

RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

\$18 MILLION DOLLARS FROM GATES FOUNDATION

ENCORE! ENCORE!

Congratulations to Professor Sean Emery (pictured), Dr Mark Boyd and colleagues from the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research on the award of the largest grant ever received by the Faculty of Medicine and UNSW. Professor Emery said "Data from early clinical trials suggested that the doses of several antiretroviral drugs could be lowered, with no loss of efficacy, and potential for improvements in safety profile, pill counts and cost.



New clinical trials are needed to prove the efficacy of these lower doses – hence ENCORE. The clinical trials in ENCORE will compare current versus new doses of antiretroviral drugs, over 96 weeks, in Europe, Australasia, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The first trial will compare reduced dose efavirenz with standard dose efavirenz. Smaller pharmacokinetic studies in human volunteers will generate informative data to assist in the design of additional studies that could investigate lower doses of lamivudine and lopinavir. The clinical trials will be of a standard high enough to change World Health Organisation and other key treatment guidelines using a design employed by industry during clinical development of antiretroviral drugs. Trials will be independently audited, with a Data Safety Monitoring Board to monitor their progress. "

Welcome to the first edition of the Faculty of Medicine's Research Newsletter. Our aim is to keep staff up to date and informed about important issues related to research. We will highlight upcoming events in the research calendar and acknowledge and salute the achievement of our research scientists. The Newsletter will also be a forum for communicating important activities in the Faculty related to research and training, and facilitate networking by profiling research active staff and students in the Faculty. I hope you will enjoy reading this Newsletter and invite you to contribute to our news.

Denis Wakefield, Associate Dean Research, Medicine

From the Dean's Desk : \$46.9m for Ingham Health Research Institute (IHRI)



I am delighted to inform you that the Commonwealth Government has announced a contribution from the Health and Hospitals Fund (HHF) of \$46.9m for the construction of the Ingham Health Research Institute (IHRI) at Liverpool Hospital. IHRI is collaboration between Sydney South West Area Health Service, the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and the University of Western Sydney (UWS) which has four broad research activities: health services, population health, clinical trials and clinical and biomedical research.

The funds will be utilised, along with investments from each of the partners, in the construction of a four-storey building with a combination of wet and dry laboratory facilities. The allocated funding also includes approximately \$4.2m for the construction of a Clinical Skills and Simulation Centre, which will be managed by the South Western Sydney Clinical School of the Faculty, with an aim to meet the clinical training needs of the redeveloped Liverpool Hospital. The Commonwealth's investment in these facilities will greatly increase the access that UNSW staff have to research facilities in the south west and improve the educational experience for students training in our south western Sydney teaching hospitals.

RESEARCH AND THE BUDGET

The 2009 budget provides significant new investment in research and innovation. In 2009/10 commonwealth expenditure on innovation, science and research will be \$8.6b, a 25% increase on 2008/9 budget. The budget provides \$5.7b for new programs over four years across the higher education and innovation sectors in response to the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education and the Cutler Review of the National Innovation System. \$3.1b of these funds is in Kim Carr's DIISR portfolio. The Government has also released a response to the Cutler and Bradley reviews called *Powering Ideas* (<http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>). This paper indicates commitments for various reforms such as activity based costing for evaluating full costs of research, which have been implemented in this budget.

The key budget initiatives are:

\$512m to increase funding for the indirect costs of research: initially Research Infrastructure Block Grant (RIBG) up to 25 cents then to 50 cents in the dollar by 2014; A new Joint Research Engagement Program that replaces the current Institutional Grants Scheme to support research collaboration between universities, industry and other end-users; \$52m for collaborative research programs – a new scheme for 6 year networks based in non-research intensive regional universities in areas they have identified as strategic research strengths to build collaboration with other institutions. Slight increase to postgraduate stipends; Indexation of research block grants; ARC funding to develop ERA, which means it does not have to be funded out of existing ARC programs; NHMRC: No cuts or new programs. There are major new health infrastructure grants some of which will have direct benefits for researchers and universities.

AT YOUR SERVICE: HISTOLOGY & MICROSCOPY UNIT

The Histology & Microscopy Unit provides high quality services in histology, microscopy, imaging and analysis techniques. The Unit is available to postgraduate students and research staff throughout the University, to off campus research centres, Government departments and private industry groups. HMU is part of the School of Medical Sciences at the University of New South Wales, Kensington and is located on Level 1, Wallace Wurth Building. Visit the website on: <http://histology.med.unsw.edu.au> : Dr Maria Sarris (pictured) is Manager of the HMU.



Professor Bill Sewell has joined the Office of Medical Research as the Director of Graduate Students. Bill has a long and distinguished career in research and has a keen interest in improving the training experience of our graduate students. He is based at St Vincent's Clinical School.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Each month we will profile members of the Faculty's staff who can help you with various aspects of your research. This month's profile is of Petrina Choong from the Office of the Dean.



I work with the Faculty's Higher Degree Committee and the University's Graduate Research School

on postgraduate research student matters. My duties include the administration of applications for admission, enrolments, candidature and scholarships.

Where: Medical Administration, Office of the Dean

How: med.rsch@unsw.edu.au or 9385 2457

RESEARCHER PROFILE: SIMONE REPPERMUND

Research Associate, School of Psychiatry



Simone is a psychologist working in the field of ageing and mild cognitive impairment in the School of Psychiatry. She worked as a research assistant at the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry in Munich, Germany and received her PhD in March 2007. The focus of her PhD research was cognitive functioning in the course of depression.

Simone moved to Australia in July 2008 to work as a Research Associate at UNSW. In her current position, she coordinates a large longitudinal study (Memory and Ageing Study) that brings together neuropsychological, medical, brain imaging, genetic and proteomic components to identify risk factors, or even protective factors against cognitive decline. Her primary role is to coordinate the study from both a scientific and administrative perspective. Her responsibilities include providing training and supervision of research assistants, administrative assistants and students involved in the study.

Simone participates in the Early Career Research Program to learn strategies on how to combine research and "day-to-day" work.

ST GEORGE FOUNDATION

The St George Foundation has just announced the first grants to staff of the St George Hospital campus and clinical school. This is a great achievement by this fledgling foundation, which aims to support and foster research at the St George and Sutherland Hospitals.

What's your H factor? Don't know? The Library can help : Contact Toni Gifford, Outreach Librarian on 9385 8241 or email t.gifford@unsw.edu.au with your cv: REMEMBER -THESE CALCULATIONS TAKE TIME SO APPLY WELL IN ADVANCE!

HIV PROPHYLAXIS by Andrew Grulich (pictured)

In Australia, anti-HIV drugs may be prescribed as prophylaxis against HIV infection after high risk behaviour. The therapy needs to continue for four weeks and is usually coupled with risk reduction behavioural counselling. Researchers at UNSW followed a large cohort of nearly 1500 initially HIV negative homosexual men. Use of prophylactic therapy increased markedly between 2002 and 2007, and was reported by 7% of men in the final year of the study. Use was mainly appropriate, in that it was in relation to high risk behaviour, but men who received anti-HIV prophylaxis were nearly three times more likely to become HIV infected in the future. This was not because the prophylactic therapy failed, but because these men continued to have unprotected anal intercourse. Lead author Dr Mary Poynten concluded that changes to the program are necessary to decrease risk behavior and to ensure that risk of HIV is reduced in the long term. Poynten IM et al, AIDS 2009.



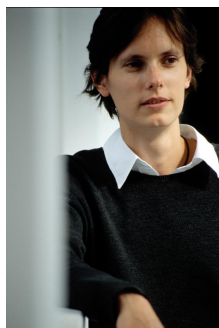
ERA Trial - Good news and bad news!

UNSW has volunteered to participate in the ARC pilot study over the next 3 months. This will involve chemical, physical and earth sciences only and not the Faculty of Medicine. The census date for staff whose output may be included in ERA evaluation is 31 March 2008. Outputs for the period 2002-2007 only will be considered for this census. It is anticipated that the trial will be extended to other faculties, including Medicine, in the next round in 2010.

DEAN'S AWARD & DEANS LIST

The guidelines for nominating staff and students for these awards have recently been posted on the Faculty website which should be consulted for further information - <http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/medweb.nsf/page/deansawards>.

BIOLOGICAL MICROSCOPY IMAGING FACILITY (BMIF)



We have a new microscopy facility: the BioMedical Imaging Facility or BMIF. Currently it is still a 'virtual' facility but will open its doors officially in the Lowy Cancer Research Building in January 2010 under the directorship of Associate Professor Kat Gaus (pictured).

The mission of the BMIF is to provide state-of-the-art imaging technology to cutting edge biomedical research. It is a multi-user facility that provides training instrument operation and data analysis. The facility is part of UNSW Analytical Centre (<http://www.analytical.unsw.edu.au/>). We are currently appointing a Manager and a Technical Officer for instrument operation. A further Technical Officer for image analysis will be appointed in early 2010. The BMIF will be located on the lower ground floor of the Lowy Cancer Research Building (C25). This includes a tissue culture facility and lab space for sample preparation. All users will have 24h swipe card access and can book instruments and retrieve data online. The focus of the BMIF is fluorescence microscopy including epifluorescence for live cell imaging, confocal microscopy, spinning disc microscopy, 2-photon microscopy, total internal reflection fluorescence (TIRF) microscopy, single molecule imaging including fluorescence lifetime imaging microscopy (FLIM) and fluorescence correlation spectroscopy (FCS), and. The BMIF may also include other imaging modes such as atomic force microscopy (AFM) in the future.

CALLING ALL POSTDOCS

Postdoctoral researchers in the Faculty are reminded that they are eligible for travel and research grants.

Research grants deadline: **30 June 2009**

Postdoc Travel Grants will be announced in June.

Further information can be found on the Faculty's website: <http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/medweb.nsf/page/postdocs>

HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS—EXIT SURVEY

The Graduate Research School conducts a survey of students at the point of thesis submission. The 2008 survey of 28 out of 101 students, revealed that over 92% of students, agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their higher degree research experience. Similarly, students were positive in response to questions related to research supervision and faculty/school support. These are pleasing comments from our students and reflect the high standard of research supervision.

HOW TO WRITE A GREAT GRANT!

Denis asked me to say something about how to write a good grant application. As I have no idea how to do that, I thought I would write about Christopher Columbus instead. Christopher Columbus wouldn't have received NHMRC funding for his transatlantic voyage of 1492. Although his proposal was *innovative* because he sought to find an entirely new route to the East Indies and *significant* because this would lead to new opportunities for trade and colonisation, the overall *scientific quality* of his plan was assessed as poor because he had grossly underestimated the distance involved (the expert committees appointed by King John of Portugal and Queen Isabella of Spain both pointed this out). Furthermore, the *feasibility* of his proposal was questionable (he was relying on the untested notion of using the trade winds) and he lacked any *preliminary data* (where was his SatNav evidence of an unobstructed sea passage from Spain to the Spice Islands?). In any case, he had no *track record* of any consequence (after all, what oceans had he previously sailed and what had he previously discovered?) so he really had no hope. Note, however, that Columbus spent several years developing his application and obviously had a *persuasive* line of argument. As a result, King Ferdinand of Spain decided to fund him anyway. He thus went on to prove yet again that serendipity is a crucial ingredient for success (and possibly that benefactor funding is the solution to the endless struggle for grants). **RAKESH KUMAR**

PUBLISH OR PERISH!

Each month the Faculty will award a prize for the best publication by a member of the Faculty's research staff that is suitable for DEST submission. A certificate will be awarded by the Dean. The best published article submitted after an internal competition for each school, centre and institute, in which they judge the best publication from a member of their staff in the preceding month.

Publication of the Month:

S.E. Coggan, G.A. Smythe, A. Bilgin and R.S. Grant, "Age and circadian influences on picolinic acid concentrations in human cerebrospinal fluid", *Journal of Neurochemistry* (2009), Vol. 108, 1220-1225. Paper of the month in the School of Medical Sciences.

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Accolades and Awards



Robyn Ward has recently been appointed the new Head of the Prince of Wales Clinical School



Phil Hogg, a finalist in NSi Awards for Medical Research

Research Code of Conduct:

Link to new guidelines:

http://www.policy.unsw.edu.au/policy/research_code_of_conduct.htm

GRANT WATCH

A large number of grants, fellowships and seminar information is available through the Grants Management Office (GMO) at <http://www.gmo.unsw.edu.au/>

Research Strategy Office (RSO): The RSO provides important strategic support for researchers applying for major ARC funding rounds of Discovery, Linkage and Future Fellowships. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.dvcresearch.unsw.edu.au/strategic.html>

What is UROP?

Last year the Faculty launched the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) aimed at attracting talented young scientists from the science and engineering faculties who had an interest in pursuing research in medicine. Five scholarships were awarded to talented young scientists and the scheme thus far has been a great success. Anyone interested in participating in this program of supervising students, should contact Dr John Hunt (j.hunt@unsw.edu.au , ext. 51580).

BREAKING NEWS!

FUTURE FELLOWSHIPS

EOI now open! Researchers interested in submitting an EOI should discuss their applications with Prof Denis Wakefield in the OMR prior to submission. DVC research website: <http://www.dvcresearch.unsw.edu.au/funding.html>.

FULLBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIPS

Fulbright Scholarships are only open to **Australian citizens**. Applications open June 1 and close 31 August 2009. For further information see www.fulbright.com.au

Quote of the month: "I'm a card carrying sceptic. I don't believe most of what I can see, let alone what I can't." Hawkeye Pierce, MASH.