

News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Newsletter #20; September 2004

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

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

1. Head of School Report
2. Upcoming conferences and symposiums
3. School Brochure
4. Time Management
5. Scholarships
6. Student awards
7. Out of office
8. Postcard from Jan Ritchie

1. Head of School Report

A recent development at the School warrants particular mention. The Indigenous Health Unit has been renamed and will now be known as Muru Marri. The name captures the many roads that lead to health. The launch of Muru Marri took place on September 2 and was a wonderful event – Aunt Ali Golding welcomed everybody to country with moving words about how her heart “leaps” when she comes across such positive developments as those within Muru Marri. Sue Green spoke about UNSW’s inadequate response to indigenous studies to date. The School employs two of only five Aboriginal academics across the University.

Around 80 people were present for most of the day with nearly 15 presentations each with a focus on some aspect of Aboriginal health, and each presented by somebody within Muru Marri or somehow connected with it. It was an exciting and stimulating day, brought to a close with a School-focused session exploring key areas for the future research agenda of Muru Marri.

Dennis McDermott and Lisa Jackson Pulver deserve great credit for developing the Unit and facilitating its further growth. They have brought on board two other colleagues – Anton Clifford and Jill Guthrie, and are working with numerous research collaborators and students. Many within the School are working actively with them in relation to research and teaching.

Postgraduate teaching in indigenous health will be further advanced next year with the creation of a new course as part of our MPH. In 2005 we aim to hold an even more extensive indigenous health research day. This will be an opportunity to share and explore with a broader range of institutions, policy makers and research groups with an interest in indigenous health.

Dennis and Lisa have extended an open invitation to those interested in indigenous health to make contact and explore collaborative opportunities. I encourage you to do so and to make this critical area of public health in Australia one of the areas for which the School will become known – for reinventing health in this area - doing innovative things, doing them well, and making a difference.

Welcome Muru Marri!

Anthony Zwi

Head, School of Public Health and Community Medicine

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2. Upcoming Conferences and Symposiums

A symposium on Medical Research Integrity will be held at the University of New South Wales on the 8th of November 2004.

This Congress is an important opportunity for issues of medical research governance and integrity to be discussed and actions that Universities, professional bodies and government can take to promote them. This occurs immediately prior to the first international Bioethics Congress to be also held at UNSW on the 9th and 10th of November. More information on speakers and the program are at:

<http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/mris/>

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN PUBLIC HEALTH:
RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

3-5 November 2004

Venue: Copland Theatre, The University of Melbourne.

For further information check www.rhr.net or contact Pascale Allotey pascale@unimelb.edu.au or Melina Simmond simmondm@unimelb.edu.au

This conference has now been added to the SPHCM website:

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

A one day conference for all who work in the area of babies and families of substance dependent women will be held on Monday 18th October, 2004, City Beach Function Centre, Marine Drive, Wollongong.

Conference Convenor is Kerry Moore, Ph: 02 4275 8575, Email: kmoore@barnardos.org.au

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

3. School Brochure

If you attend conferences and symposiums you might like to take along some brochures outlining the School's programs and research activities. These are available from Chris Rousellis on level 2 of the Samuels Building.

4. Time Management

If you don't have time to attend conferences perhaps your time management needs improving. A half-day workshop provided by the Staff Development Unit can assist you to identify the main influences on your time and help you formulate strategies to minimise the impact of things that reduce your time effectiveness. Pre-course work is required. This will involve participants monitoring the use of their time by completing a time log. This information will be used in the workshop to assist each participant to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to address time management issues.

When: 9.30am-1pm Thursday 23rd September.

Where: Staff Development Training Room, Level 4, Mathews Building.

Inquiries: Karen Sell, k.sell@unsw.edu.au or x53536

Registrations: To register email: staff.dev@unsw.edu.au

Registrations close 7 September 2004.

5. Scholarships

UNSW Staff PhD Completion Scholarship

UNSW staff members who have faced difficulties completing their PhD programs due to disadvantage experienced because of family/carer responsibilities, a disability or racial/cultural background may be eligible to apply for one of five scholarships offering up to \$10,000 for 6 months. The Scholarship is to be used for costs associated with the completion of the PhD, such as buying some teaching relief, paying for materials or employing a research assistant. It is open to UNSW academic staff and some general staff who are working in research-related positions. Information and application forms can be obtained from the Equity and Diversity Unit on Tel: 93855210. Or by visiting: <http://www.equity.unsw.edu.au>
Internal deadline for applications: 6 October

The University of NSW Federation Scholarships

These scholarships are established to encourage students from the United States of America and Canada to complete postgraduate study at UNSW. Applicants must be proposing to undertake a postgraduate coursework qualification of one year's duration in one of the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Commerce and Economics, Engineering, Medicine or Science. Selection is based on academic merit.

Applications close 30 September for study commencing in Session One.

6. Student awards

Juliet Babyire, a PhD student in the School, was recently awarded the Australasian society for HIV medicine's "Junior Research Support Award in HIV and Hepatitis 2004".

Ms Yu Xuan Li was awarded the 2/5 Australian General Hospital Association Prize for the best performance in Community Medicine and The Georgouras Prize in Dermatology.

Ms Rebecca Pelly was awarded the Department of Health, Rural General Practice Prize.

Ms Denise Wing Yan Tong won the the Australian Medical Association Prize for General Practice.

Mr Andrew Jordan won the 2/5 Australian General Hospital Association Prize for the best performance in Community Medicine.

Congratulations to all these students.

7. Out of office

Just a reminder that the School website has a feature called the Staff Out of Office Calendar. Its purpose is to provide an easy way for you to enter on our School website if and when you are 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).

Please remember to use this as it helps the admin staff to answer queries about staff availability.

8. Postcard from Jan Ritchie

Well, I would have to say that being a scholar-in-residence at the invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation is proving to be one of the highlights of my working life - in fact, a highlight of my life overall!

The Bellagio Centre at any one time hosts 15 scholars and artists with their spouses/partners. Each of us is here to achieve a work-related goal and the Foundation attempts to mix us so that residents come from a diverse mix of disciplines and countries of origin.

As we at SPHCM all know, public health is already a mix of disciplines and we are more accustomed than most academics to stepping outside one's narrow area of expertise so I am really relishing the opportunity to find that most of the residents here have some interest or connection with some aspect of my work yet they speak from another point of view.

Despite being in Italy, English is the common language so conversations over cappuccinos, meals and vino are just wonderful. Two or three times a week, residents take their turn in the late afternoon to present their work a little more formally, and the subsequent feedback and further probing from others is very valuable.

So far we have explored a Harvard psychologist's work on implicit prejudice, perspectives on ethnic conflict from a political scientist, miniature paintings of Samarkand from a Tajikistan professor, a wonderful presentation on thermal field theories in understandable layman's language from our two collaborating physicists (one Indian, the other Brazilian) and a recital of Armenian music from a pianist.

Among others coming up is a discussion on environment and US religion, a presentation on early English print culture, a fascinating study on armed non-state actors and international law, a view of the crisis in Zimbabwe through a collection of oral histories and a sociological view of worker participation in Brazil. (Note the focus on equity issues and human rights.) Spouses/partners are encouraged to have a project too and Bruce has taken up watercolours with a vengeance - and improving rapidly. There is a strange satisfaction here that we all feel in getting our work done not only despite the distractions but also it seems, because of them - it appears we all feel committed to achieve what we set out to do and will not let ourselves or the Foundation down. This is interesting as there are unbelievably marvellous distractions. Bellagio is one of the most beautiful places in the world I would think - views to die for with spectacular deep lake waters and the most powerful mountains in every direction, some with vestiges of snow even now in midsummer! The village of Bellagio is a little gem set at the water's edge of a small peninsula jutting out onto Lake Como.

Encompassing the village and above it are 60 acres of garden covering the whole of the rest of the peninsula. This is the Villa Serbelloni, home to us Rockefeller residents. The site has a long history with some archeological evidence of Celts being here more than 2000 years ago. Pliny the Younger had a villa here in 100AD as this was a holiday locality for wealthy Romans and following this, various villas were built and torn down over the centuries.

Some of the previous owners of this present villa, built in 1537, were obsessed with gardening, and the trees, shrubs, paths and roads still remaining throughout the site are magnificent. The villa was bequeathed to the Foundation in 1959 and the artworks and antiques that were in it then are still here - quite breath-taking!

Each of us has a separate study/studio either attached to our bedroom or in the case of the artists, in the garden. The common rooms are beautifully furnished and most inviting to use - three various sized dining rooms, a music room, four different lounges, a games room, two conference rooms, etc etc. In the grounds are other buildings housing short international conference groups who come for a few days only. On the lake's edge we have a private swimming beach and even a classic Italian rowing boat for our use.

Work is a pleasure to face as our studios have such comfortable working arrangements - excellent lighting, ergonomic chairs, direct internet access and personal laser printers. I manage to start at 6am most days. However, I am interrupted regularly, primarily by food and drink but also by the view out my window - there is always something to enjoy. Newspapers in various languages miraculously appear daily and this is another distraction.

A quick run down to the village for a gelato is an occasional imperative. All meals are excellent, the coffee is as one would expect in Italy, and the fruit and salads are exceptional. When we don't want to eat lunch on the Villa's terrace, we can order a packed lunch to take anywhere we wish - sometimes a walk to the top of the grounds, sometimes with a swim at the lake's edge, sometimes further afield on a ferry trip or a walking trail. Regardless of how one spends one's day, it is obligatory to attend dinner, including the drinks before dinner, since mixing with the others meets the Center's mission of 'promoting international understanding'. After dinner some retire to work more, some of us go for a European evening stroll in the balmy night air and some even challenge others with scrabble or cards.

Well, I had better get dressed for dinner! I hope all is well back there - with warmest wishes to all.