



Inaugural Elder in Residence Aunty Ali Golding celebrating her appointment with Clarence Slockee (RHS) and the Muru Marri team

Exciting developments at Muru Marri

The Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit has had much to celebrate in recent months. A highlight was the awarding of Member of the Order of Australia to Unit Director Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver for service to medical education and as a supporter of educational opportunities for Aboriginal people. Lisa is quick to point out that this work has involved many others, particularly those in both the Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit and those in the Shalom Gamarada Indigenous Scholarship Program, both of which Lisa co-founded. The Shalom Gamarada Program is now in its sixth year and is supporting 27 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the majority of whom are studying medicine. This year has also seen the continuing success of the Shalom Gamarada Art Fair, the annual program

highlight, plus the presentation of the program's Inaugural Xstrata Art Centre Award.

Both Lisa and Associate Professor Melissa Haswell attended the recent Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) conference in Brisbane, where Lisa gave a keynote address within a plenary session entitled "Health for Sustainable Populations" to a packed audience. Also recently, Melissa Haswell gave a presentation to the Rural Health Research Colloquium in Dubbo entitled, "Pathways of Care for Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Remote Areas."

Both Melissa and Ms Sally Fitzpatrick recently attended the national conference of the

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and promoted the work of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine. Sally continues to provide academic and advocacy support to the Stolen Generations Working Partnership and attended the partnership's inaugural interagency forum in Canberra in September.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Latest developments in managing Adult Pneumococcal Disease	3
Timor-Leste Day	4
Mental Health Award	6
Research Grant Success	6
Burn Injury Prevention	7
Why study at UNSW?	8



The PHAA conference provided an opportunity to showcase the post-graduate study opportunities of our School. School staff attending the conference spoke to many potential students. It also provided the Muru Marri Unit with the chance to highlight the launch of a new stream – Master of Public Health in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing commencing in 2012. Students who select this stream complete the three MPH core courses plus five stream-defining courses. Of the stream-defining courses, three are Indigenous-specific in content and context (PHCM9630, 9632 and 9634), plus ‘Applied Research Methods in Public Health’ (PHCM9132), and a ‘Project in Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing’ (PHCM9148).

The three Indigenous-specific electives, the recently renamed PHCM9630 ‘Public Health Perspectives of Indigenous Health’, and the newly developed PHCM9632 ‘Indigenous Health & Wellbeing across the Lifespan’ and PHCM9634 ‘Case Studies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health’ are available to all post-graduate students.

‘Indigenous Health & Wellbeing across the Lifespan’ was run for the first time in Semester 2, 2011, and characteristic of all electives convened by Muru Marri, involves a mandatory residential workshop. Lisa Jackson Pulver says: “This year, we had the great pleasure of inviting Rachael Wargent from the



School of Australian Indigenous Studies at James Cook University to facilitate the Stage 1 of the Aboriginal-developed Family Well Being Empowerment Program. Student feedback on the workshop experience and consistently throughout the semester suggests that students are experiencing transformational learning, which is a key objective of the course.”

Muru Marri’s research agenda is also thriving with staff member involvement as chief investigators on three new grants commencing in 2012 – two (NHMRC; ARC Linkage Grant) associated with CHETRE’s Gudaga Study and one examining needs of women with rheumatic heart disease in pregnancy. The Unit is also leading a FaHCSIA-funded project on social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous youth involving six case studies on programs around the country. This has allowed the Unit to engage all Unit staff, including Dr Ilse Blignault and Ken Zulumovski, as well as two medical

students in their Independent Learning Projects, Perdi Osborne and Ally Rigg. This multi-site study also involves collaborators from James Cook University. It has involved visits to youth programs in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Cairns, Brisbane, Aurukun, Adelaide and just up the road in La Perouse! Ilse has also completed an evaluation of the Homework Centre at Reiby Juvenile Detention Centre for Save the Children NSW.

Lisa Jackson Pulver says: “We are looking forward to commencing the new Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Stream, submitting grants and expanding our research in the area of health and wellbeing among Aboriginal youth in 2012.”

Photo top left: Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Administrator of the Commonwealth of Australia with Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM



Forum highlights latest developments in managing adult pneumococcal disease

Researchers, policy makers, healthcare professionals, advisory groups and industry representatives reviewed the latest research and discussed future directions at a recent forum on adult vaccination against pneumococcal disease.

Hosted by the School of Public Health and Community of Medicine at UNSW with funding from CSL Biotherapies, the forum featured presentations from international speakers including Professor David Goldblatt, Professor of Vaccinology and Immunology and Head of the Immunobiology Unit at the Institute of Child Health, University College London (UCL), UK. Dr John Grabenstein, Senior Medical Director for Adult Vaccines, Merck and Co. in Pennsylvania, US was also a speaker. Australian speakers included Professor Peter McIntyre from the National Centre for Immunisation Research, Professor Paul Torzillo from The Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney, Professor Peter Richmond from the University of Western Australia and A/Prof Ross Andrews from the Menzies Institute in Darwin.

Diagnosis of pneumococcal disease remains challenging

The difficulty in diagnosing pneumococcal disease was a common issue echoed by many speakers at the forum. As Professor Paul Torzillo said: “although people have been studying pneumococcal disease for a long time, we still don’t have a good way of diagnosing it. There is no simple gold standard

for diagnosis of non-invasive disease.”

Due to the challenges in diagnosis, the incidence of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) is often used as an indicator of the overall burden of pneumococcal disease. Patterns of IPD incidence by age are similar internationally. There are high rates of disease in the very young before rates decline, and then a marked increase in rates from approximately 65 years of age. Risk factors are also important, with a recent analysis of IPD cases in Australian adults identifying risk factors in almost half of all cases.

The role of vaccination in managing adult pneumococcal disease

Associate Professor Ross Andrews provided an update on a Cochrane Review evaluating vaccines for preventing pneumococcal infection in adults. “The 2008 review found polysaccharide vaccines were effective in preventing IPD of all types, with vaccine efficacy of 74%,” he said. “An updated analysis suggests our position on vaccine efficacy will not change significantly.”

The Australian average for coverage with 23-valent pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (23vPPV) in people aged 65 years of over is approximately 53%. Coverage appears to be particularly low for younger adults with risk factors. These rates are ‘definitely not high enough’, said Dr Rob Menzies.

Another issue addressed at the forum was the adverse-event

profile of 23vPPV. In April 2011, the TGA advised health professionals not to administer second or subsequent doses of 23vPPV due to an apparent increased rate of injection site reactions following the second dose. Currently, the overall risk–benefit of revaccination with 23vPPV is still under review.

The long-term persistence of effect of 23vPPV in adults will be an important factor to consider when making decisions about revaccination. Dr John Goldstein said: “The literature indicates that antibody levels persist above unvaccinated baseline for 5 to 10 years. Longer intervals between doses results in lower circulating antibody levels. It is important to recognise that when antibody level has dropped to baseline, a person is back to their original risk of disease.”

The impact of infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) programs on adults was also discussed. “In the UK, there has been an indirect effect to reduce IPD in the 7vPCV serotypes in the elderly since the introduction of an infant vaccination program; however, the replacement phenomenon has resulted in an increase in the elderly of some of the serotypes not in 7vPCV,” said Professor David Goldblatt.

The potential role of 13vPCV in adults in the future should also be evaluated. “We need to consider the value and cost-effectiveness of using 13vPCV in adults in conjunction with a mature infant PCV program that is likely to deliver herd immunity,” Professor Goldblatt said.

Future directions in the management of pneumococcal disease

“We all recognise that pneumococcal disease is an important issue for the elderly and those with comorbid conditions that put them at particular risk of disease,” said Professor Peter Richmond in a closing summation of the forum. “We also still need to do more work in diagnostics and therapeutics.”

Evaluating the benefit of vaccines for different population groups and then implementing appropriate vaccination programs accordingly will be another important step.

“We need to think about what vaccines we do have, who they work in, and what is the most effective way of moving forward,” Professor Richmond said.

“An adult immunisation register would provide a major tool for improving coverage, as it would eliminate the uncertainty about whether a person has been previously vaccinated,” Dr Menzies said. “Also, healthcare providers are highly influential in advocating vaccination to their patients. We therefore need to explore ways to assist healthcare providers to prioritise vaccination.”

Over 60 people from around Australia attended the forum and joined a discussion panel on future directions for the control of adult pneumococcal disease in Australia.

Timor-Leste Day:

HRH Hub convened meeting October 16th



Dr Augustine Asante

Following discussions earlier this year with Dr Nelson Martins, the Minister for Health of Timor Leste, the Human Resources for Health Knowledge (HRH) Hub convened a meeting of the other AusAID funded Knowledge Hubs to harmonise support to the Timor-Leste health sector. The four knowledge Hubs (Human Resources for Health at UNSW, Policy and Finance at Nossal Institute for Global Health, Health Information Systems at the University of Queensland and Women’s and Children’s Health at the University of Melbourne’s Centre for International Child Health, Menzies School of Health Research and Burnet Institute’s Centre for International Health) are funded by AusAID to collate and contribute knowledge to their respective policy domains, in support of policy development towards improving health systems and services.

The intention of the day was to identify common issues and to devise methods for conducting effective work without disrupting the Ministry of Health. Timor-Leste has obtained support for their health sector development from multiple funds, agencies and NGOs and, as we have seen elsewhere,



Dr Graham Roberts

officials are at risk of being over-run by development assistance officials and enthusiasts. The HRH Hub hosted the Timor-Leste Day at UNSW on October 16th, and drew on the expertise of Dr Jaoa Soares Martins of the Universidade Nacional in Timor-Leste (UTL), who until recently was completing his PhD studies at SPHCM.

The Women’s and Children’s Hub has ongoing work in nutrition in Timor-Leste and the HRH Hub has strong links to both the Ministry and to UTL. The main issue of interest emerging at the meeting was the challenge for Timor-Leste in the integration of newly trained doctors into the health system. Doctors are trained in Indonesia, Portugal and Fiji and, recently, in Cuba through its Solidarity Aid program. The final 2 years of the Cuban medical curriculum is now delivered in Timor-Leste and new graduates have been produced. The next graduation will be of 500 new doctors and by the end of 2012-13, a total of 677 Timor-Leste medical students will have completed their training to enter the health system.

Dr Martins, the Dean of UTL Faculty of Medicine and Health



Timor-Leste Day participants in discussion

Sciences, said Timor-Leste suffered from inadequate and unevenly distributed human resources, and that a deployment plan for new doctors needed to be designed now. Dr Martins outlined the other major challenges in health sector development in Timor-Leste as:

- High child and maternal mortality rates
- High burden of communicable diseases, malnutrition, and inadequate attention to non-communicable diseases
- A weak health information system.

The key question identified for the HRH Hub to assist with was: How are new doctors integrated into the health care system and how can they strengthen it?

In his presentation Dr Augustine Asante, HRH Hub Research Fellow, reported that Timor-Leste

had made remarkable progress as a young nation in developing its health sector. However, several issues of concern required attention if the gains made so far were to be consolidated. These included:

- The need for HR management capacity building in the MoH
- Health workforce planning and financing
- Development of HR information systems.

Professor Anthony Zwi encouraged participants to consider developing a combined program of activities that would not burden partners and would be supportive of the needs of research and institutional arrangements in Timor-Leste.

David Fowler, Consultant to Timor-Leste MoH, Global Fund Programs, reported on the likely effects of rapid economic and social change for future management of the health system.

Dr Tim Anderson, University of Sydney, spoke on the topic of social medicine and provided further information on the Cuban-trained doctors.

Participants in the day also had the opportunity to hear from Dr Merita Monteiro, who recently returned from training in Cuba and is now undergoing a two year internship in Timor-Leste. In the evening, the group joined SHARE in the presentation of Dr Anderson's recent film on medical training in Cuba as a component of a discussion on Social Medicine.

All presentations from the Timor-Leste Day are available on the HRH Hub website, which also includes links to films made by Dr Tim Anderson on the Cuba - Timor-Leste cooperation program. See <http://www.hrhhub.unsw.edu.au/>



From left: Dr John Rule, Dr Jaoa Soares Martins, and Dr Augustine Asante taking part in the Timor-Leste Day discussions



Dr Jaoa Soares Martins

The Mental Health Award for Excellence in Research



UNSW Prison Team with Robyn Richmond on the far right

The UNSW Prison Research team led by Professor Robyn Richmond which includes Professor Kay Wilhelm, Dr Alex Wodak, Dr Devon Indig and Professor Tony Butler, won the Mental Health Matters Award for 2011 for excellence in research. The university research team received the award from the Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Kevin Humphries, MP, at NSW Parliament House at a lunch to launch Mental Health week on 12 October, 2011. The award acknowledges the high standard and ongoing commitment demonstrated by those involved in innovative and effective programs which address key mental health issues at local, regional and statewide levels. Further, the awards encourage individuals and organisations to continue to strive for excellence in their daily work and to continue to enhance their skills and experience within the mental health field.

The UNSW Prison Research Team has conducted three studies to reduce tobacco use among prisoners. There are 80% of prisoners who have a mental illness and 80% are smokers. Prisons are now regarded as the mental health institutions of the

21st century. Mental illness among prisoners is more than double that of the general population and prisoners are 5 times more likely to be smokers. The first study that they conducted was the pilot trial of a multi-component smoking cessation intervention developed in collaboration with prisoners. A qualitative study followed which examined the role of tobacco use in prison and the possible influences of the prison environment on smoking. Tobacco is used as a currency in prison to pay for gambling debts, for painting equipment and other goods and services, such as for sex. In the third study, a randomised controlled trial was conducted of a multi-component smoking cessation intervention among 425 male prisoners across a majority of NSW prisons and one in Queensland. Recommendations flowing from the research include; conducting smoking cessation in the prison clinic concurrent with other treatments where there is comorbidity among prisoners, activating the Mental Health Telephone service and Quitline for inmates, and designating specific smoking cells and areas.

Recent research grant success at SPHCM

NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence (CRE) in Population Health

The CRE will commence in 2012 funded by a grant of \$2.5 million, led by Professor MacIntyre in collaboration with a multidisciplinary team across UNSW, The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, The Kirby Institute, Westmead Hospital, The University of Sydney and the University of Antwerp. A very talented team of postdoctoral researchers will work with senior researchers to fulfil the goals of the CRE.

Travellers visiting friends and relatives: New approaches to understanding and reducing infectious disease risks

Travel is the single most important factor in the spread of infections globally and travellers who visit friends and relatives in their country of birth are at increased risk of infections. This project will provide necessary evidence to guide an effective response to reducing travel-associated infectious disease in this target at-risk group. Prof Chandini R MacIntyre; Prof Nicholas A Zwar; Prof Heather Worth; Dr Holly Seale; Dr Anita E Heywood; Dr Mohamud Sheikh; Dr Mitchell M Smith (\$253,177).

The Gudaga Study: NHMRC Project grant describing the health, development, early education, family environment and service context of Aboriginal children aged five to nine years in an urban location

The Gudaga Study is a unique study of Aboriginal children in an urban environment on the eastern seaboard of Australia. Children were recruited at birth (October 2005 – May 2007). They have been followed up at 6-monthly intervals to age 5 years and more than 80% are still in the study. The aim of this new research is to describe the health, early learning and service context of these urban Aboriginal children from age 5 to 9 years. Detailed longitudinal data on Aboriginal children's early life experiences have not previously been collected in an urban setting. The Gudaga study has received NHMRC funding (\$1,525,060 over a period of 5 years) to support its research program. Lead Investigator is A/Professor Elizabeth Comino.

An ecological study of school transition and the early years of school for Aboriginal children in an urban environment

The Gudaga goes to school research has received an ARC Discovery grant (\$357,535 for 3 years). Reducing the gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is critical. Information is lacking on the early educational experiences of urban Aboriginal children. This research will explore urban Aboriginal children's early school experiences and provide information on the early life factors that support positive outcomes. Lead Investigator is A/Professor Lynn Kemp.

Routine screening for intimate partner violence in Antenatal Clinics

This NHMRC Project Grant is a qualitative study of how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women decide whether to disclose abuse they have experienced and contributors to the impact of screening. The Chief Investigators from SPHCM are Anthony Zwi, Jo Spangaro and Alison Rutherford.

Risky business

A qualitative investigation into Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) risk and vulnerability among sex workers in three Pacific countries. Prof Heather Worth (\$118,879).

PhD student's research into burn injury prevention stimulates widespread interest

One in five Australians suffer some sort of burn injury each year, and over 6000 people require hospital treatment. Lara Harvey, a PhD candidate in the SPHCM, is evaluating the translation of research into policy and practice in the prevention of burn injury. Lara's thesis explores in detail the use of hot tap water regulating devices, the introduction of legislation for mandatory ownership of smoke alarms, and community knowledge of correct first aid for a burn or scald. She has utilised a variety of different methodologies, data sources and statistical analysis methods to explore these topics.

Lara's work has been published in Burns, (Journal of the International Society for Burn Injury) and the Medical Journal of Australia and presented at conferences both nationally and internationally. Lara received a "highly commended" award at the Australian and New Zealand Burn Association Conference in Melbourne in 2008 for her paper "Preventing hot tap water scalds: have the NSW plumbing regulations made a difference". In October this year, Lara was awarded "highly commended" certificates for both her paper presentation



"The impact of changes in smoke alarm legislation on residential fire injuries and smoke alarm ownership in NSW" and her poster presentation "Making burn injuries count: the impact of case definition" at the Australian and New Zealand Burns Association Conference in Brisbane. Her recent publication on community knowledge of first aid, published in the MJA, stimulated media interest and Lara's research was the focus of a panel discussion on first aid for burns and scalds on ABC radio Nightlife with Rod Quinn.

"It is wonderful to work with a student so passionate about making a difference through research," said Dr Ros Poulos, Lara's supervisor. Lara plans to submit her thesis early next year.

Why study at UNSW?

- The largest public health program in NSW
- The oldest health management program in Australia
- Targeted MPH specialisation streams with area of specialisation on testamur
- Specialisation streams aligned with flagship areas of research strength
- Summer school to accelerate your progress (including the option for standalone professional upskilling)
- Distance education available
- Multi-national and multi-cultural student environment
- Mix of short courses and semester long courses
- Flexibility in changing options
- Wide range of research and evaluation courses and projects
- Combined degree options
- Coursework, combined coursework and research, and research only higher degrees
- Research degrees such as PhDs and Master of Philosophy available

Our programs

- Public Health (MPH)
- International Public Health (MIPH)
- Health Management (MHM)
- Combinations of the above

Specialist MPH streams to facilitate career choices:

- Aboriginal health and wellbeing
- Infectious diseases epidemiology and control
- Health promotion
- Primary health care
- International Health

For more information about our postgraduate programs please contact the School or visit our website.



Seasons greetings and best wishes for the New Year from everyone at SPHCM

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

Published by the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

Opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of New South Wales. Information was correct at the time of publication but is liable to change. Please visit the School website for the latest information: 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
Website: www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au



CRICOS Provider No: 00098G