m.
Where: The University of Sydney, Holme and Sutherland Rooms
Cost: \$20 Members, \$55 Non-Members
RSVP: by 31 July 2003 to Aleks Natora
Email: antora@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

4.3 Invitation to Book Launch

Friday 8th August, 6:00 for 6:30 p.m.
Gleebooks: 49 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe (parking nearby)
Free

Yolande Lucire
Constructing RSI: Belief and Desire
UNSW PRESS

This book explains how and why medical symptoms collectively known as repetitive strain injury (RSI) or cumulative trauma disorder (CTD) became so widespread during the late 1980s. Author and forensic psychiatrist Dr Yolande Lucire makes a strong case that RSI and cumulative trauma disorders are neither injuries nor caused by repetitive trauma.

'This is a scholarly book, written with great clarity. The analysis is critical, balanced, and focused on the key questions. It is an argument for the role of cultural and social research in clinical and policy settings as much as for psychiatry's role in assessing an epidemic of functional complaints.'
Professor Arthur Kleinman, Professor of Anthropology,
Professor of Psychiatry Harvard University

To be launched by
The Hon Emeritus Professor Peter Baume AO,
Chancellor: The Australian National University
also Dr Stephanie Short,
Master of Ceremonies: Dr Julian Lee.

RSVP Tel: 9386 9311 or Email lucire@ozemail.com.au

4.4 Postgraduate Research Student Retreat 4 September, 2003

The School of Public Health & Community Medicine is holding a Retreat for postgraduate research students to be held at Little Bay. Prizes will be awarded for the best presentations.

Contact: Associate Professor Lisa Maher
Email: l.maher@unsw.edu.au

4.5 Public Health Association of Australia Annual Conference

'Essentials, Differentials and Potentials in Health 28 September-1 October 2003 Brisbane Convention Centre

Further Information about the Conference can be obtained from the PHAA Secretariat Email: conference@phaa.net.au or Telephone: 02 6285 2373

4.6 Action on Quality

The Divisions Diabetes & Cardiovascular Quality Improvement Project
10-11 November, 2003
Marriott Hotel, Sydney

Contact Nardia Drayton
Senior Research Associate
Centre for General Practice Integration Studies
Email: n.drayton@unsw.edu.au or
Telephone: 02 9385 1501 for more details

4.7 The Ethics and Philosophy of Health Financing (RACP), 15-17 Nov 2003

Bridging the Gap: Research and Values to Policy and Practice (HSRAANZ), 16-19 Nov 2003.

This is your chance to join Barbara Starfield, Alan Cass, Bob Evans, Alan Maynard, John Lavis, Nick Black, Angela Coulter and a host of distinguished speakers at this year's concurrent conferences, hosted by the RACP and the HSRAANZ:

Other speakers include:

Randall Ellis, John Deeble, Jeff Richardson, Robin Osborn, Stuart Rowley, Fiona Tito, Kay Paterson, Gillian Durham, Philip Davies, Martin McKee, Toni Ashton, Karen Davis, Mick Reid, Claudia Scott, Don Robertson, Carol Beaver, Bronwyn Pike, Sally Redman, Katherine McGrath, Steve Birch, Neil Halfon, Harvey Whiteford, Ian Anderson, Myrna Mandell, Nicole Lurie, Peter Davis, John Wyn Owen and Jackie Cumming. These conferences present an exciting opportunity for clinicians, health services researchers, health policy makers and health professionals with diverse interests in health services provision to exchange views and experiences with peers and colleagues. They also provide a critical occasion for health professionals to develop effective strategies and sound practices for health services provision in Australasia.

For more information, or to register your interest, please visit the conference Website at:
www.healthservicesconference.com.au
Email: hspr_conf@latrobe.edu.au
Fax: 03 9479 1783

5. International Health

The School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW invite you to register for the **Global Health and Foreign Policy Symposium** to be held at The Scientia, UNSW on 18th and 19th September 2003.

This two-day symposium is a collaborative initiative between School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW, Institute of International Health at University of Sydney and Nuffield Trust, UK. It builds on the growing international interest in the link between health and foreign policy. The underlying theme is Global Health - Promoting access and equity. The Symposium will critically explore and debate the implications of this concept in the context of Australian interests and capabilities.

The Symposium will be led by International and Australian leaders in the field of health and foreign affairs. These include Professor John Wyn Owen (Director, Nuffield Trust, UK), Professor Ron Labonte (Director, Community Health and Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan, Canada) and Mr Julian Lob-Levyt (Chief Health and Population Adviser, Department for International Development, UK).

The two days will provide lively debate on health in relation to humanitarian aid; the role of trade; health, human security and human rights and global health governance through panel discussions, interactive workshops and plenary sessions.

More details to be found at

<http://sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcm.nsf/CE-WebLink/1E00065BB9>

The program, flyer and registration form can be downloaded from the above Website. Please pass this to other interested parties

Also on the international front, the School is hosting two WHO Visiting Fellows here for longterm stays:

Dr Danjaad Boldmaa from Mongolia - she's in charge of Environmental Health in the Health Promotion Department of the Directorate of Medical Services, and also is responsible for health promotion for older people. She is here until mid December and is being supervised by A/Prof Jan Ritchie.

Mr Wu Zhendou from China - his interest is information technology and networking. He works in the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) which amongst other things oversees the integration of TCM and Western medicine. His particular responsibilities are with the Department of International Cooperation. He is here for three months and is being supervised by A/Prof Johanna Westbrook.

Staff are very welcome to come to Level 2 - open area near room 230 – and introduce themselves to our visitors...and if you have any particular interest in their fields of study, please let us know.

WHO Learning Project

6. Items of Interest

6.1 The PHAA Public Health Media Awards were instigated in order to promote and reinforce by rewards, high quality reporting of public health issues through the mass media.

The Awards will be presented in the Television, Print Media, Radio and Online "Eberhard Wenzel Award" categories. Closing date for nominations is 8 August 2003.

The Nomination Form is on the Website www.phaa.net.au. Click on 'About PHAA' Awards to download the form.

For further information contact: Pieta Laut, Executive Director, PHAA
Telephone: 02 62852373

6.2 SOCIETY FOR HEALTH ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS IN EDUCATION 'Promoting Excellence in Health Service Management Education and Research'

The SHAPE 2003 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held on Friday 4 July 2003 in Sydney. SHAPE represents 16 member programs in Australia and New Zealand. Research papers were presented by Ros Sorensen and Ming Liang & Stephanie Short

6.2.1. SHAPE/ACHSE Textbook

There was agreement that SHAPE should publish a second edition of the text for 2005 and with the new publishers Elsevier.

6.2.2. ACHSE Research Web Page

Following from the previous day's presentation by David Briggs and Bill Lawrence (ACHSE), it was agreed that SHAPE would support ACHSE's development of the research web page.

The ACHSE research web page would provide the following access:

1. Links to research sites such as SHAPE and CHERE;
2. Links to academic research web sites;
3. A page that allows researchers to post current research;
4. A page that allows members to post potential research that might encourage others including students to take up;
5. A research discussion facility

6.2.3. ACHSE Certificate in Continuing Professional Development

David Briggs advised that the ACHSE would be offering members a Certificate in Continuing Professional Development. The certificates would be offered to members who complete 4 units/subjects being offered in SHAPE academic programs that are accredited by ACHSE. The meeting endorsed this initiative.

6.2.4. Potential SHAPE Collaboration in ARC Research Network

Potential collaborations were discussed and a meeting involving Bill Lawrence and David Briggs (ACHSE), with Godfrey Isouard (SHAPE) and Stephanie Short (UNSW) will follow this up.

The second suggestion was the potential development of a collaboration to investigate 'Clinical Governance' that seeks ARC funding. Nicola North and Ros Sorensen will explore this further and prepare a one page discussion paper on the proposal.

6.2.5. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS 2002/2003

6.2.5.1 Chairperson : Jan Lewis was again elected for a period of two years.

6.2.5.2 Executive representatives

Queensland: Gary Day & Desley Vine

NSW: Lyn Irwin & Stephanie Short

Victoria: Judith Dwyer & Ann Smyth

SA: Janny Maddern

WA: Chris Skinner

New Zealand: Rod Perkins

Immediate Past President: Nicola North

Treasurer: Mary Harris

Treasurer Elect: Gerard Viswasam

Secretary: Godfrey Isouard

6.2.6. Life membership

Life membership was awarded to Dr Mary Harris, Policy Analyst, Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee Secretariat and Professor Chris Selby Smith, Co-Director of the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash University.

6.2.7. Student Involvement

There was general support for fostering greater student involvement in SHAPE

Two recommendations were supported:

1. The proposed establishment of a SHAPE student network. Ming Liang to progress this.
2. The awarding of a research student scholarship to cover the costs of travel and accommodation so that students may present a paper on their research at the annual SHAPE Symposium.

6.2.8. SHAPE Symposium 2004

It was confirmed that the 2004 Symposium will be held in Melbourne, and possibly in St Kilda. It will be a 2-day Conference with the Executive Meeting held in the morning on Day 1 and the AGM that evening at the completion of the main Program. On behalf of the members present, the Chair thanked Godfrey Isouard for organising the Symposium and also thanked Liselle Heap for the expert administrative support provided to SHAPE, including regular updating of the SHAPE Website.

6.3 Out of office?

The School is pleased to announce that a new feature has been added to the School's website called the Staff Out of Office Calendar. It's purpose is to provide an easy way for individuals to enter on our School website if and when they're away for easy reference by everyone else in the School including those at the front desk. The information is password protected (UNIPASS) and viewable only by School staff at:

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

Instructions are included on this web page however if you require further assistance please contact Karsten (Email: k.sommer@unsw.edu.au or Tel: 9385 3200).

It's success is dependent on everybody using it - please do so from now on. Thank you to Karsten for developing this feature for us.

7. On the occasion of Gallia Therin's retirement

7.1 Farewell to Gallia Therin

Community medicine has always been hard to explain in the University, especially in a Faculty of Medicine. Gallia Therin believed our charter could only be judged by our actions. Since the early 70's to today, Gallia personified all that students understood to be Community Medicine. She carried the spirit of the School, even when times were rough. The spirit was expressed through her relationship to students and staff; the example of relationships we all had to follow.

In the days when community medicine was a struggling infant among the giants of established medical disciplines, Gallia, and others with her, were involved in every aspect of our teaching – lectures, seminars and community visits. If the students were not with us, then no one was. Gallia's philosophy was that rhetoric of community care had to be expressed in our relationships with students. We all needed to experience the rough and the smooth of medical student life, as evolving young lives come to grips with the profession of medicine.

From day one, the experiences of students beyond the walls were documented and treasured. These records exist today, a rich reef of experience and culture. Students, students from other universities, could be seen at any time of the day reading through the resource file of the 'elective terms' of the students before them. Gallia encouraged them to be different, to take the opportunity to adventure; she was a fount of formal and informal knowledge of distant places.

I can recall when one student did not come back because of the stress of being confronted by the disparities between the profound needs and suffering in Bangladesh and the distant comfort of a 'well to do' Australian medical school. Gallia went looking, to ensure the student, a precious person, would continue to graduate in medicine. Now a doctor the one-time student is providing leadership in medicine among the disadvantaged.

Community Medicine started from the School of Human Genetics. Gallia was a senior laboratory technician. The transition from biology and statistics was unsettling and traumatic for all the staff. It was a sad and a poorly planned transition. Most could not change. Gallia on the other hand embraced the new approach. With her unique equanimity and warmth, Gallia functioned above the perturbations. She fixed on the idea of teaching, of teaching as a fundamentally about relationships and development.

When I moved to Liverpool, my greatest loss was the fellowship and support of Gallia, but other Heads of School and staff have benefited.

Through this period Gallia supported her family by outside work. She worked at night in a pathology laboratory. To Gallia this was just a part of life, accepted without complaint, and with remarkable good humour. My wife Jan while working at the Eastern Suburbs Hospital in the very early 70's had already met Gallia, so she can claim to have known her for longer than I have.

For many of us, Gallia Therin has been a very important part of our lives at UNSW, and through whatever we have done and hopefully achieved a bit of Gallia has been expressed. Her influence has thus been amplified.

She departs with my good wishes and the best wishes of all of us. There will be so many people, not only in the School but well beyond (GPs, their staff and people in South Western Sydney), who will miss the generous support and encouragement that Gallia has given them.

Ian W. Webster

7.2 Gallia will be missed by everyone

When Ian Webster was giving me a run down on the School of Community Medicine he described Gallia Therin as 'the cement that holds the School together'. He was talking of the then School of Community Medicine, the forerunner of the School Anthony Zwi now heads.

She was just that. The glue and soul of the School. Students loved her, as did all members of the School.

Pleasant to all, she knew everyone in the School (sometimes devastatingly well), and how things happened around the University (arcanelly and ponderously). She was one of the few people who really understood the University computer system and could use it well. At an early stage in my time, her dominant interest was the progress of her son, Michael, who was an archaeologist in training. She used to keep odd hours too, coming in at 0720 by car with Jenny Heeks (and thereby missing heavy traffic) and leaving at 1600 (again missing the heavy traffic). In doing this she anticipated what leading politicians are saying now! So she was prescient too! It meant that by the time that others wandered in, she had several hours of work under her belt.

She moved next to the Head of School at my urging and stayed near the administrative centre when the School moved and was renamed. She understood and shared all the troubles around the place (and

there were plenty) and had to exercise the strongest self-discipline not to allow the problems of others to become hers to solve.

She was the point of contact for students wishing to go overseas or needing to make arrangements for their general practice term. They were hard to please and critical but came to her office readily because she was always welcoming and positive.

Her mother lived in New Zealand where she was reared, and she went frequently to visit her Sister, her old Home and her Mother. She will retire to New Zealand after she retires from the University of New South Wales. Our loss will be New Zealand's gain. And just as she goes, NZ rugby is getting stronger and the World Cup is imminent. What a great sense of timing!

She recruited many of the people (like Bruce Long) who now keep the School going behind the scenes. She will be missed by everyone.

Peter Baume

7.3 Goodbye to a friend and an era

Gallia Therin will be leaving the School at the end of July. It is impossible to over estimate Gallia's contribution over the three decades to the School of Community Medicine and now the merged School of Public Health and Community Medicine. She has seen 3 heads of school come and go, coping admirably with each of their foibles, providing invaluable support and advice.

Her vision has not only helped to shape the administration of the School but also financial and physical planning of the School. She has been available to help all the academic staff. We will remember her leaning back from her computer screen to answer yet another question from someone sticking their head in the door. When in doubt, the answer to any problem has always been 'ask Gallia'. Solving problems often has meant efforts well beyond the call of duty – her job description should have included removalist, caterer, events coordinator, career advisor etc.

She has been most passionate in her commitment to undergraduate and post-graduate teaching. Her office has been regularly filled with students phoning doctors to arrange placements, filling in forms, asking for help with something etc. She has nurtured whole generations of students many of whom are now members of the Faculty. Medical graduates will occasionally phone up years after graduations asking to get her advice on something they vaguely remember about community medicine from their undergraduate days.

We will greatly miss her daily presence but anticipate continuing the friendship (at a greater distance) in New Zealand. Christmas parties will not be same.

Mark Harris

7.4 Gallia Therin

In 1978, after completing Med 3, I joined the (then) School of Community Medicine as a prospective B Med Sci student to undertake a project in an inner city area. As a relatively naïve and sheltered medical student I was unprepared for the rigours of the 'community' part of Community Medicine. I had a fairly torrid time in the getting started with my project. Many people helped me at that time, including Ian Webster (my supervisor) and my fellow medical students, who worked with me on the project. However, I recall Gallia's role particularly as a vital source of strong moral support, during the difficult times and throughout that year. Her listening, understanding, and encouraging comments, accompanied as they were by her cheerful disposition and sense of humour, were greatly appreciated.

Gallia had a major role in my student career but, also I believe, in the career of many others who passed through the School in those days: either as B Sc (Med) students or, more commonly, as students doing

Community Medicine elective projects. These projects were a challenge to most of us: outside the normal realm of undergraduate medical student activity. Many people needed encouragement and advice: Gallia was a major source of both.

Gallia's personality was key to the role she filled within the School. It seemed to me that she knew something about everyone in the Year. Furthermore, she knew something good about everyone. This knowledge, accompanied by her evidently genuine concern for students' welfare, made her a uniquely valued and admired person.

Guy B. Marks

7.5 I will never forget Gallia's support and no-nonsense advice

After an unpleasant encounter with another university I was delighted at the friendly response I received from Gallia when I enquired about the Master of Community Health back in the late 80s. Of course I subsequently enrolled, and I will never forget Gallia's support and no-nonsense advice. She knew the system, she knew the staff and students, and she could always be depended on to find the most practical solution to any problem. For us students she and the School were one. From her I learned the importance of establishing a zone where students were protected from 'the system' and treated like adults.

Since I graduated in the MCH I have continued to work closely with Gallia through coordinating the MPH and now postgraduate coursework programs. Over the last decade she has made my job easier, and given me valuable support when it was most needed. I will miss our regular meetings/debates and I wish her a happy and fulfilling life after UNSW.

Alan Hodgkinson
