



## Monash Praxis

A publication for alumni by the Monash University Medical Foundation – Issue 6, Summer 2006

### Inside this issue

- Discovering why pets are good for you
- Rural news
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# Tapping for palliative care



We are currently going through a period of great excitement in both health education and research which is arguably more evident at Monash University than any other institution in our part of the world. We have recently seen the development of a series of new departments in the allied health disciplines and the establishment of a Malaysian medical school within the faculty and will shortly see new major regional medical education developments in Gippsland and in Northern Victoria. Collectively these give unparalleled opportunities in interdisciplinary and transcultural education, which will reinforce Monash's role as a global health education university.

The early twenty-first century will be seen by future generations as a golden age of health research with new developments in almost every facet of knowledge creation ranging from the most basic cellular mechanisms that underpin health and lead to disease, to the development of new therapeutics and diagnostics and to an understanding of the wealth of inputs that influence and maintain human health. This is truly an age of interdisciplinary education and our huge faculty at Monash University is ideally placed to make major contributions. A consolidation of the Monash Institute of Medical Research under Bryan Williams' leadership, new research developments in the School of Biomedical Sciences led by Christina Mitchell and an appropriately ambitious and consolidated approach to university research at AMREP are some of the major research developments. Major developments in regional Victoria include the establishment of a university Department of Rural Health in the Gippsland region and the exciting research developments around the health needs of chronic illness and our ageing society in the School of Rural Health and at the Peninsula campus. An increasingly collaborative approach between existing research strengths in the faculty, the new Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute and the important Australian Stem Cell Centre research activities co-located on the Monash campus are another key development which will make Monash and Victoria the central university in regenerative medicine research in Australia. Taken collectively these developments signal a period of incredible research energy.

“...a flourishing and extremely successful faculty...”

I would like to acknowledge in particular the assistance of Michael Berndt as deputy dean research, Tony Luff as deputy dean, education and quality, and Leon Piterman as senior deputy dean, in providing leadership for the faculty in these key areas. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Chris Browne for the extremely hard work he and his team have put into getting the new MBBS developments to a very credible state under very demanding time constraints. Janet Kemp and her team have provided outstanding administrative support for the faculty at a time of change which has imposed great work demands on them. Their contribution has been exemplary. I will be stepping down as dean early in the new year for a mixture of personal and professional reasons and taking up a position in the UK as some of you may have heard. I will miss my many friends at Monash, but take some comfort in the fact that I leave behind me a flourishing and extremely successful faculty in which all who work there should take considerable pride.

Professor Edward Byrne AO  
Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

The Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences alumni newsletter has a new name – *Monash Praxis*. According to the Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)), praxis is of Ancient Greek origins and referred to activity engaged in by free men. Praxis was one of Aristotle's three basic activities meaning to be practical or that which had an end goal of action.

Readers are welcome to submit contributions to *Monash Praxis* of approximately 200 words or as discussed with the editor (Leanne Cutler ph: 03 9905 9329). Whilst every effort will be made to include readers' contributions, we reserve the right to evaluate content for suitability and relevance to the audience, and to edit content where necessary.

This newsletter is published by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University through the Monash University Medical Foundation.



Cover: Former Chief of Defence, General Peter Cosgrove and the Ros Hendy Dancers at the Vivian Bullwinkel Memorial Fund Gala Dinner

## Vivian Bullwinkel Memorial Fund Gala Dinner

More than 400 people packed the Melbourne Museum to support research into palliative care nursing on 18 August. Industry partners, clinical staff, Monash researchers, colleagues and friends enjoyed a diverse evening of entertainment and speeches.

Three leaders in their field spoke to support the cause. Former Chief of Defence, General Peter Cosgrove AC, MC gave a moving speech recounting Sister Vivian Bullwinkel's care of the sick and dying in a prisoner of war camp in World War II and her major influence on the nursing profession in Australia in peacetime.

Commander of the Australian Army's Medical Relief Unit for the tsunami in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, Lt-Col Georgeina Whelan CSC AM, gave her account of the medical care given and to those left destitute as a result of the catastrophe and the challenges they faced. She also emphasised the importance of Vivian Bullwinkel's story for younger people in the military.

The inaugural Vivian Bullwinkel Chair in Nursing, Palliative Care, Professor Margaret O'Connor AM said that while palliative care was an aspect of healthcare, it was often hidden and undervalued. She said the chair provided the opportunity to raise the profile of palliative care in the community as well as focus research efforts in this area. Professor O'Connor acknowledged the unique structure of her chair along with its three clinical partners – Peninsula Health, Peninsula Hospice Service, and the Royal District Nursing Service, which contributed to ensuring that all research was clinically relevant. She described the current research program of her team, which concentrates on three areas – service delivery issues, cultural aspects of care and care of veterans at the end of life.

Media identity, editor and writer, Ita Buttrose AO provided extra elegance and sparkle to the event as Master of Ceremonies. Guests were delighted by the superb Gershwin piano recital by Rebecca Chambers and Puccini's 'Neesun Dorma' sung by tenor Greg McMaster. The Ros Hendy Dancers (aged 40–70) tap danced to some old favourites completely delighting the crowd with their prowess and glittering costumes. The Peter Sullivan Big Band was in full swing later in the evening enticing many-a-dignitary to 'get dancing'.



From left: General Peter Cosgrove; Vivian Bullwinkel Chair in Nursing, Palliative Care, Professor Margaret O'Connor; Governor of Victoria Professor David de Kretser; Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences Deputy Dean, Professor Leon Piterman; Ms Ita Buttrose; and Mr John Bullwinkel.



Top left: Mr David Oliver, RSL Victoria State Executive member Anne Pahl, Mr Mark Pahl, Aged Care and Health Services ANZAC House Mrs Michelle Oliver, RSL Victoria State Executive member Mr John Johnson.

Bottom left: Mrs Helen Annett, RSL Victoria CEO Mr Mike Annett, Ms Ann Logan, RSL Victoria State Executive member Mr George Logan, and Ms Anita Johnson.

## Contributions

Contributions to research of palliative care nursing can be made through the Vivian Bullwinkel Memorial Fund by calling:

03 9905 9329

or by sending a donation made payable to:

"Monash University Medical Foundation"  
PO Box 64  
Clayton campus  
Monash University VIC 3800.

A tax deductible receipt will be issued.



Lieutenant-Colonel Georgeina Whelan



On the day at the Investiture: Dr Alan Finkel AM, Governor of Victoria Professor David de Kretser AC, Professor Ed Byrne AO and Professor Leon Piterman AM

## Honours for Monash

The Dean and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences received their Australia Day and Queen's Birthday honours respectively from the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC.

The dean, Professor Ed Byrne, was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) and the deputy dean, Professor Leon Piterman was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) at an investiture ceremony at Government House held in October.

Professor Byrne received his award for services to neurology as a clinician and academic, and advances in medical research, particularly in the area of mitochondrial muscle disease.

Professor Piterman, who is also Professor of General Practice and Head of the School of Primary Health Care, was recognised for his service to family medicine through distance education for doctors in remote areas, to research and student training and to international medical education.

Also receiving his award on the day, was Dr Alan Finkel, who is a member two boards within the faculty – the Monash University Medical Foundation Board and the advisory board of the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse.



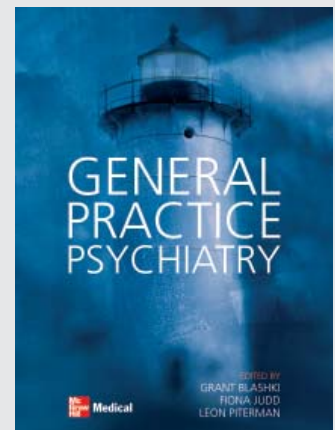
Mr Deepak Sharma, Dr Susan Lim, Mrs Wen Joy Lim and Professor Yean Leng Lim

## Distinguished medical alumni

The faculty's Distinguished Alumni Award winners from across the years met at this year's awards ceremony held in August. The 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award Winner Dr Susan Lim, a 1979 graduate of medicine, completed Singapore's first successful liver transplant and has interests in stem cell research and robotic surgery. In her speech, she said that she hoped to develop a collaborative stem cell research project with Professor Alan Trounson, Director of the Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratories.

During the Awards event, Dr Lim met one of Monash University's first Distinguished Alumni Award recipients, Professor Yean L. Lim AM, an internationally eminent cardiologist, photographer and arts patron.

Professor Lim was a Distinguished Alumnus in 1993 and is recognised as a pioneer of coronary intervention in Australia and China. He completed his Bachelor of Medical Science, MBBS and PhD at Monash, then later attended the Massachusetts General Hospital at Harvard University to undertake his postdoctoral research. Professor Lim is currently the Permanent Secretary of the Asia-Pacific Society of Interventional Cardiology. He founded the medical faculty of Xiamen University, China, serving as its inaugural dean, and now holds Visiting Professorships in 17 Chinese universities. Born in Singapore, Professor Lim was invited by the Singapore Government in 1997 to head the National Heart Centre, the National Medical Research Centre and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. In the arts, Professor Lim is a graduate in fine arts, an Associate Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society of the United Kingdom and one of the Patrons of the Musical Society of Victoria.



## GP psychiatry text

Professor Piterman has co-edited the new text, *General Practice Psychiatry*, with Monash Honorary Senior Research Fellow Dr Grant Blashki and Professor Fiona Judd. The book covers higher prevalence disorders, common problems that GPs encounter, and current guidelines on regularly used pharmacotherapies. It is available from the Monash University Bookshop.

## Announcement of prestigious faculty awards

The David de Kretser Award and the faculty's Lifetime Achievement Award for 2006 will be awarded in a special ceremony hosted by the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC in December.

### David de Kretser Medal

Professor Warwick Anderson AM, Chief Executive Officer of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is the recipient of the 2006 David de Kretser Medal. He commenced the role of Chief Executive Officer of the NHMRC in June this year after ten years at Monash University, firstly as Head of the Department of Physiology and since 2001, the Head of the School of Biomedical Sciences.

“His far-sighted vision has helped place Monash University in a strong position nationally...”

This award is presented by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences to an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to any area of the faculty's operations over a significant period of his or her working life.

“We are pleased to announce that Professor Warwick Anderson is the recipient of this year's David de Kretser Award,” Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Professor Ed Byrne AO said.

“Professor Anderson made an enormously valuable contribution to Monash University through his leadership, firstly at the Department of Physiology, and then concurrently of the new School of Biomedical Sciences. Through his time of academic leadership at Monash, he also led a large research team of his own and made significant contributions to teaching. His far-



Professor Warwick Anderson

sighted vision has helped place Monash University in a strong position nationally, that it currently occupies in the medical research arena. Under Warwick Anderson's leadership, the School of Biomedical Sciences has become the leading activity of that type in an Australian university.

“Warwick Anderson has been a great leader in biomedicine from Monash University and is a worthy recipient of the David de Kretser medal.”

In the 1970s, Professor Anderson spent three years as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Medical School, returning to a role at the University of Sydney. His next move was to the Baker Institute in Melbourne where he was promoted to deputy director.

His research interests focus on the causes of high blood pressure, especially the role of kidney disease, and he has published over 150 scientific papers in this area.

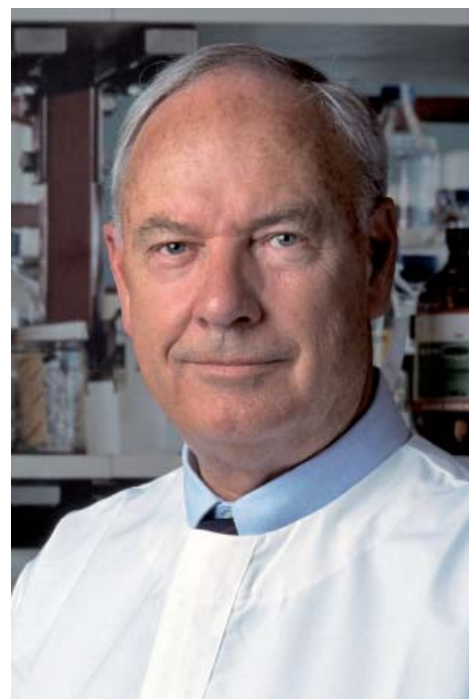
### Lifetime Achievement Award

Emeritus Professor Donald Metcalf AC of The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research is the 2006 recipient of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science's Lifetime Achievement Award. This award is presented to an individual who has made an exceptional contribution, nationally and internationally to human health and wellbeing.

“Professor Donald Metcalf is one of the few Australian medical scientists who have seen scientific breakthroughs in their own laboratory lead to treatments which improve human health,” Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Professor Ed Byrne AO said. “His pioneering work has enabled the development of bone marrow rescue therapies which have greatly improved the safety and effectiveness of anti-cancer treatments. He is one of Australia's greatest ever medical scientists who has made truly exceptional contributions.”

Professor Metcalf is distinguished for his work on the control of blood cell formation and the control of leukaemic cells. He and his team discovered colony stimulating factors (CSF's), hormones that control white blood cell formation and the resistance to infections. These CSF's have now been used in more than five million patients throughout the world as valuable reagents in accelerating the regrowth of blood cells following anti-cancer treatment, in permitting improved methods for blood cell transplantation and for increasing resistance to infections.

He has worked at the The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute since 1954 with periods of research overseas including posts as visiting scientist at Harvard Medical School, Boston; the Roswell Park Memorial Institute, Buffalo; the Swiss Institute for Experimental Cancer Research, Lausanne; the Radiobiological Institute, Rijswijk; and the University of Cambridge. In 1996, he was appointed an Emeritus Professor of The University of Melbourne.



Emeritus Professor Donald Metcalf



Nobel Laureate Professor Barry Marshall



Associate Professor James Whisstock



Alumnus, Professor Susan Davis,  
Professor of Women's Health

## Rod Andrew Oration by Nobel Laureate

2005 Nobel Laureate Professor Barry Marshall and his colleague, Dr Robin Warren made the most significant discovery in the history of gastroenterology, which resulted in them being awarded the 2005 Nobel Prize for Medicine.

Professor Marshall told the story of how they won the most prestigious award in medicine at this year's Rod Andrew Oration in August.

He is noted for drinking a culture of *Helicobacter pylori* bacterium to prove his hypothesis that it caused peptic ulcers. Not only did he prove this to be correct, he developed the combination of drugs that eliminate ulcers permanently. His other hypothesis that *H. pylori* was a causative factor in stomach cancer has also been accepted.

Professor Marshall is currently a Senior Principal Research Fellow in the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences at the University of Western Australia.

The Rod Andrew Oration is held in honour of the Founding Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Emeritus Professor Richard Rod Andrew.

## Life Scientist of the Year Award

Monash researcher Associate Professor James Whisstock has been awarded the 2006 Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year.

The award was in recognition of the discovery of how a protein called MENT helps DNA so that it fits inside the cell nucleus.

The prize is one of Australia's most highly-regarded awards and is presented to a scientist in the early stage of his or her career for world-class scientific research.

Dr Whisstock, from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, has spent the past 10 years studying the structure and function of a specialised family of proteins called serpins.

Recently, Dr Whisstock's research group was the first to find serpins in bacteria and he hopes that the study of these proteins and how they avoid aggregation will provide important insight into how to combat human disease.

The research has been recently published in the *European Molecular Biology Organisational Journal*.

This is the second time in three years that a Monash University scientist has received the Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year. Professor Jamie Rossjohn, also from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, was awarded the prize in 2004.

## New DVD helps women deal with breast cancer

Australia's first comprehensive DVD guide to help women and their families deal with breast cancer diagnosis has been produced by the Women's Health Program at Monash University's Central and Eastern Clinical School.

The DVD *So I have Breast Cancer, What Now?* includes interviews with Australia's top breast cancer surgeons, physicians and psychologists as well as candid interviews with women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer and their families.

Chair of Women's Health and Director of the Women's Health Program of the Department of Medicine, Central and Eastern Clinical School, Professor Susan Davis said a major issue facing women with breast cancer was fatigue and the DVD was designed with this in mind.

Professor Davis said the DVD included valuable information on treatment options, the impact of breast cancer on relationships, what to tell the children about a diagnosis, finance or career issues and the availability of support services. Issues specific to young women are also explored.

The DVD is available for \$9.95 at AMCAL and Guardian pharmacies across Australia or online at [www.womenshealth.med.monash.edu.au](http://www.womenshealth.med.monash.edu.au).



Professor Brian Oldenburg

## New Chair of International Public Health

Professor Brian Oldenburg commenced his position as Chair of International Public Health in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine in August. He is also Regional Director of the Asian Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health, an international non-profit organisation with almost 60 academic public health institutions as members, dedicated to improving their public health education and research programs in their region. Professor Oldenburg was the Scientific Program Chair for the 9th International Congress of Behavioural Medicine in Bangkok. He holds Visiting Professorships at the National Public Health Institute of Finland and the Beijing Centre for Disease Control, China.

## VC's Commendation

Dr Helen Kelsall was recently awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Commendation for Doctoral Thesis Excellence. Dr Kelsall's thesis, entitled *Respiratory and neurological health, symptoms, medical conditions and chronic fatigue syndrome in Australian Gulf War Veterans*, was part of the Australian Gulf War Veteran's Health Study funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This also received the 2005 Victorian Public Health Award for Research Excellence. It was the first comprehensive health study of an entire group of Australian war veterans involved in a single theatre of war. Dr Kelsall has been awarded a National Health and Medical Research Council postdoctoral fellowship and is now employed by the Cancer Council of Victoria.



Dr Helen Kelsall

## NHMRC Committee appointment

Monash PhD Graduate (2005) of the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, Dr Kathryn Antioch has been appointed by the Federal Health Minister, Mr Tony Abbott, MP, to the National Health Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council. Dr Antioch is Principal, Health Economics and Funding Reforms at Western Health and an Associate Fellow and Certified Health Executive of the Australian College of Health Services Executives.

## Professor Murtagh's outback adventures

Distinguished Alumni Award winner and Monash University Professor John Murtagh AM and his wife, senior lecturer Dr Jill Rosenblatt recently spent their holidays leading 80 students from the Notre Dame University Graduate School of Medicine on a rural and remote medicine exercise in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

For 18 days, the couple and six other teaching staff dispersed with the students to various locations in the area.

"Students were given first-hand experience in the issues of rural and remote medicine and Indigenous health including presentations from Indigenous people and their medical practitioners," Professor Murtagh said. *(continued on next page)*



Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences Professor Edward Byrne; Vice Chancellor of Monash University Professor Richard Larkins, Mr Lorenz Grollo, Associate Professor Matthew Wilce, Associate Professor James Whisstock, Mr Rino Grollo, Professor Jamie Rossjohn and Associate Professor Steve Bottomley.

## Grollo Ruzzene Foundation Centre for Protein Structure visit

Mr Rino Grollo and his son Lorenz recently toured the Protein Crystallography Unit headed by Professor Jamie Rossjohn. The tour was held in recognition of the Grollo Ruzzene Foundation's generous donation of \$1 million to the research by the unit which studies the molecular interactions underlying immunity, infection and rational drug design.

### Professor Murtagh's outback adventures (continued)

"They visited industrial facilities, hospitals and clinics in Carnarvon, Port Hedland, Broome and Derby.

"Of particular interest were the kidney dialysis units accommodating large numbers of diabetic Aboriginal patients," he said. "The whole group eventually met at the old Leprasarium at Bungarun and were accommodated in the old dormitories.

"They also met some of the original inmates and heard their stories about coping with Hansen's disease."

Professor Murtagh was invited to participate in this innovative teaching trip as staff and students wanted to get to know him, as the author of the noted text *General Practice*. He is also an Honorary Professor of Notre Dame University.

If you have completed some interesting, career-related community service lately, why not send us your story? Please contact newsletter editor Leanne Cutler on [alumni@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:alumni@med.monash.edu.au) or 03 9905 9329.

### Extra medicine places for rural Victoria

More medical students will train in rural Victoria thanks to the Federal Government providing 60 new medical places to be shared between Monash University and the University of Melbourne.

These places will establish an Extended Rural Cohort (ERC) stream in their respective medical courses commencing in 2007. The ERC stream will provide a new training option to students wishing to graduate and practice in a rural and regional location. The students will undertake their clinical education over five semesters within the Northern Victorian Medical Education Network.

The 30 Monash places in the stream will be for undergraduate entry. These students will train in Bendigo, Mildura and surrounds.

"Evidence shows that doctors who train in rural regional settings are more likely to practice in rural and regional areas," vice-chancellor Professor Richard Larkins said. "This offer enables us to take the vision forward to build a stronger rural medical education network which can address the doctor shortages which have affected the communities of central and northern Victoria."

The offer of places was subject to guarantees from the state government to provide sufficient resources for clinical training placements and internships.

### Rural health regional clinical schools

Approximately 300 first-year Monash University medical students received their first taste of rural medicine in August during a one-week placement within the faculty's regional clinical schools.

The students gained first-hand insights into local health systems and their communities at training sites in North-western and South-eastern Victoria.

The five-day program included visits to local hospitals, healthcare organisations, rural industry workplaces and home-based patients.

"Each of these have well-established partnerships with health services, medical practices and health agencies..."

Second-year medical students follow-on from this experience with a compulsory two-week placement in the country. In the final three years of the course, students are provided with ample opportunity to gain clinical training experience in regional Victoria.

The School of Rural Health has four well-established regional clinical school site located at Mildura, Bendigo, Traralgon and Bairnsdale. Each of these have well-established partnerships with health services, medical practices and health agencies and are well-embedded in their local rural communities.



Gippsland campus



Ambulance and Paramedics Building, Peninsula campus

If you would like to donate to medicine, nursing or health sciences in rural Victoria, please call 03 9905 9329 or send a contribution made to the “Monash University Medical Foundation”, PO Box 64, Clayton campus, Monash University VIC 3800.

Donations of over \$2 are tax deductible.

## Nursing in rural areas

A new double degree in nursing and rural health practice is underway in Mildura and a new course in mental health nursing is being developed for the Peninsula campus with 20 postgraduate and 30 undergraduate places becoming available. Another double degree will commence at the Peninsula campus in 2007 in nursing and emergency health (paramedic).

Research projects in progress include an investigation of the capacity of rural areas to accommodate clinical practice for nursing students, the recruitment and retention of overseas trained nurses from non-traditional countries to hospitals in Gippsland and the experience of rural midwives supporting intellectually disabled women during pregnancy and childbirth. At the Peninsula campus, a number of research projects into clinical placements are being carried out as well as research in palliative care nursing through the Vivian Bullwinkel Chair in Nursing, Palliative Care.

Projects investigating weekend and night duty placement for students and the capacity for rural areas to accommodate clinical practice for students are being carried out in collaboration with Peninsula Health, Bairnsdale Regional Health Service, RMIT University and East Gippsland Institute of TAFE.

## Ambulances for asthma in rural areas

A research project on the use of ambulances for asthma emergencies in rural and remote areas has recently been awarded funding of \$105,000 by the Asthma Foundation of Australia. A multimedia package will be provided to health professionals and patient/carers regarding the use of ambulances for acute asthma in rural areas and improve

understanding of the ‘000’ processes and information the caller will be asked when calling for assistance. Project leader, Leanne Boyd, of the Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies, said two earlier studies have shown that people in rural areas still drove themselves to hospital with severe asthma instead of using ambulances. The initial focus of the project will be in the areas of Gippsland, Mildura, the Ottway Ranges and Eastern Ranges.

## 2006 Tim McArdle Memorial Scholarship



From left: Tim McArdle Scholarship Fund Committee Chair Mavis Galliene, Patricia McArdle, 2006 scholarship recipient Jenny Massey; Monash University Medical Foundation Executive Director, John Allen and School of Rural Health Director, Mark Oakley-Browne. Photo courtesy of *The Warragul and Drouin Gazette*.



Professor Ishwar Parhar

### New Brain Research Institute investigates drug delivery

Scientists at Monash Malaysia in Bandar Sunway are working to improve drug delivery to diseased brain cells, giving hope to people with brain-related illnesses.

The team at the Brain Research Institute have developed a technique that allows for neurons of interest to be isolated with precision without damaging surrounding neurons.

The Brain Research Institute is led by Professor Ishwar Parhar, Director of Research of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Malaysia.

Professor Parhar said that he intends to establish six units within the new institute – nanotechnology, neuroinformatics, genomics, proteomics, brain imaging and behavioural neurogenetics.\*

According to Professor Parhar, the institute is a step forward for neuroscience in Malaysia and South-East Asia as the number of people working in the field is small.

An accomplished neuroscientist, Professor Parhar is formerly the director of the molecular neuroendocrinology unit at the Department of Physiology at Nippon Medical School, Japan.

\*Source: *New Sunday Times*, 2 April 2006 by Nurejehan Mohamed – used with permission.

### Jordanian students to study Monash medicine

Through a new agreement with the medical school of Hashemite University in Amman, Jordan, the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University has once again extended its work in the Middle East.

According to Dr Nizar Farjou, Senior Lecturer of the faculty's International Education Unit, an agreement between Monash University and Hashemite University will allow students from Jordan to study medicine at Monash.

Dr Farjou said that the first students to undertake medical studies at Monash will be six PhD candidates and two students on clinical fellowships.

Hashemite University commenced operation at the onset of the 1995/96 academic year and now has 18,000 students in 10 faculties including medicine and nursing.

Jordan has 21 universities with 150,000 students.

"The country has a number of new medical schools and the upgrading of curriculum is occurring in the established ones," Dr Farjou said.

Other discussions are underway with contacts in Saudi Arabia and Qatar in regard to curriculum development, exchanges and other projects to advance public health training.

"...an agreement between Monash University and Hashemite University will allow students from Jordan to study medicine at Monash."



From left: Hashemite University's Dean of Medicine, Professor Nayef Gharaibeh, Monash University's Dr Nizar Farjou, Hashemite University's Vice President of Academic Affairs, Professor Mohammed Rawashdeh and the President of Hashemite University, Professor Omar Shdeifat.



University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

## Progress in the United Arab Emirates

The teaching of Monash's medical curriculum would revolutionise the practice of medicine in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Middle Eastern countries, according to Senior Lecturer, Dr Nizar Farjou of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences' International Education Unit.

He said the Australian approach was more holistic taking into account psychological, social and other aspects of illness as well as the physical illness.

"Australian medical practice is superior as it is patient-focused and not only focused on diseases, which is the practice in many other countries," Dr Farjou said.

"Middle Eastern countries once looked to North America and the UK for medical expertise but there has been a big shift toward Australia, a country that has formed medical education curricula based on the best of other countries and some of our own.

"This approach will change ideals in the Middle East to this more holistic approach," he said.

Dr Farjou said that Monash had been delivering short courses in the UAE for 15 years and had just presented a two-month course in child health at the University of Sharjah.

"The collaboration with Sharjah University is progressing well with students from Monash's shorter courses enrolling in the Masters in Family Health offered there," he said.

Meanwhile, two students from the UAE have chosen to study their Masters in Family Medicine in Melbourne so that they could have a 'hands-on' clinical experience.

Dr Nizar Farjou completed his Masters of Family Medicine as an international student at Monash University's Department of General Practice in 2000.

"The course changed my life, making me realise that I was wasting time with diseases and needed to focus on people," he said.

He now works to implement 'people-oriented' medical training in other countries.

Dr Farjou was formerly a Director of Primary Health Care in the Ministry of Health, Sharjah, UAE and was once named as Global Doctor of the Month by the World Organisation of Family Doctors in recognition of his pioneering work.



Towards a Cure – MS recently visited Professor Claude Bernard at the Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratories: Jill Wells (centre); left to right: Jennie Wilmoth, Jenny Davies, Gill Thomas, Felicity Sladen, Goldie Batrouney, Sandy Rush, Margie Lilley, Dianne Walford, Sandi Addison, Professor Claude Bernard, Belinda Burke and Amanda Derham.

## New partnership with Towards a Cure – MS

A new major donor to the faculty for Multiple Sclerosis (MS) research is the independent community fundraising group, Towards a Cure – MS.

This group financially supports the work of Professor Claude Bernard, an internationally recognised neuroimmunologist specialising in MS located at the Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratory since September 2004.

Towards a Cure – MS member in charge of Partnerships and Alliances, Ms Amanda Derham said that over the past eight years, the organisation has raised more than \$1.2 million for the purchase of equipment for Professor Bernard's research.

In October, the group kindly provided an additional donation of \$12,000 in support of Professor Bernard's work.

Ms Derham said an independent medical review board, chaired by Professor Edward Byrne AO, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, ensured all MS research projects funded by Towards a Cure – MS were internationally significant and fall within the top 50 research projects worldwide.

She said Towards a Cure – MS was able to give 100 per cent of all funds raised to MS research due to it being a solely volunteer-based organisation.

"It completely relies on a dedicated volunteer committee and supporting group, pro-bono work, sponsorship, private gifts, corporate donations, foundation grants and monies raised through events," Ms Derham said.

Towards a Cure – MS is a volunteer, not-for-profit organisation, established in 1987, with the specific aim of raising funds for medical research into Multiple Sclerosis. It is an independent charity with no formal ties to other MS organisations or research facilities. The group includes two members who have MS and it was initially formed by Jill Wells, President, who wants to make a difference to the next generation who are diagnosed with MS.

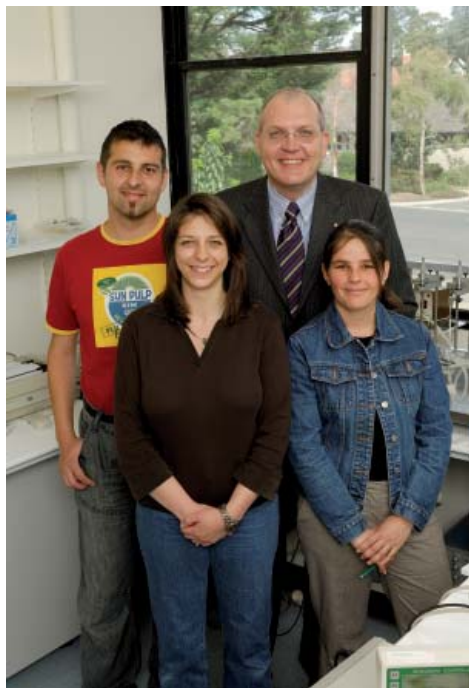
The Monash University Medical Foundation thanks Towards a Cure – MS for their support. Thank you, too, to The Baker Foundation for their contribution to research into finding a cure for Multiple Sclerosis.

## Victorian Ambulance Services Awards

Bachelor of Emergency Health (Paramedic): The Victorian Ambulance Services Academic Achievement Award is a \$1000 prize presented to the top two students in each year of the Bachelor of Emergency Health (Paramedic) showing individual excellence and academic achievement and study with the highest aggregate mark. The winners were: year one, Caitlyn Forrester and Alycia King; year two, Piaf Redmond and Daria West; and year three, Suzanne Ratcliffe and Kate Sedgwick.



From left: Year three winner Ms Suzanne Ratcliffe; Assistant Manager, Operations Clinical and Educational Services, Rural Ambulance Victoria, Jenny Geer; General Manager, Paramedic Education and Training, Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Mr Kevin Masci; and year three winner, Ms Kate Sedgwick.



From left: Dr Peter Schmidt, Dr Barbara Kemp-Harper, Professor Harald Schmidt and Dr Sabine Meurer

## Bellberry support obesity research

The not-for-profit human research ethics company, Bellberry Limited, has contributed \$40,000 to research into attitudes towards obesity.

The emotional burdens of depression, discrimination and humiliation of obese people will be investigated by the Monash Centre for the Study of Ethics in Medicine and Society, lead by Professor Paul Komesaroff.

"The medical and health issues surrounding obesity are already being fully explored. This study is designed to examine in detail the lived experience of obesity and the nature of the relationships that develop between people living with obesity and their health professionals," Professor Komesaroff said.

The study, which will require 100 volunteers from Victoria for private interviews with trained researchers, may be expanded to a national survey.

This donation is in addition to Bellberry Limited's generous financial support of MS research at Monash.

## New target for cancer therapy found

A new target for cancer therapy has been identified by Monash University scientists investigating the cell signalling pathways that turn on a gene involved in cancer development.

A team led by Associate Professor Jun-Ping Liu, from the Department of Immunology, has identified two proteins that are involved in stopping a gene from producing a protein called telomerase which is found at the end of chromosomes.

Associate Professor Liu and his colleagues have been investigating breast cancer cells to identify the molecular signalling that is required to turn on, and also inhibit, the gene that produces telomerase. They have found two proteins – *Smad3* and *c-Myc* – that are involved in turning off telomerase production.

Their findings are published in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*.



Associate Professor Jun-Ping Liu

## US grant supports ethical research in developing countries

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) has granted \$US944,776 for scholarships and stipends for students of the Master of International Research Bioethics.

The course, coordinated by Associate Professor Bebe Loff, Head of the Human Rights and Bioethics Unit at Monash's Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, commenced in 2004 to build capacity in ethical research practices in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Students targeted to undertake the course at Monash are usually academics, researchers, health professionals and members of non-government organisations from countries with the poorest match of ethics capability and research activity.

Professor Loff said it was hoped that more students from China, Vietnam and Thailand would enter the course as this is the special focus area of the NIH currently.



Associate Professor Bebe Loff

## New drug improves blood flow

A new drug has been shown to improve blood flow in diseased arteries, reducing risk of high blood pressure and heart attacks.

The finding is a significant development for the Monash team that, in conjunction with Bayer Health Care, hopes to use the drug as part of a revolution in the management of heart disease.

Professor Harald Schmidt, Director of the Centre for Vascular Health and his colleagues, Dr Peter Schmidt and Barbara Kemp-Harper, said the next step would be to translate the research so it benefits patients. Clinical trials of the drug have already started for the treatment of acute heart failure.

Professor Schmidt said that when a blockage occur in arteries, the cells lining the arteries produce nitric oxide to signal to the arterial muscles that they need to dilate the artery and allow more blood through. But free radicals destroy a key enzyme that allows the arterial cells to respond in this way, so the signal doesn't get through.

However, the new drug – developed by Bayer Health Care – reactivates the damaged enzyme.

The results have been published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* and the September 2006 issue of *Nature Reviews/Drug Discovery*.

## Discovering why pets are good for you

– Improving health and welfare for humans and animals

We often hear how animals as companions are good for us, but how is this being proven?

Led by the Head of the School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine, Professor Grahame Coleman, a team of researchers are gaining results to help both humans and pets.

As part of Victoria's Animal Welfare Science Centre, researchers from the school have a well-developed track record in studying how positive interactions with humans can enhance the welfare of animals used in agricultural production, as well as improving their productivity.

"With animal welfare attracting more community attention, researchers have broadened their field of interest to include an exploration of the roles companion animals play in enhancing the physical, social and psychological health of our community," researcher and Head of the Anthrozoology Research Group, Dr Pauleen Bennett said.

"If we can understand why companion animals are so important and beneficial to so many people in our community, we can use this knowledge to promote positive human-animal relationships and, by doing so, really start to make inroads into how animals are treated generally."

Dr Bennett said that research conducted at Monash and elsewhere had already shown that pet owners have a better survival rate after experiencing a heart attack than do non-pet owners, and that pet owners visit doctors less often than do other community members.

She said that the presence of a companion animal could reduce anxiety during cognitive tests and improve test performance, alleviate sadness and depression and increase community involvement.

"Pets offer their owners unconditional love and acceptance, provide a welcome distraction from the stresses of modern life, and act as a social conduit – allowing pet owners to meet and interact with other community members," she said.

"Try walking down the street by yourself, and then with a cute, friendly dog as a companion and you'll immediately notice how many more people stop to talk to you," Dr Bennett said.



Current studies at Monash are examining factors that make dogs and cats good pets. One project, conducted by clinical psychologist and PhD student Michele Silva-Cummins hopes to find out what human and dog factors contribute to the success of the human-canine relationship as it develops.

"We know that the bond between dog and human is the main factor in determining whether owners keep a dog or give it up for adoption, but we just don't know how this bond develops or why it sometimes fails," Michele Silva-Cummins said.

Linda Marston, another PhD student, examined factors that affect the success of dog adoptions from welfare shelters. This completed project is now being followed by Kate Mornement, who will develop a screening test for use by shelters wanting to identify dogs suitable for adoption. Dr Jacqui Ley, meanwhile, is developing a test of canine personality. After studying over 1000 dogs, Dr Ley, a veterinary behaviourist and PhD student, has concluded that dogs definitely have distinct personalities that make some better pets than others. Yishyene Chew, a fourth-year student, is now using a similar methodology to explore the personality

dimensions of pet cats, while Dr Ley is exploring breed differences in personality and behaviours and whether dog breeders take these issues into account when making breeding choices.

Other projects by the team include dog obesity studies by Vanessa Rolfe; Jordan Schaan is investigating the attitudes, behaviours and expectations of people who treat dogs like substitute humans; Mia Cobb is developing strategies for Guide Dogs Victoria to enrich the environment of dogs while they are kennelled during training. Dr Samia Toukhsati has completed a study that examined the feeding of cats by people who are not their owners, leading to cat overpopulation and associated welfare problems. Another series of studies underway seeks to establish the benefits received by dementia patients in nursing homes when interacting with dogs.

"If we can show why it is so beneficial to include our pet animals in all aspects of our daily lives, the benefits for both pets and the rest of the community will be enormous," Dr Bennett said.

Researchers from the Animal Welfare Science Centre, including those from the Anthrozoology Research Group, are always looking for participants for their research projects and for new project ideas. They also need funding to carry out their important work. To find out more visit [www.animalwelfare.net.au](http://www.animalwelfare.net.au) or to offer support contact the Monash University Medical Foundation on 03 9905 9329.



A dementia patient enjoys time with a special canine visitor, assisted by a handler from Delta PetPartners, left, and Monash researcher Ms Linda Marston, right.

## Dean's Public Lecture Series

Thank you to the new professors at Monash who delivered Dean's Public Lectures in 2006. Please check [www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni) in early 2007 for details of the 2007 Dean's Public Lecture Series.

### 2006 podcast directory

The Dean's Public Lecture Series can now be downloaded through the internet. The podcast version of these lectures can be located at [www.mulo.monash.edu.au/medicine](http://www.mulo.monash.edu.au/medicine). Please use this table to assist with your selection.

#### 11 April

**'Traumatic Brain Injury: the challenge to improve outcome and quality of life'**

Professor Jennie Ponsford, Professor of Neuropsychology, Director, Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre

#### 4 May

**'Healthcare Reform in the UK and Implications for Australia'**

Professor Roger Jones, Wolfson Professor of General Practice, King's College London

#### 9 May

**'Advances in the treatment of heart disease: what the next generation can expect'**

Professor Ian Meredith, Director of Cardiology, Monash Medical Centre, Southern Health

#### 13 June

**'From parasites to pregnancy and asthma: immunological connections'**

Professor Els Meeusen, Department of Physiology

#### 11 July

**'Application of RNA interference to fight cancer and virus infection'**

Professor Bryan Williams, Director, Monash Institute of Medical Research

#### 23 August

**'The curing of stomach ulcers and how the Nobel Prize was won'**

The 2006 Rod Andrew Oration by Professor Barry Marshall, 2005 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

#### 12 September

**'Toward a cure for Multiple Sclerosis: understanding susceptibility, pathogenesis and regeneration'**

Professor Claude Bernard, Professor of Neuroimmunology, Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratories

#### 10 October

**'Low back pain: specific treatment or one size first all?'**

Professor Jenny Keating, Head of Physiotherapy

## Thinking of postgraduate study – bookmark these!

If you are considering postgraduate studies in medicine, nursing or health sciences, then these links should be useful.

Postgraduate studies:  
[www.med.monash.edu.au/pgrad](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/pgrad)

Contact details:  
[www.med.monash.edu.au/pgrad/contact.html](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/pgrad/contact.html)

For future postgraduate information events:

University-wide information events:  
[www.monash.edu.au/study/events/pgstudy](http://www.monash.edu.au/study/events/pgstudy)

Medicine, nursing and health sciences events:

[www.monash.edu.au/study/events/pgstudy/medicine.html](http://www.monash.edu.au/study/events/pgstudy/medicine.html)

Postgraduate coursework enquiries:  
[graduate@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:graduate@med.monash.edu.au) or +61 3 9905 1535.

Research degrees enquiries:  
+61 3 9905 2511 or  
[research.degrees@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:research.degrees@med.monash.edu.au)



Medical students at The Alfred in 1969

## Reunions

The MBBS Class of 1996 will hold a 10-year reunion on 2 December this year. For more details about this and other reunions, please call Melinda Warnecke at the Monash University Medical Foundation on (03) 9905 5971 or email [alumni@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:alumni@med.monash.edu.au).

If you would like to organise a reunion, please see the alumni website [www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni) for details of how we can help you.

## I remember when ...

Calling for contributions to the new column called 'I remember when ...'. You are invited to provide anecdotes of your days as a Monash student. Please send your reminiscences about the fun times, the challenges, the breakthroughs, classroom antics, old poems, photos and anything else you'd like to share. Perhaps an alumnus from the 1969 medicine group shown above might like to send in some memories? Or does anyone have any fun photos from their student days to share?

## Classnotes – send us your news!

We welcome contributions from alumni (including former staff). Tell your fellow alumni what you are up to now – in your career, family life and interests. Good quality print or digital photos (300 dpi) are also welcome.

## Find an old classmate

Do you ever wonder what happened to that old Monash classmate of yours that you had such a good time with? You are welcome to contact us with the alumnus's name, course and year of completion. If his or her current details on file, we'll help to connect you with your classmate.

Please forward your 'I remember when...', 'Classnotes', or 'Find an old classmate' details to [alumni@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:alumni@med.monash.edu.au).

Enquiries: (03) 9905 9329

## Update your details

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Given name \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Course and year of completion  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your business or home address?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred contact telephone number  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred contact mobile number  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of classmate/s I would like to contact  
\_\_\_\_\_

- I would like information on leaving a bequest in my will to the Monash University Medical Foundation
- Please tick if you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email, when available
- Please tick if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter

## Please return this form

By mail:  
Monash University Medical Foundation  
PO Box 64  
Clayton campus  
Monash University VIC 3800

By fax:  
+ 61 3 9905 0750

By email:  
[alumni@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:alumni@med.monash.edu.au)

## Next edition

Reunion news! Please send photos and captions of your reunions with old classmates.