

*****News from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine*****

Newsletter #14; March 2004

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- 1. Update from Head of School**
- 2. From the Frontline**
- 3. Reports from School Committees**
- 4. People**
- 5. Conference reports**

1. Update from Head of School

Reflecting on 2003 – we have moved far in establishing a new coordinated structure and culture within the School. Communication has been improved with a regular newsletter (thank you to Sophie di Corpo and Kevin Forde for undertaking to coordinate and edit the 2004 newsletters), regular monthly School meetings, and frequent academic seminars. Ilse Blignault, Vanessa Traynor, and Jacqui Miller ensured that our Seminars attracted attention by the press, students and colleagues. A number of high profile events were held, raising the profile of the School as a site of debate and critique and sharing insights into our work and interests. Volunteers to assist with the 2004 seminar program are being sought at the moment.

Postgraduate coursework has seen in major changes. Alan Hodgkinson and the Postgraduate Coursework Team have navigated significant changes in the structure, size and focus of our postgraduate programs through numerous University committees. Most Masters programs are now 48 units of credit; and opportunity will exist from 2005 to be awarded an MPH in a number of more specialised areas, such as International Health and Development or in Health Promotion. Sophie diCorpo and the Professional Education Group have established guidelines for developing new courses and have established standard formats for the presentation of notes and course materials. The quality of our educational offerings is looking very impressive – thank you also to the hard work of Christine Rousselis.

The School Website functions very effectively as a key source of communication with the outside world. Karsten Sommer has done a wonderfully efficient job at keeping it up to date and placing new material on whenever requested. The School will soon launch our new Virtual Public Health Library that is likely to attract additional interest in our programs and School. This year we will need to enhance our ability to keep the website up to date and to develop sustainable mechanisms for doing so.

MaryLou McLaws and Deborah DeBono have developed standards and guidelines for our postgraduate research activities. In particular, an effective process of review of our postgraduate research degree students is now working well, with both students and supervisors reporting significant benefits. In 2003 we held our first postgraduate research student retreat that was a terrific success and highlight of the year; the 2004 research student retreat will be held on June 25th 2004 – all research degree students, supervisors, and others interested parties are invited to attend.

Elizabeth Harris and members of the research strategy committee have made major progress in identifying areas of common research endeavour and have started a process of assisting those who wish to be research active to become more research productive. A series of seminars was held to provide support for submitting research proposals to competitive research bodies, and a number of proposals were subsequently submitted, with more to follow. School members submitted five grant proposals to the Faculty Research Committee and we were awarded all five.

The School is strongly involved in working with the Institute for Health Research (IHR) and has participated in a large number of collaborative bids, some of which have already proven to be successful. The IHR is a significant development in NSW and we look forward to continuing to work actively to enhance research collaboration in NSW.

The Indigenous Health Unit has benefited from the dynamic partnership between Dennis McDermott and Lisa Jackson-Pulver who have been successful in drawing in colleagues and students to focus on indigenous health. Major teaching and research developments are planned for 2004/5 and an indigenous health strategy for the school will be unveiled during the year.

Our Administrative Team is now better established with clear lines of responsibility with respect to different areas of the School's endeavours. There is clearly scope for further improvements and clarification – but most activities are functioning well with clear partnerships between academic and administrative staff.

The quality of our space has improved greatly on the ground floor of the Samuels Building, now home to the Centre for Culture and Health, the Centre for Clinical Governance Research in Health, and numerous postgraduate research students from the School. The postgraduate coursework zone on the second floor is a much improved environment for our postgraduate students and the team working with them. Bruce Long has been offered more secluded space so he can get on with managing School finances and supporting our research and teaching activities. From March 2004 Bruce will have jury duty – we hope this is not too onerous or does not last too long. On the third floor of the Samuels Building we have established an enhanced primary care and population health area. I thank the Dean for supporting these significant space improvements during 2003/4.

2004 has started with a bang. We're in the process of recruiting a new School Executive Officer, a Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences and Health, and an Associate Professor in Healthcare Management and Systems. Many of our associated Centres are also seeking new staff for projects funded in the last few months.

The new medical program has started and many people are actively involved as Coordinators, Facilitators, and course designers. The Office of Medical Education will have three offices on the third floor of Samuels and we anticipate enhanced communication with those of our staff actively involved in undergraduate coursework activities.

Our big challenges remain space, enhancing the linkages between the varied activities we are involved in, and getting right our approach to workload balance, career development and gender equity. The Workload Balance and Career Development committee is working hard to develop systems and approaches - consultation around these issues will take place soon. A values statement has been agreed. Tessa Ho, the chair of the workload balance group, has joined the School Executive Advisory Committee. The School has won funds for two initiatives concerning gender equity – one will gather data across a number of schools within the Faculty; the other will be focused on taking forward gender equity issues within our School, focusing in particular on women researchers and teachers.

There is much more to do and much happening in 2004. Be part of it.

Anthony Zwi
Head of School (hos-sphcm@unsw.edu.au)

2. From the Frontline

Special Studies Program (SSP)

Applications for Session 1, 2005 will be considered by the SSP Committee in March 2004 and for Session 2, 2005 in July 2004. Applications should reach the SSP Coordinator for session 1, 2005 by 1, March 2004 (it's now too late) and for session 2, 2005 by 1 July 2004
Information on SSP Entitlements and Application Processes can be viewed on
<http://www.hr.unsw.edu.au/ssp.htm>

Promotion to Associate Professor - 2004

Applications are being invited from Senior Lecturers and equivalent Academic Research staff (Level C) for promotion to Associate Professor (Level D).

Year 2004 documentation must be used, which includes an Information Booklet (HR94), Application Form (HR95), Personal Data Form (HR96) and Head of School Report (HR97) and can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.hr.unsw.edu.au/acprom.htm>

The Form is linked to the Booklet but may also be found at:

<http://www.hr.unsw.edu.au/hrforms.htm>

The information should be typed directly onto the relevant form and then printed. Where you are not able to insert the information requested you may provide it as an attachment. The page numbers of these attachments should be inserted under the relevant section on the form. You will be pleased to hear that applications for promotion will be assessed entirely on merit.

Applicants are advised to consult extensively with their Head of School and Dean before submitting an application. To ensure that optimum advice has been received regarding documentation of your case, you are asked to submit a final draft copy of your application to the Head of School and Dean before lodgement.

Applications must be lodged with Human Resources by Friday, 19 March 2004. Interviews will be held in May 2004. Late applications will not be accepted.

School Website

Previous newsletter editor Karin Banna has some breaking news on the School's website. In some instances course description information on our website still shows the previous year's information. Unfortunately, this is not something that we can update directly as it is dependent on chain uploads of information from NSS via the Faculty and then to the School. We are currently also in the process of updating other parts of the web information.

Research supervision seminars

Surveys conducted by the Faculty Postgraduate Research Student Subcommittee (PGRSS) have identified poor supervision as a major cause of dissatisfaction among our research students.

The PGRSS has agreed that all new supervisors of postgraduate students should attend training at one of the research student supervision training workshops organised by Staff Development. These will be held on 19th March, 17th May and 20th August and will take up six hours with a light lunch included. The contact person for booking into the workshops is Gillian Heard (g.heard@unsw.edu.au). New research supervisors must take part in one of these workshops. Experienced supervisors are also invited to attend these seminars.

Upcoming conference

On May 1 and 2, a conference will be held entitled Islam Health and Medicine: Clinical Perspectives. You may be interested to look at our website <http://www.healthandislam.com> for additional information about the conference.

The intent of the conference is twofold in that it aims to:

- (1) develop the field of professional knowledge and practice in addressing the health needs of people from this important and growing religious tradition and;
- (2) support health professionals and researchers in their efforts to engage this community more appropriately and effectively.

The conference will be in the University of Sydney's Veterinary School Conference Centre. For more details contact the conference administrator [administration@healthandislam.com] Hamish Robertson on 0425 237 942

Volunteers needed

WHO, in collaboration with the CDC and UNICEF, is looking for volunteer health professionals to participate on STOP (Stop Transmission of Polio) missions. During 3-month consultancies, participants work at the district level along with national counterparts to support surveillance activities and/or assist with planning, monitoring, and evaluating National Immunization Days. There is an urgent need for French speakers who may be available to work in West and Central Africa.

Each participant receives training, per diem and travel expenses. A seven-day training is provided at the CDC in Atlanta prior to the field assignment. The assignment does not pay a salary. Qualifications: Either a graduate degree or licensure in a health field example: RN, MPH, MD, etc.) AND at least three years of relevant work experience OR have at least five years of relevant work experience. For more details visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/global>

Holiday excess

If the only exercise you got over the holiday period was eating and drinking to excess then you might need a consultation with Martha Lourey Bird. Over the past months she has become a multi-media personality spreading the good news on exercise on behalf of the School. Of late her sensible advice and take-away-and-use information has been seen and heard through various means including: ABC TV George Negus Tonight, Good Taste Magazine, Radio 2GB Sydney, Radio 4GR Brisbane, NBN TV Today Extra, Weight Watchers Magazine and Cosmopolitan Magazine.

A new year and a new social calendar to fill

This year we are planning three school social events so would like to have an indication of level of enthusiasm - please let us know if you'd like to be involved, intend to come along and/or have other ideas - so far we are thinking about:

1. Family picnic day - Sunday May 9 or 23 (depending on which date suits most people) this will be held around lunchtime, outdoors but somewhere that offers cover as well, and will be a chance for us to meet each others' families - and reveal any backyard cricket skills.
2. Trivia night - September, exact date, venue and level of difficulty to be advised
3. Christmas party - ok, ok so a bit early to be thinking about this yet.

As you will appreciate, organising any social activity involves a high level of planning so we'd really appreciate if you can let us know if you can come - especially at this stage to the first gathering - the family picnic day - please email Michelle Davies michelle.davies@unsw.edu.au to let her know if you are interested to come along and which date suits you better.

3. Reports from Committees

Workload Committee

The work of the workload committee continues to grow at an exponential rate with monthly meetings planned for this year. The exact details of the Workload Allocation Pilot – for which the School volunteered – are still to be clarified.

Under the current Enterprise Agreement covering academic staff, workload allocation data collection is to use a hours-based approach and expressed in terms of what can be allocated and controlled. The committee's next step is to identify key items of data on workload in the following areas:

- Post graduate coursework
- Undergraduate teaching
- Research students
- Research centres
- Online teaching

4. People

A number of new people have joined us in recent months here is some background information on some of them.

Tim Luckett PhD, Research Assistant, Centre for Culture and Health

As a new research assistant at the Centre for Culture and Health, I'll be working closely with the Director of Research Dr Ilse Blignault on developing the Centre's research program, and on helping to design, implement and publish projects like the Health Care Interpreter Service Emergency Department study due to begin in early 2004.

It's exciting to be involved in the early stages of a developing research centre - all the more so given its focus on healthcare issues that are both topical and demanding of attention.

As a speech and language pathologist with a doctorate in the area of applied Developmental Psychology, I have a strong interest in communicative contexts within health and education. My new post promises to make full use of my academic and clinical experiences, and to extend my understanding to encompass new areas of community-based research.

Qin Guo PhD, Research associate, Centre for Culture and Health

Medicine and education were the two areas I had chosen when I determined my study direction more than twenty years ago and now I am combining both interests by joining the Centre for Culture and Health as a research associate.

I will participate in the development and implementation of the New Medical Education Program with a focus on the evaluation of cultural competence of medical students. I have been working in the area of education and development communication for nearly twenty years and have a PhD in International Communication.

I have not worked in a medically relevant area before. However, my new position provides me with an opportunity to apply my knowledge and experience in education and development communication to medical education and practice. In addition I will be able to enrich my knowledge and experience in the application of education and communication principles in practical contexts, with a sweet bonus of fulfilling the dream I had when I was a teenage girl.

Tessa Ho

Tessa was recently appointed by NSW Health Minister Morris Iemma to the Medical Training and Education Council (MTEC) and to the Postgraduate Medical Council of NSW in the Education and Resource Development Committee – both for three years. MTEC is an advisory council to the Minister – its role is to work with key stakeholders to develop a sustainable and high quality medical workforce by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of service based training in NSW. Its chairman is Professor Bruce Dowton.

In addition, Tessa has been involved in three successful grants:

1. School of PHCM Equity Initiative Grant of \$10,000 for 12 months for a project implementing the recommendations of the Gender Profile Study Report undertaken by the School in 2003.
2. Faculty of Medicine Equity Initiative Grant of \$10,000 for 12 months called the MEDI Project which will collect data for gender profile across four schools in the medical faculty (SPHCM, SOMS, St Vincent's and POW) to develop and implement strategies and initiatives to improve and support the career development of women academics.
3. Faculty Research Grant of \$20,000 for two years jointly with Debbie Black and Elizabeth Sullivan on the linkage of National Perinatal Data Collection and Assisted Reproductive Technology data.

5. Conference reports

Jane Carthey reports exclusively on the Group for Health Architecture and Planning (GHAAP) – Australasian Health and Health Facilities Conference held in Sydney from 5 – 7 November, 2003.

One of GHAAP's most successful, profile-raising activities to date was the inaugural Australasian Health and Health Facilities Conference held from 5-7 November 2003 in Sydney.

A cocktail party was held for delegates on the evening of 5 November at which Bob McGregor, Deputy Director-General (Operations) of NSW Health spoke on the importance of conferences of this sort and welcomed all the delegates.

The next morning, Dr John Yu officially opened the conference and spoke of his experiences as a client and clinician during the development of the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

The conference was attended by over 90 registrants. It should be noted that this is a very good attendance for a conference of this type – many of the similar commercial conferences achieve only 30 or so attendances.

The people who attended the conference came from a range of professional backgrounds including design consultants, health service managers, post-graduate students and clinicians with an interest in facility design. They came from across Australia and New Zealand, plus two came from the Ministry of Health in East Timor.

Two key note speakers came from the United Kingdom and one from Singapore. From the United Kingdom, Peter Scher, an architect and author, discussed issues of designing hospitals and health facilities to deliver patient focussed design i.e. physical facilities that are supportive of the healing process. From Singapore, Liak Teng Lit, Chief Executive Officer of the Alexandra Hospital spoke about bringing the natural environment into the modern hospital through the development of a wonderful hospital garden. This garden, largely developed by keen staff and other volunteers, is now a home to endangered butterfly species plus a wonderful range of birds and other wildlife.

Presented papers covered a wide range of topics including:

- Health service delivery frameworks and initiatives in Queensland, South Australia, NSW, Victoria and New Zealand
- Taking the politics out of capital works decision-making processes;
- The challenges of delivering care to remote areas including how to attract and retain staff given the poor quality of much of the physical infrastructure in those locations;
- Development of national benchmarking tools for assessment of health capital works projects, and development of decisions support tools for better facility design;
- Designing health facilities for multicultural, regional or aboriginal communities;
- Designing for dementia sufferers in aged care facilities;
- Designing for environmental sustainability and responding to government initiatives that require reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse emissions.

GHAAP has been asked to consider running this conference on an annual basis; the feedback forms demonstrated that many people felt that this was the best conference of this kind that they had ever attended. This first conference ran as a cost neutral operation; however the opportunity exists to generate small amounts of funds from future conferences, but more importantly to use these as an opportunity to showcase our research projects, and to generate further interest in our activities from outside UNSW. Presentations and papers from the conference are available from our webpage.

Conference Report by Effat Merghati Khoei

The 2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health (RSH) held in Bangkok, Thailand encouraged broad debate about reproductive and sexual health issues. The necessity of determining factors that influence sexual and reproductive health issues were widely discussed.

Although RSH programs promote gender equality, key elements, which have been generally overlooked in such programs, are decision making and violence. A strong theme emerging from the conference was that relieving the burdens of women's sexual health is more complex than once thought. It does not seem to be enough to open the sexual health clinics' doors to people if culturally competent programs are not provided. Lack of cultural sensitivity can be one of the main reasons that women are relatively silent and uninformed about effective ways of dealing with sexual health problems such as STDs, and HIV/AIDS.

To succeed, RSH and gender-equality programs must be culturally aware and be incorporated into the health system at all levels. These programs should begin with attention to gender issues at the policy level and end with a wide distribution of aid in the developing countries. In these

countries women's sexual rights have often been seen from a male perspective and consequently are largely ignored.

In developing countries conducting projects to consider women's sexual issues may be an important health investment. I would sum up the conference in one phrase: More work remains to be done. The support of the School of Public Health & Community Medicine in attending this conference is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also go to the APCRSH organisers for support during the conference.

After many years of working in the field of family and women's health, I have now realised that it is not enough simply to specify women's sexual health problems. My current study aims at examining why sexual matters are an unspoken issue; why women avoid seeking help on this issue, and the effects of various determinants on women's sexual lives. You can view a copy of my latest research on the Centre for Culture and Health website:

<http://cch.med.unsw.edu.au>