The School of Public Health and Community Medicine (SPHCM) has been successful in winning the tender for an academic partnership with NSW Department of Health to support and enhance the prestigious NSW Public Health Officer Training Program (PHOTP). The SPHCM is working closely with NSW Department of Health, particularly Sarah Thackway, Director of the Centre for Epidemiology and Research, and Dawn Simpson, the Acting Manager of the Public Health Training and Development Branch, to progress arrangements for this exciting and important new venture.

Sarah Thackway says: “The NSW Department of Health is excited about the prospect of building a stronger partnership with the UNSW. I’m personally thrilled to be part of this significant step in strengthening our well respected training program. We are looking forward to working with Raina and her team on this innovative model of public health education.”

Professor Raina MacIntyre, head of SPHCM, thanked all staff “who have already expressed enthusiasm and interest in teaching in this program and who contributed to the tender document. This is an important opportunity for SPHCM to enhance a highly valued and successful program. Academics will have the opportunity to supervise candidates, and to build links with NSW Health and the community of public health practice.”

A number of SPHCM staff have been involved in the PHOTP previously, including Lois Meyer who has worked as an educational consultant to the PHOTP for over ten years and currently sits on their Advisory Council; Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver, who is an alumnus of the program and A/Professor Jan Ritchie who has been involved with the PHOTP as an invited assessor on the PHOTP assessment committee. Other academic and conjoint staff have supervised trainees in their field placements over many years.

Congratulations to Aaron Cashmore, Evan Freeman, Ben Polkinghorne and Susan Thomas (pictured above), who are the first successful PHOTP applicants to be offered the opportunity to enrol in the new Professional Doctorate of Applied Public Health at UNSW. They commenced with the PHOTP in February and all have completed a MPH by coursework. Together, they have a broad range of public health experience in government, community and international settings.

The PHOTP is a highly competitive 3-year field-based public health training program. It commenced in 1990 and was modelled on the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Program from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program’s mission is to produce highly competent multidisciplinary professionals capable of ‘public health action’. Its
Partnership in the PHOTP

Overarching strategic goals are to develop career pathways for talented public health professionals, contribute to a sustainable public health workforce in NSW, and to provide immediate surge capacity in response to public health risks and threats. Over 80% of graduates have remained in public health in NSW and many now occupy high-level positions in NSW Health.

Requirements for entry into the PHOTP include successful completion of a Master of Public Health degree and at least three years health-related experience. Over the 3-year period of the program, trainees develop rich practical public health experience through field placements of 6-12 months duration across a range of sites within NSW Health as well as other appropriate organisations including the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and the National Centre for HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research. All trainees are required to undertake one of their placements in a rural setting and are drawn upon to respond to major public health threats and disease outbreaks as happened with SARS and the equine influenza. Learning in the field is supported by specialised seminars, workshops and regular ‘Bug Breakfasts’.

An important component of the SPHCM submission was the development of a unique Professional Doctorate in Applied Public Health (DrPH) in which PHOTP candidates commencing in 2009 can enrol. Each DrPH candidate will be supported by an academic and field supervisor. The SPHCM will also be responsible for the development and delivery of workshops and seminars in core public health subjects, practical skills and translation of evidence into policy and practice. These will support trainees to integrate their public health knowledge and understanding to meet the standard of a professional doctorate in Applied Public Health.

Over the next few months, there will be opportunities for everyone at the SPHCM to meet Susan, Aaron, Ben, and Evan, as well as many of the current trainees who commenced before 2009, their field supervisors and NSW Health staff involved with the program. We look forward to an exciting new era in the PHOTP.

GET YOUR RESEARCH ON THE RADAR

There is increasing recognition of the potential value of research evidence in developing health policies. Comprehensive research reviews in particular have been identified as useful for policy development because they synthesise the relevant research in a transparent way and so are more reliable than individual studies. Reviews are particularly useful for decision making when they focus on the broad sorts of questions of interest to policy makers, incorporate contextual information relating to complex health issues or systems, and are presented in user-friendly formats.

The Sax Institute has developed the Evidence Check program to help policy makers commission targeted, policy-relevant reviews of research in a timely way. Evidence Check includes systems for diagnosing policy makers’ research needs, identifying academics with relevant research expertise, and commissioning policy-friendly products. To date, over 20 research reviews worth over $350,000 have been commissioned through Evidence Check.

To help identify researchers who might be interested in undertaking commissioned Evidence Check reviews, the Institute maintains a database of health research expertise, known as RADAR. Researchers who register on RADAR are informed about new projects in their fields of interest as they arise. Twenty-five UNSW researchers have already joined RADAR, but registration is open to all researchers in health-related fields and new members are always welcome. Joining RADAR is simple and takes just a few minutes. Simply:

1. Complete the online RADAR Registration Form to identify your research expertise
2. Click the ‘Submit Form by Email’ button at the bottom of the form
3. Attach a current CV to the email before sending

The Sax Institute is an independent non-profit organisation with core funding from NSW Health. One of the Institute’s roles is to increase the impact of research on health policy, programs and services by facilitating partnerships between researchers and potential users of research. The Institute’s members, which include the School of Public Health & Community Medicine and several of the School’s research centres, provide the research expertise to enable these partnerships.

To find out more about the Sax Institute’s work, contact Danielle Campbell at: Danielle.Campbell@saxinstitute.org.au or visit: www.saxinstitute.org.au.

NEW PROFESSORS

The following staff members have been promoted to professor:

- **LISA JACKSON PULVER**
  *School of Public Health and Community Medicine*

- **GREGORY DORE**
  *National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research*

- **SEAN EMERY**
  *National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research*

- **LISA MAHER**
  *National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research*

Congratulations on all the dedicated work over many years in order to achieve these prestigious positions.
Dr Brahmaputra Marjadi’s research began in 2004 when he enrolled as a PhD student at SPHCM. His PhD topic was sparked by the frustration he felt when he realised that the infection control policies and procedures explored during his Master of Public Health program were “practically useless in many Indonesian healthcare facilities due to the differences in epidemiology, context, and cultures (societal, organisational and professional). The most pressing need was in rural areas where extremely limited resources put patient safety at the highest risk.”

Brahm’s work gave him the opportunity to focus on designing an infection control program suitable for rural Indonesian healthcare facilities. He used a mixed methods approach to identify major barriers for direct implementation of infection control programs prescribed by high-resourced countries in the low-resourced rural Indonesian setting.

When asked about the link between his work and recent policies or initiatives, such as those issued by WHO, Brahm explained that broadly his thesis “fits very well with the WHO’s Global Patient Safety initiative that was launched in 2004, the year I started my PhD. Healthcare-associated infections have been known to be one of the greatest preventable threats to patient safety. Some of my research addresses the issue of hand hygiene, which links to WHO’s focus on hand hygiene (Clean Care is Safer Care campaign 2005-2006) as well as WHO’s call for various nations to pilot test the WHO’s Advanced Draft for Hand Hygiene in Health Care (2006).”

“At the national level, my thesis also addresses the issue of appropriate antibiotic prescribing, for which there was a national training program in 2002-2003 where I participated as a trainer of other trainers. In addition, since I submitted my thesis in August last year, the Sub-Directorate for Special Services under the Directorate of Medical Services in the Indonesian Ministry of Health has been seeking my input into developing national infection control initiatives.”

With this in mind, Brahm is particularly hopeful that his research will contribute to an international awareness that programs from high-resourced countries “cannot simply be implemented as ‘plug-and-play’ solutions to complex problems in low-resourced settings.”

When asked to identify the best aspect of being a PhD student at SPHCM, Brahm described the collegiality in the research and teaching community. “Both academic and administrative staff members have been very approachable and supportive, from being devil’s advocate to a sounding board - and even to teach us how to fix a printer’s paper jam. This atmosphere also encourages research candidates to be open and supportive of each other. I also tremendously enjoyed the personal friendships and social interactions that keep reminding all of us there is more to life than our work.” Brahm would like to see more financial support for PhD students to attend conferences and more chance for them to be involved in decisions that affect their financial support when studying.

Brahm’s tips for future and current PhD students:

1. Live a balanced life -- physically (go to the gym), mentally (take a break), socially (get out of your cubicle) and spiritually (whatever that means to you). That’s how you can make the most of this journey and come out safe and sound at the end.

2. Find support and use it -- most of it is surprisingly free. At the same time, support others, an empathetic smile or lending an ear over lunch can do wonders for a research candidate heading to a breakdown. And yes, breakdowns are bound to happen at least once during a research journey.

Brahm is currently awaiting his examination results. His final words: “A research candidature is a life-changing experience, and I will be forever grateful to my supervisors, A/Professor Mary-Louise McLaws and Mike Whitby, my colleagues and the whole SPHCM family for making it such a special period of my life.”

If you are interested in contacting Brah, you can reach him at:

Dr Brahmaputra Marjadi
Email: b.marjadi@gmail.com
Faculty of Medicine
Universitas Wijaya Kusuma Surabaya
Jalan Dukuh Kupang XXV no. 54
Surabaya 60225, Indonesia
Other recent achievements include:
- Injecting drug users avoid viral infection and Friedman: Staying Safe: How Rhodes, Bonnel, Maher, Hope, Treloar Council. The successful application is for GBP £294,728.46 from the UK January of success of an application by Lisa Maher, who were notified in Prevention Program (VHEPP), led Viral Hepatitis Epidemiology and Prevention Program (VHEPP) VHEPP staff have had four papers published so far this year including a paper in AIDS Care on a microbicide male tolerance study, and a report on hepatitis C virus in injecting drug users attending needle and syringe programs in the Journal of Urban Health. Lisa Maher, Julie Mooney-Somers and Anna Bates conducted qualitative research training in Cambodia with staff from the Cambodian Women’s Development Agency and women community leaders as part of the NIH-funded Young Women’s Health Study, a longitudinal study examining sexual risk, drug use and prevention orientations among young women involved in the sex and entertainment industry.

Course participant conducting an in-depth interview with a sex worker

HIV Epidemiology and Prevention Program
The PASH (Pleasure and Sexual Health) study, which will look at risk taking and sexual behaviour in gay men on a national level, began a drive to recruit participants by hosting a booth at the Melbourne Midsumma™ Carnival on January 18. PASH will also be hosting a booth at Fair Day this year as part of the recruitment drive.

The Online Seroconversion Study is still recruiting men who have recently become HIV positive to discuss their experiences. Information about this study can be found at www.hivss.net.

Viral Hepatitis Epidemiology and Prevention Program (VHEPP)

Viral Hepatitis Epidemiology and Prevention Program (VHEPP) is in partnership with Kit Fairley and Sue Garland at the University of Melbourne, with NCHECR/UNSW the lead institution. The group has received $9.1 million over five years.

This large-scale, longitudinal research is designed to be directly translated into medical and public health interventions to control STIs. The program will focus on young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and homosexual men, identified as the highest priorities in the National Sexual Health Strategy. The program will be undertaken under four themes, each of which involves all of the priority populations. The four themes are:
- Causes of STI transmission, persistence and re-infection
- Long-term consequences of STIs
- Intervention trials to control STIs
- Biomathematical and economic models to predict the population impact and cost effectiveness of STI interventions.

Another major grant has gone to the Viral Hepatitis Epidemiology and Prevention Program (VHEPP), led by Lisa Maher, who were notified in January of success of an application for GBP £294,728.46 from the UK Economic and Social Research Council. The successful application is Rhodes, Bonnel, Maher, Hope, Treloar and Friedman: Staying Safe: How injecting drug users avoid viral infection in the long-term.

Other recent achievements include:
- Lisa Maher was promoted to professor, commencing in 2009.
- John Kaldor, Andrew Grulich, Lisa Maher and Basil Donovan have been awarded NHMRC fellowships commencing in 2009.
- Jeff Jin has been awarded a NHMRC training fellowship to work on Anogenital human papillomavirus infection and its outcomes in men.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Program
This recently established program has received an NHMRC Project Grant to conduct a community randomised trial in 21 remote communities in Northern and Central Australia. The trial is designed to support primary health care services to achieve best practice in STI care, in order to reduce the prevalence of bacterial STIs in remote communities. Community engagement, consultation and protocol development is underway.

NSW Health recently provided funding for a range of projects in Aboriginal health, specifically a continuous quality improvement project within four to six Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in STI care and treatment; a general practitioner survey to assess GPs STI care and treatment issues for Aboriginal populations, especially those in areas with high proportions of Aboriginal residents; and a study of Aboriginal patients undertaking HCV treatment.
Richard Taylor graduated in medicine from the University of Sydney, and after a decade in clinical practice in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, during which time he trained as a physician and completed the course on tropical medicine and hygiene at the London School, he commenced public health research investigating diabetes and cardiovascular disease in Pacific Island countries, while based at Monash University in Melbourne.

He was Epidemiologist for the South Pacific Commission (SPC) located in Noumea (New Caledonia) during the 1980s, concerned with surveillance and control of infectious disease, non-communicable disease and injury in Island country populations. Richard was at the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney 1990-2004 (as Associate Professor, then Professor) where he obtained a PhD and continued international work in the Asia Pacific with WHO, SPC and AusAid. Richard was head of the NSW Cancer Registry (1990-95) and subsequently advisor to NSW cancer screening programs, has obtained NHMRC and other research grants, as well as designing and launching the Master of International Public Health (MIPH) in 2000 at Sydney University.

Following his appointment as Professor of International Health at University of Queensland (UQ) in 2005, an MIPH was implemented, including new courses, with significant increases in student numbers. Richard has played a significant role in international collaborations as director of the Australian Centre for International and Tropical Health (UQ PHERP consortium), and in successful UQ applications for the Pacific Malaria Initiative Support Centre (AusAid) and the Health Information Knowledge Hub (AusAid).

Richard is currently involved as principal investigator in international research studies, including two AusAid ADRA grants (Pacific Island cause of death, Australian disaster response), and national research studies, including NHMRC grants on suicide epidemiology and Indigenous mortality. He has 349 publications, of which 188 are articles in refereed journals, and is currently involved in research grants ($6.6 million) and service contracts ($13.1 million) totalling $19.7 million.

Meredith Makeham joined the SPHCM in October last year as a senior lecturer in general practice. Her main research focus in recent years has been patient safety in Australian general practice, and she was awarded her PhD on this subject in 2008. Meredith was a chief investigator of the Threats to Australian Patient Safety (TAPS) study, which was awarded an NHMRC project grant and has resulted in a number of recent publications in peer reviewed scientific journals presenting new findings on the nature of reported errors in primary care. Her research prizes have included the Allan Chancellor award from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), and an NHMRC scholarship.

Meredith’s major teaching focus is her role as course convenor for Phase 3 primary care, which is part of the new curriculum in the undergraduate medicine program. She has recently developed a website to support clinical teachers in primary care, and has introduced some new clinical assessments for the students with actors role-playing patient scenarios.

Prior to joining the SPHCM, Meredith was a lecturer at the University of Sydney, and has formerly been an RDP Fellow with the support of PHCRIS. She has worked in clinical general practice on the lower North Shore of Sydney since 2000, and has been involved in a number of GP representative activities. These have included several years as a director of the Northern Sydney General Practice Network (formerly the Northern Sydney Division of General Practice), as a GP representative on the North Shore Private Hospital Medical Advisory Committee and the Family Planning NSW Medical Advisory Committee. She was also a GP Registrar representative on the national Council of the RACGP, and was awarded the College Medal of the RACGP for services to the College. Other GP representative activity include her role as a question writer for the Australian Medical Council examinations.

Meredith is also an inaugural director of the Alport Foundation of Australia, which aims to raise awareness and research funding to assist Australian sufferers of Alport syndrome, a genetic illness that causes renal failure and deafness in affected young men. She has three young children, aged five, four and one, and loves to spend her free time playing with them. She hopes one day that they may be able to make their own breakfast and dress themselves.
NSW Initiative for Health and Human Rights (IHHR), hosted by our school, held its 2nd course on Health, Development and Human Rights from 8-12 December 2008. This unique cross-faculty collaboration between the Faculties of Medicine, Law, and Arts and Social Science builds on the premise that higher education will impact directly on how future generations will approach critical global and local issues through a combined health, development and human rights perspective.

The course was attended by 74 participants comprising UNSW postgraduate students, PhD candidates, and national and international professionals. Pivotal to the design of the course was the mix of participants with experience and expertise from diverse backgrounds including law, public health, community and international development, social work and related research. The course also benefited from a rich cultural diversity as participants and lecturers came from various geographical regions and countries including Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Twelve AusAID sponsored Australian Leadership Award fellows from the Asia-Pacific region also participated, as did staff from United Nations agencies (WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF and UNDP).

Directed by Professor Daniel Tarantola, chair of the UNSW IHHR, the course featured 13 lecturers from the UNSW Faculties of Arts and Social Science, Law and Medicine, joined by Professor Sofia Gruskin, director of the Program of International Health and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, USA. Cross-institutional contributions came from speakers from the Human Rights Council of Australia, the University of Sydney, Disability Studies and Research Centre, and St. Vincent’s Hospital. Daily plenary sessions, thematic sessions, numerous group workshops and lunch-time topical discussions allowed participants to engage fully with each other, share individual experiences, and swap insights and opinions.

Organised in collaboration with the Diplomacy Training Program and the Australian Human Rights Centre, with the support of the UNSW Alumni Department, was the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. This well attended event, opened by Professor Fred Hilmer, Vice-Chancellor of the UNSW, featured two other prominent speakers: Lord Bingham, former Master of the Rolls and Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales; and Elizabeth Evatt, former member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the UN Human Rights Commission.

After two hugely successful years, the UNSW IHHR is currently working towards the realisation of the 3rd Intensive Course on Health Development and Human Rights, 7-12 December 2009. More information on previous and upcoming courses can be found at www.ihhr@unsw.edu.au.
SPHCM is offering a new specialisation plan in the Master of Public Health (MPH) in Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Control.

Throughout history new pathogens such as HIV, SARS and pandemic influenza have emerged to challenge human populations. Core competencies learnt will include the different modes of transmission, surveillance systems, outbreak investigation, control methods using screening, pharmaceutical, non-pharmaceutical, quarantining and border control. Pandemic Influenza and SARS will be used to learn about preparedness and containment of diseases that have potentially catastrophic impact to the health and economic stability of the world. The impact of travel, refugee populations and internationally displaced persons on surveillance and containment of infectious diseases will be covered as well as modelling infectious diseases common to the community and healthcare settings and key concepts of cost-effectiveness analysis.

This program is aimed at public health trainees who seek a career in communicable disease control in the health sector or in international health, or who wish to progress to postgraduate research in infectious diseases epidemiology.

Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Control is a key focus of research and practice within the Public Health field and also a key area of research and expertise within the School.

This plan provides students with an opportunity to select courses in a combination which enables specialisation in infectious diseases epidemiology and control. As part of the program, students undertake a small-scale research project, which may be in the form of a research study, a case study, a program evaluation or a report on field experience.

The name of the specialisation plan is reflected on the testamur and students graduate with a Master of Public Health in Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Control.

For further information on this new plan email: postgrad-sphcm@unsw.edu.au or go to: www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/SPHCMWeb.nsf/page/PHPlanInfect

HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH (HRH)

The HRH Hub@UNSW received the most welcome news that its 2009 workplan has been approved. This means the Hub’s work can now commence in earnest. There are three areas of work in 2009:

1. Human Resource Mapping in the Pacific – in association with the Pacific Human Resources for Health Alliance (PHRHA) and WHO, the Hub is undertaking a HRH mapping exercise of twelve Pacific Island countries. This will also include HRH training programs and providers. This activity is already well under way.

2. Strengthening Health Leadership and Management Capacity in the Asia Pacific Region – this work will entail developing frameworks and methodologies to assess leadership and management in the Asia Pacific Region in order to identify current strengths and areas for further enhancement of performance.

3. Evidence informed community based maternal, neonatal and reproductive care (MNRC) staffing – will undertake a critical review and profile MNRC staffing at the community level priority countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Dr Augustine Asante and Dr Angela Dawson have joined the HRH Hub as research fellows. The Hub staff and principal investigators have commenced work on each of the areas outlined above. They have also started planning for the HRH Symposium to be held here at UNSW on September 2nd, 3rd and 4th 2009.
Advances in Public Health and Health Services Research at UNSW

First Annual Symposium 2009

This symposium showcases the breadth and depth of leading population health and health services research across the Faculty of Medicine and UNSW. It will be an opportunity to learn about innovative research and to meet leading researchers and academics across various disciplines. This symposium is open to the public, university staff and students.

Represented Centres and Schools

FACULTY OF MEDICINE
School of Public Health and Community Medicine (SPHCM)
National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR)
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)
Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity (CPHCE)
Centre for Health Informatics (CHI)
Centre for Clinical Governance Research in Health (CCGR)

FACULTY OF SCIENCE
Injury Risk Management Research Centre

Guest Speakers
Professor Rob Moodie
Nossal Institute of Global Health
Professor George Rubin,
Centre for Health Services and Workforce Research

Themes
• Prevention, Population and Global Health
• Health Services and Policy
• Marginalised and Hard to Reach Groups

Symposium details
Friday, 1 May 2009
Scientia Building, UNSW
9:00 am - 4:30 pm
(Registration begins 8:00 am,
Acknowledge Country 8:50 am)

Registration is free, but places are limited, so hurry!

RSVP by Monday, 13 April 2009
l.yap@unsw.edu.au, (02) 9385 1925

For more information contact Lorraine Yap: l.yap@unsw.edu.au

Upcoming SPHCM Seminars*

Physical activity and nutrition behaviour in women with recent gestational diabetes: Implication for reducing risk for type 2 diabetes
Dr Husna Razee, Lecturer, SPHCM
18 March 2009, 12.00 noon

Evaluation of the Australian national meningococcal C immunisation program
A/Prof Glenda Lawrence, SPHCM
25 March 2009, 12.00 noon

Issues around health literacy, using some recent survey data to test out some rival notions
Dr James A Gillespie, Deputy Director, Menzies Centre for Health Policy
8 April 2009, 12.00 noon

HIV/AIDS and rehabilitation centres in Vietnam: Sexual and reproductive health needs, care and choice of current and former detainees and their sexual partners
Professor Daniel Tarantola, SPHCM
15 April 2009, 12.00 noon

Preventive care in general practice
Professor Mark Harris, Executive Director, CPHCE
22 April 2009, 12.00 noon

Clinical trial registration and bias in the RCT literature: Evidence that it’s not working
A/Professor Nicolas Rasmussen, History and Philosophy Conjoint Senior Lecturer, UNSW
29 April 2009, 12 noon

* All seminars are held in Room 305, Level 3, Samuels Building, UNSW

Let’s hear from you
We would like to keep in touch with former staff and students of the School. Please send your contributions to the editor, Kevin Forde: k.forde@unsw.edu.au

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www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au

The School of Public Health and Community Medicine
The University of New South Wales
UNSW Sydney NSW 2052, Australia
Tel: +61 (2) 9385 2517 Fax: +61 (2) 9313 6185

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