Medical imaging alumni forge ahead

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Time of transition

Welcome to our Winter edition of Praxis which is arriving during an important period of transition in our faculty. Our previous dean, Professor Ed Byrne, left at the end of March and our new dean, Professor Steven Wesselingh, commences in early October.

The university has indeed been fortunate to secure such an outstanding appointee as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, and I am sure you will join me in welcoming Professor Wesselingh to Monash later in the year.

Steven is not new to the faculty, having had a close association in his current role as Director of the Burnet Institute at AMREP. In my current role as Acting Dean, I wish to pay tribute to the superb role Ed Byrne played in leading the faculty for the past three-and-a-half years. Many of the achievements listed below were either initiated or supported by Ed. He has left a wonderful legacy fostering collegiality and collaboration in all of his endeavours. We wish him well as he brings his skills and talents to University College London.

Our faculty’s research performance has been outstanding over the past three years with incremental growth in NHMRC project and industry grants. We are now ranked 19th in the world according to The Times ranking for biomedical science having gone from 35 to 28 to 19 in the past five years. Melbourne is therefore one of only three cities in the world with two medical schools ranked in the top 20 (London and Boston being the others).

In the area of undergraduate medical education we are pleased to announce the onsite commencement of our medical school operations at the Malaysian campus with a new intake of 60 students in Kuala Lumpur and our third-year clinical program commencing in Johor Baru. The course has Australian Medical Council (AMC) approval and is the first time the AMC has approved an offshore medical course conducted by an Australian university. With a new graduate-entry medical school commencing in Gippsland in 2008 and a joint venture in North-Western Victoria (Bendigo and Beyond) with the University of Melbourne, our faculty will be responsible for teaching almost 500 students per year from 2010. This provides a huge challenge and ensures a continuing role for ageing clinicians and academics like me!

As a rapidly growing faculty our demand for infrastructure continues to soar. New research buildings are under construction at Clayton (STRIPS 2 and 3), new facilities are planned or under construction in Gippsland, Bendigo and Mildura and the School of Primary Health Care (including general practice) and sections of psychological medicine are moving into a new building in North-Western Victoria (Bendigo and Beyond) with the University of Melbourne.

On the international front we are pleased to announce that the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) has approved our offshore Bachelor of Social Work course in Singapore — a unique achievement. A high-profile group of Monash researchers (Professors Berndt, Schmidt, Smith, Boyd, Risbridger) have just completed visits to UK (Kings, UCL, Newcastle), Stockholm (Karolinska) Berlin (Charité) and Florence to sign collaboration agreements with these prestigious institutions for research collaboration and academic/student exchange.

As I continue to juggle serious commitments at Monash — life is never dull! Over the past three months, Monash has been a most popular destination for delegations from the Gulf and Middle East involving both ministerial visits (health and education) as well as university visits.

These have largely been organised by Dr Nizar Farjou (originally from the UAE) who joined our faculty last year. As a result, we now have a number of PhD students from Jordan, masters students from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iraq. We are also finalising arrangements for up to 30 Clinical Masters Scholarship students from KSA who will undertake clinical and academic training at Monash.

As I continue to juggle serious commitments as an acting dean, I am constantly assured of one certainty at Monash – life is never dull!

I look forward to welcoming our new dean in October and our new chancellor, Dr Alan Finkel AM in January.

Professor Leon Piterman AM
Acting Dean
New dean announced

The new Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University will be Professor Steven Wesselingh, a distinguished leader in education and medical management and an expert in infectious diseases.

He is currently the Director of the Macfarlane Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health and will commence his role as dean in early October.

Other senior positions held by Professor Wesselingh include two years as an Associate Professor of the Department of Neurology at the John Hopkins School of Medicine, four years as Senior Infectious Diseases Consultant at Flinders Medical Centre and four years as Professor and Director of Infectious Diseases at the Alfred Hospital and Monash University.

Professor Wesselingh graduated with his MBBS from Flinders University and undertook his residency at Flinders Medical Centre and at Goroka Base Hospital, Papua New Guinea. He also completed his PhD with Flinders University.

His sustained research interest has been infectious diseases, with research activities including neuroAIDS, pathogenesis of HIV-associated dementia and peripheral neuropathy, plant-derived oral vaccines and microbicide development.

Professor Wesselingh has served on panels for the National Health and Medical Research Council, Royal Australasian College of Physicians and other national and international scientific bodies. He has been President of the Australian Society for Medical Research and has received a number of prestigious awards, including a Glaxo Award for Advanced Research in Infectious Diseases.

Faculty board member named as new chancellor

Faculty medical research advisory board member, respected neuroscientist, entrepreneur and philanthropist Dr Alan Finkel AM (BE 1976, PhD 1981) will be the new Chancellor of Monash University.

Dr Finkel is also Chair of the Board of the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse within Monash’s Department of Social Work.

He is the seventh chancellor in the university’s 50 year history, but the first Monash graduate to be appointed to this prestigious role which will commence on 1 January 2008.

Dr Finkel’s accomplishments include the founding of Axon Instruments, a world-class supplier of electronic and robotic instruments and software for use in cellular neuroscience, genomics and drug discovery.

He recently invented a device that was successfully commercialised to speed drug research, and has co-founded the award-winning science magazine Cosmos, managed the merger of several prominent research institutes, represented the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in a program to foster appreciation of science in secondary school students, and co-founded a company distributing educational toys and books for children.

He will follow Mr Jerry Ellis, who has served as chancellor since 1999.
Innovations

Australian Synchrotron collaboration creates firsts for Monash

Monash University’s adjacent location to the Australian Synchrotron will create greater collaboration and more opportunities for all scientists using the new facility, according to the Chair of the Monash Centre for Synchrotron Science Advisory Board, Ms Sue Renkin.

“The synchrotron’s location makes it one of the few facilities in the world to have university facilities nearby,” Ms Renkin said. “Visiting scientists will have access to Monash libraries, laboratories and facilities through collaborative arrangements.”

Monash University is one of a number of Australian and New Zealand organisations and consortia participating in the establishment of the synchrotron’s technology and beamlines.

“Collaboration between scientists from throughout Australia and around the world will be fostered and new opportunities will grow from having the facility adjacent to a university.”

Ms Renkin said another first was the proposed neighbouring medical imaging facility which will access the beamlines and produce high-quality images of cells, tissue and bone.

“The Australian Synchrotron has the potential to be one of the first in the world that will be able to clinically treat patients,” she said.

She said that another advantage was that Professor Rob Lewis from the Monash Centre for Synchrotron Science was a world expert in the application of synchrotrons in biomedical research” Ms Renkin said.

“Professor Rob Lewis has been teaching other Monash researchers in the use of the technology.

“He will lead a group of 25 Monash scientists to the Spring-8 Synchrotron in Japan later in the year to advance expertise in its use while progressing research projects already underway.

“It is important that we communicate to all researchers that they do not have to be synchrotron experts to be able to use the facility to enhance their own research.”

Synchrotron technology is a tool for limitless application in most disciplines.

New edition of Murtagh’s bestseller

Distinguished alumnus, Professor John Murtagh AM recently celebrated the launch of the fourth edition of his text Murtagh’s General Practice. It is a comprehensive edition of more than 1500 pages which is the biggest selling text in the primary care field worldwide. General Practice has been published for 12 years and is translated into 11 languages. Professor Murtagh was also recently awarded the AMA Victoria Gold Medal services to medicine. He is pictured (left) with Professor Doris Young, Professor Leon Piterman and Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, Immediate Past-President of the AMA.
Alumni news

Ultrasound is ultra-good for Filia

Alumna Filia Artisidou, B RadMedImag (Hons) (2004), DipMU (2006), has taken to her chosen field like a proverbial duck to water. Here Filia tells of her career-path to date and why medical ultrasound is the field for her.

“After successfully completing my International Baccalaureate in 2000, I was faced with the dilemma, like many students, of what course to pursue at university. After much thought I declined an offer for engineering/commerce, and with insight from a parent in the medical profession, decided to embark upon a degree in radiography and medical imaging.

“Radiography proved to be an interesting and challenging degree with a large clinical component which I enjoyed and subsequently excelled in. At the end of my second year, I received the 2003/04 Agfa Scholarship for outstanding academic achievement. During my clinical rotations in third and fourth years, we were introduced to the various modalities in medical imaging. Through this exposure, I acquired a keen interest in ultrasound and know this was the field I wanted to specialise in. Generally, two years of radiography experience is necessary before ultrasound training may be commenced, however I was fortunate to be offered a position with MIA immediately after graduating. In 2005, I was accepted into the postgraduate medical ultrasound course at Monash and graduated one-and-a-half years later. The course was run by distance education which was advantageous as I was able to train full-time in ultrasound while studying. This provided the opportunity to consolidate and practically implement the theoretical knowledge in a clinical environment.

“Currently I work as a sonographer for MIA Southern Region and am also employed by Monash University, tutoring third-year radiography students in ultrasound practical sessions.

“Medical ultrasound proved to be an excellent career choice for me, as it is a challenging and stimulating modality. It provides me with an important role together with the radiologist, in the process of diagnosis. It is a field in which medical and technological advances are continuous, creating an environment where one is forever learning.”

If you were a classmate of Filia’s and would like to keep in touch, please email alumni@med.monash.edu.au to arrange this.

Thank you to MIA Southern Region for their assistance with this story and photo.

Using medical imaging to help prevent football injury

Injury caused to footballers during punt-drop kicks will be better managed and even overcome through a greater understanding of thigh muscle activity.

Recent Master of Philosophy (Radiography and Medical Imaging) graduate Kara Baczkowski studied the muscle activity in a team of amateur Australian Rules footballers using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in an innovative way.

“It is possible that the identified pattern of muscle activity used in the punt-drop kick could contribute to some groin injuries found amongst Australian Rules footballers,” Kara said.

The information found in her thesis could be used by coaches and medical personnel to assist in developing new training techniques and in the rehabilitation of specific injuries related to kicking.

This project used MRI technology to look at the physiology behind how muscles work together when doing a punt-drop kick.

Normally, the MRI is a diagnostic tool used in the clinical setting, but this time it was used to directly examine muscle activation during a set exercise technique as well as providing detailed anatomical information.

Kara said that there were other methods of examining muscle activity (for example, electromyography), but these methods did not provide the anatomical detail that is available with an MRI scan. The physiological information combined with the anatomical detail created an insight into muscle activity during the punt-drop kick that had not previously been described.

“The discovery paved the way for further investigation into the theories about hamstring injuring and its relationship to tendon harvesting for knee surgery,” she said.

Kara has presented papers on her finding at conferences in Japan and around Australia. She completed her undergraduate radiography and medical imaging degree at Monash in 2006 and is now Head of the MRI Department at Queensland Health’s Southport campus – Gold Coast Public Hospital.
Prizes

Top of the class in 2006

Medicine alumnus Marcus Robertson was awarded five prizes at the recent 2006 undergraduate prize ceremony. Here Dr Davis presents Dr Robertson with the Sophie Davis Memorial Prize for the student with the highest aggregate marks in the MBBS with Honours. Dr Robertson also completed a Monash degree in biotechnology in 2003. He is now an intern with Southern Health and is enjoying rotation through the general, surgical and emergency departments. It is still too early for a decision about specialisation however, he is weighing up the options of obstetrics, infectious diseases and emergency medicine. As well as being the top medical graduate for 2006, Dr Robertson is an accomplished swimmer. He won a number of gold medals in 1998 at the Asia Pacific Games and more recently competed in the 2006 World Life Saving Championships. Currently, he is the second-fastest Victorian swimmer of all time in both the 400m Individual Medley and the 800m Freestyle events.

Amit Verma was awarded the AMA-EH Embley Memorial Medal in Anaesthesia by Dr Mark Yates, President of the Australian Medical Association

Karen Skewes – Fourth-year Bachelor of Nursing Prize – Peninsula campus

Kim Norris was awarded the top prize for third- and fourth-year Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics by donor, Associate Professor Boyd Strauss

Neroli Harding – Fourth-year Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Rural Health Practice prize – Gippsland

2006 Psychology prize winners with Professor Grahame Coleman, Head of the School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine

Jessica McDonald – The Margaret Niall Prize (first- and second-year Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics)
Prizes

Alumna, Professor Rachelle Buchbinder was awarded the 2006 Mollie Holman Doctoral Medal for her thesis *Short-And Long-term Effects Of A Public Health Media Campaign Designed To Reduce Disability Associated With Back Pain*. Professor Buchbinder is a rheumatologist and clinical epidemiologist who graduated in Medicine from Monash in 1981. Her PhD thesis described the success of the media campaign in terms of its clear and lasting beneficial effect on community and general practitioners’ beliefs about back pain and the significant reduction in the number, duration and costs of workers’ compensation back claims in Victoria. This work has had a profound impact on health policy and back pain research internationally. She acknowledges the invaluable contributions of her collaborators Associate Professor Damien Jolley and Dr Mary Wyatt.

Professor Buchbinder is an NHMRC Practitioner Fellow, Director of the Monash Department of Clinical Epidemiology at Cabrini Hospital, and a Professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine.

A second outstanding PhD thesis was acknowledged with the Vice Chancellor’s Commendation for Doctoral Thesis Excellence. Dr Amee Morgans of the Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice received this honour for her thesis entitled *Patient Decision Making In Prehospital Health Emergencies*. More on page 13.
New research model to benefit Australian life scientists

A new research model creating think-tanks for young Australian and international life scientists will alleviate the burden of funding and competition issues in the near future.

The new model will be based on features of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) and will be first established nationally at Monash University within the new Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute (ARMI) once the Australian application to join EMBL is ratified.

EMBL has successfully run world-leading life science research programs in Europe for over 30 years, supported by annual contributions of over $100 million from its 19-member states. EMBL is currently ranked as the highest non-US institute in research performance worldwide. According to Professor Nadia Rosenthal, new Director of ARMI and head of the EMBL campus in Rome, the model is considered ‘nirvana’ to young scientists.

"EMBL was set up so young scientists at their intellectual peak can research without the pressures of finding funds or worrying about competition,” Professor Rosenthal said.

“This Australian initiative will be the first time the model has been established outside of Europe, and the time is definitely right for Australia.

“There is an obvious need for a research workplace in this form for Australian scientists as it will help stop the brain-drain and may in fact, attract top Australian scientists working overseas home.”

It will also be the first time an EMBL lab has been established within the area of medical research.

“In the European EMBL campuses, top young scientists are invited to research whatever is of interest within a particular basic science discipline, such as cell biology or bioinformatics,” she said.

“In Australia, the focus of the first laboratory will be on an interdisciplinary approach to regenerative medicine.

“Monash is in an ideal position for the first EMBL model lab at ARMI because the university has superb hospital affiliations, a powerful institute in medical research and is already prominent in the three basic research areas needed for regeneration – molecular, cellular and organisational biology.

“However, when I first was introduced to Monash it was clear that a program emphasising the intersection of these areas was needed.

The Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute premises have been funded to the tune of $35 million by the Victorian Government. Support for initial running costs and other infrastructure has been pledged by Monash University and the Commonwealth Government has also contributed to construction and fitout costs.

Funds will now be raised to progress the operation of the initiative and consequently, world-leading research findings which will translate to clinical applications.

The Group of Eight and other Australian universities are in support of the initiative with three additional universities already expressing interest in establishing EMBL model laboratories in the future.

More information on EMBL:

www.embl.org

New Monash post for world-leading stem cell researcher

Acclaimed stem cell researcher Professor Nadia Rosenthal has commenced at Monash University as the founding director of the Australian Regenerative Medicine Institute (ARMI).

Professor Rosenthal is currently Head the Mouse Biology Unit at the internationally renowned European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) in Rome, Italy where she leads an international program in mouse models of human disease. Her own research concentrates on:

- embryonic heart development;
- mechanisms of ageing; and
- stem cell-mediated regeneration of neuromuscular and cardiac tissues

Professor Rosenthal also holds a chair in cardiovascular medicine at the National Heart and Lung Institute of Imperial College London. At the college she serves as scientific director of the Heart Science Centre with Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub FRS, the world famous heart transplant surgeon. Together Professors Rosenthal and Yacoub are looking for new regenerative ways to treat heart failure.

Professor Rosenthal has spearheaded the recent application from Australia to become the first Associate Member of EMBL, and will act as the EMBL liaison for Australia pending endorsement of the application by EMBL Council this July.

Prior to joining EMBL and Imperial College, Professor Rosenthal directed a laboratory at Harvard Medical School’s Cardiovascular Research Center and was a consultant on molecular medicine for the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine. She gained her doctorate in biology at Harvard Medical School and her undergraduate degree (magna cum laude) from Harvard University.

More information on EMBL:

www.embl.org
Explore the issues of longevity – now and in the future

The 2007 Rod Andrew Oration

Medical journalist and commentator, Dr Norman Swan will explore the changing nature of human survival through history, particularly over the last 50 years and provide a view of the next 50 years. He will look at the causes of change and the medical and social implications it will have.

Host of the Health Report, on ABC Radio National, Dr Swan, is a multi-award-winning broadcaster and journalist. Some of his awards include Australian Radio Producer of the Year, three Walkley Awards for journalism including the prestigious Gold and two Michael Daly Awards, the top prize for science journalism. In addition to radio, his career spans television and print media.

Outside Australia, he has been the Australian correspondent for the Journal of the American Medical Association and the British Medical Journal and has consulted for the World Health Organisation in Geneva on global priorities in health research and clinical trial registration and currently is working with them on a global strategy for putting evidence into health policy.

Rosenthal’s vision for stem cell therapy

It is the year 2053. A mere century after James Watson and Francis Crick resolved the structure of DNA, scientists at the forefront of medical research have just announced the first successful regeneration of a human heart.

After re-routing the blood of Jón Sigurdsson, a terminal heart-failure patient, to an advanced cardiac assist device and removing most of the damaged organ, doctors thawed a frozen tube of Jón’s personalized stem cells – established in 2013 from embryonic stem cells created through somatic nuclear transfer – and injected them into his chest. Thanks to a sophisticated cocktail of growth factors, the new stem cells target the damaged area and rapidly get to work, perfectly rebuilding a youthful heart.

Several weeks later, Jón is discharged in excellent health. Regenerative medicine provided him with a new kidney 10 years ago, and subsequent double knee regeneration gave him new mobility. Now his new heart will soon have him running a six-minute mile again.

The scenario might sound like pure science fiction, but it could become reality a few decades from now.

The technical feasibility of generating replacement tissues and organs is well within realistic projections.

However, basic scientific questions about human stem cells must be answered before we can start exploring their regenerative potential and ensure their safe use in the clinic.


Invitation

Alumni are invited to hear Professor Nadia Rosenthal speak at a Medical Research Breakfast Seminar on August 23. For an invitation, please call +61 3 9905 5971, email alumni@med.monash.edu.au or visit www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni/events.html.

Wednesday, 29 August

‘Triggers of migraine and headache: to avoid or not to avoid, that is the question’

Professor Paul Martin
Professor of Clinical Psychology

Venue
Seminar Room, AMREP Education Centre, The Alfred Hospital, Commercial Road, Melbourne

Wednesday, 12 September

‘Health promoting foods: all swings and roundabouts’

Professor Peter Gibson
Director of Gastroenterology
Eastern Health

Venue
TBC

RSVP
mnhs.rsvp@med.monash.edu.au or phone +61 3 9905 5971

Flying doctor passionate about remote health

Medical alumnus Steve Margolis regularly flies 700km from his home in Cairns to Kowanyama on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula to be the only doctor for literally miles. Whilst in Kowanyama, Dr Margolis provides medical services with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and is on-call 24 hours per day.

At other times, he provides aeromedical retrieval services with the Cairns base of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

"As the Royal Flying Doctor Service is the primary provider of retrieval across Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands and all the way to the Papua New Guinea border, a region larger than the State of Victoria."

Since his early medical training he has held a passion for rural and remote medicine, further developed whilst studying his Masters of Family Medicine and a Doctorate in Medicine at Monash under the supervision of Professor Leon Piterman.

This has lead to a range of clinical and academic experiences across a multitude of locations and countries.

"As my mentor, Leon, encouraged me to gain experience in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where I saw a range of illnesses that I could only read about in text books in Australia," he said.

"My five years’ experience of teaching and practicing medicine and in UAE was invaluable.

"Working as a doctor in a different culture was a powerful learning experience that really had me working outside of my comfort zone."

Today, Dr Margolis holds three positions which complement and overlap each other. He is an Associate Professor at James Cook University, Assessment Manager of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and Head of Research and Medical Officer, Royal Flying Doctor Service (Cairns).

He said the sharing of resources and expertise in rural and remote medicine was the reason he could wear ‘three hats’.

"Collegiality and cooperation is crucial for the rural community," he said. "There are a small number of players in rural and remote medicine, so collaboration is the best way to get results."

"Without the support of all three organisations, I would not be able to be both a clinician and researcher."

As a researcher, he is currently investigating the impact of Alcohol Management Plans in remote Indigenous communities.

Dr Margolis’ home is in Cairns where he lives with his family.

‘Working as a doctor in a different culture was a powerful learning experience that really had me working outside of my comfort zone.’
Faculty news

Tim McArdle Memorial Scholarship 2007

The annual Tim McArdle Memorial Scholarship was presented to Longwarry North midwifery student Amy Walker Hassett on Wednesday, 13 June.

The annual scholarship is presented to a Monash University student in memory of Warragul doctor Tim McArdle who was killed in a cycling accident in Warragul on 11 September 2002. Funds for the scholarship were raised in the local community after Tim’s death.

Amy was presented with $3000 to assist with her studies.

Excerpt from The Warragul Gazette, 19 June edition. For the full article and speech by scholarship committee member and Editor of The Warragul Gazette Carolyn Turner, please visit: www.med.monash.edu/news/tim-mcardle-memorial-schol-2007.html

MBBS commences at new Gippsland Medical School next year

The Graduate Entry Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) will commence at Monash’s new Gippsland Medical School in 2008 and aims to encourage students in rural areas to undertake medical education.

The biggest advantages will be that the new facilities are state-of-the-art and located close to home for students.

The course will feature some unique elements, offering an innovative integrated curriculum, and working in partnership with a number of other Monash faculties and departments, including the well-established regional clinical schools located in Traralgon and Bairnsdale.

According to Professor Chris Browne, head of the school, students of the Gippsland Medical School will engage with a curriculum which reflects the common presentation of important medical and population health issues of the Gippsland region. They will have a unique opportunity to study medicine in a local setting, working with rural medical and allied health practitioners, in both general and specialist settings.

Graduates of the program will contribute to a strong and sustainable rural and regional medical workforce in Australia. In addition, the Gippsland Medical School is committed to providing leadership in medical research in the Gippsland region, with a particular focus on research into public health, workforce issues and skills acquisition and training.

Monash University’s Gippsland Medical School has been established to oversee the implementation and management of graduate-level medical training in Victoria’s south-east region. This region extends from the Mornington Peninsula in southern Victoria, through to Bairnsdale and Sale in East Gippsland. The campus is located in the central Gippsland town of Churchill, less than two hours south-east of Melbourne by road or rail. It is home to 2000 on-campus students, 5000 off-campus students and nearly 400 staff.

The Gippsland campus offers a wide range of courses and excellent facilities and resources that make it a fantastic place to study and live. The establishment of this medical school adds to the strong foundation of medical education built by the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, in both urban and rural areas of Victoria and internationally in Malaysia. This development also complements the established rural medicine program in northern Victoria, run by the School of Rural Health in that region.

Nursing research

Researchers in the School of Nursing and Midwifery are undertaking a variety of research projects including studies into palliative care, teen parenting, psychosis in pregnancy, mobile, wireless and smartcard technologies in the management of stroke, clinical nursing education, loneliness in the rural elderly, adolescent depression, work readiness for nurses, nursing costs, grief and mesothelioma and asbestos-related illnesses, and undergraduate midwives’ experiences of stillbirth and neonatal death.
New antibody production facility
The new Monash Antibody Technologies Facility (MATF) will meet the burgeoning international demand for antibodies for life scientists and industry. The life scientist who established the only other high-throughput facility of this kind, Mr Alan Sawyer, has been appointed the Director of MATF.

Easier detection of Legionnaires disease
A Monash University Malaysia campus researcher Dr Stacey Yong is developing a simple text for diagnosing Legionnaire’s disease. She has been working on the project for several years and recently received additional funding from the Malaysian government to produce a bacteria detection test kit.

HIV/AIDS study
A study into the reasons why cases of HIV/AIDS have increased by 41 per cent will be conducted by a team of researchers from the Monash Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology Unit, led by alumna Dr Karin Leder (MBBS 1990), and funded by the Federal Government.

Prevention of child abuse
Research conducted by the Monash’s National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NRCPCA) will accelerate due to the full-time appointment of Professor Chris Goddard (MSocWork 1982, PhD 1992) as the Centre’s director. Previously, this position was combined with Professor Goddard’s role as Head of the Department of Social Work. The NRCPCA is a joint initiative between the Australian Childhood Foundation and the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.

Immunity breakthrough
A team of Monash and Melbourne University scientists have discovered how T-cell receptors recognise fats called glycolipids in some bacteria and cancer cells, thereby initiating an immune response to fight illness.

Aspirin discovery
More effective aspirin-like drugs for the treatment of diseases such as cancer may be the result of research into aspirin and other salicylates by Professor Bryan Williams, Director of the Monash Institute of Medical Research.

MS Society – USA funds Monash research
Professor Claude Bernard of the Monash Stem Cell and Immunology laboratories has received a $500,000 grant for Multiple Sclerosis research from the MS Society – USA. He and his team aim to reverse the effects of MS-like diseases by using stem cell-based therapies in conjunction of the manipulation of the thymus, an organ pivotal in controlling immune responses.

Major finding on hormone disorder in women
Monash researchers including those from the Jean Hailes Foundation for Women’s Health have confirmed that lifestyle combined with the drug Metformin (commonly used to treat diabetes) are likely to be an effective combination to treat the symptoms lower insulin resistance and potentially protect against Type-2 diabetes for women with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome. The research was directed by alumna, Professor Helena Teede (MBBS (Hons) 1989, PhD 2001), Director of the Jean Hailes Women’s Research Group within the Monash Institute for Health Services Research.
Research participants wanted

Testosterone patches may help women overcome loss of libido

Naturally postmenopausal women aged 40 to 70 are being sought to be part of a new research project, examining the impact of testosterone patches on libido. Professor Susan Davis, Director of the Women’s Health Program at the Alfred said that loss of libido is a significant issue in women’s health, with an estimated 43 per cent of women reporting that this is a problem to them. A number of studies have shown benefits of testosterone patches for women who have had a surgical menopause. This study now addresses whether women who have gone through a natural menopause will also benefit. Interested women should contact Jenny Adams on +61 3 9903 0836.

The impact of anti-depressants on couples’ sexual functioning and relationship

Couples in committed relationships where the male partner has been diagnosed with depression are sought for a study into the effect of anti-depressants on couple’s sexual functioning and relationship. The research, funded by beyondblue, includes the completion of four brief surveys prior to or within two weeks of the male starting or recommencing the medication and another four surveys three months later. There is also an option for participants to be interviewed.

For the full criteria and other details, please contact Annabel Whitby, Monash Department of General Practice, phone +61 3 8575 2222 or annabel.whitby@med.monash.edu.au.

Congratulations

Life scientist receives two more awards

Australian Research Council Federation Fellow, Professor Jamie Rossjohn, has recently received the Commonwealth Health Minister’s Award for Health and Medical Research and the Gottschalk Medal from the Australian Academy of Science. Professor Rossjohn’s research in biomedical sciences has included insights into how killer T-cells recognise viruses.

Pain management in emergency care

Alumnus and Clinical Support Officer of the Melbourne Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Mr Terry Marshall (GradDipEmerHlth 2006) was awarded a fellowship by the National Institute of Clinical Studies and the Victorian Trauma Foundation to research the most effective therapies in assessing and relieving pain after trauma.

Filling gaps in pre-conception care

Alumna, Monash Associate Professor Danielle Mazza (MBBS 1998) was awarded a fellowship from the National Institute of Clinical Studies and the Medical Research Foundation of the Hospitals Contribution Fund of Australia. She will investigate the gap between evidence and practice relating to the role in folate supplementation during the pre-conception period with the aim of reducing the incidence of neural tube defects.

Fellowship

Clinical Dean and Professor of Medicine, Bendigo Regional Clinical School, Professor Peter Disler has been awarded an honorary fellowship by the Royal College of Physicians of London.

Premier’s Award for Medical Research

Two Monash alumna Professor Rachelle Buchbinder and PhD candidate Fleur Tynan received commendations in the 2007 Premier’s Awards for Medical Research.

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Australian Research Council Federation Fellow, Professor Jamie Rossjohn, has recently received the Commonwealth Health Minister’s Award for Health and Medical Research and the Gottschalk Medal from the Australian Academy of Science. Professor Rossjohn’s research in biomedical sciences has included insights into how killer T-cells recognise viruses.

Pain management in emergency care

Alumnus and Clinical Support Officer of the Melbourne Metropolitan Ambulance Service, Mr Terry Marshall (GradDipEmerHlth 2006) was awarded a fellowship by the National Institute of Clinical Studies and the Victorian Trauma Foundation to research the most effective therapies in assessing and relieving pain after trauma.

Filling gaps in pre-conception care

Alumna, Monash Associate Professor Danielle Mazza (MBBS 1998) was awarded a fellowship from the National Institute of Clinical Studies and the Medical Research Foundation of the Hospitals Contribution Fund of Australia. She will investigate the gap between evidence and practice relating to the role in folate supplementation during the pre-conception period with the aim of reducing the incidence of neural tube defects.

Fellowship

Clinical Dean and Professor of Medicine, Bendigo Regional Clinical School, Professor Peter Disler has been awarded an honorary fellowship by the Royal College of Physicians of London.

Premier’s Award for Medical Research

Two Monash alumna Professor Rachelle Buchbinder and PhD candidate Fleur Tynan received commendations in the 2007 Premier’s Awards for Medical Research.

Research participants wanted

Testosterone patches may help women overcome loss of libido

Naturally postmenopausal women aged 40 to 70 are being sought to be part of a new research project, examining the impact of testosterone patches on libido. Professor Susan Davis, Director of the Women’s Health Program at the Alfred said that loss of libido is a significant issue in women’s health, with an estimated 43 per cent of women reporting that this is a problem to them. A number of studies have shown benefits of testosterone patches for women who have had a surgical menopause. This study now addresses whether women who have gone through a natural menopause will also benefit. Interested women should contact Jenny Adams on +61 3 9903 0836.

The impact of anti-depressants on couples’ sexual functioning and relationship

Couples in committed relationships where the male partner has been diagnosed with depression are sought for a study into the effect of anti-depressants on couple’s sexual functioning and relationship. The research, funded by beyondblue, includes the completion of four brief surveys prior to or within two weeks of the male starting or recommencing the medication and another four surveys three months later. There is also an option for participants to be interviewed.

For the full criteria and other details, please contact Annabel Whitby, Monash Department of General Practice, phone +61 3 8575 2222 or annabel.whitby@med.monash.edu.au.
Alumni news

Alumni synchronicity

Dr Albert Ip had his medical reunion come about due to a chance meeting of a classmate. “Jock” Michael Jefford spied Dr Ip shopping on Boxing Day at David Jones in 2001. “He crept up to me and said ‘Albert are you organising the 10-year reunion?’,” Dr Ip said.

The reunion was held in 2002 with more than 90 people attending with approximately 100 responses for the updating of biographies which were placed in a reunion book.

People ‘run into’ each other in the most amazing places. You are welcome to send us your story about ‘bumping into’ an old classmate you haven’t seen for years. Please email your story to alumni@monash.edu.au or call the editor on +61 3 9905 9329.

Enriching the student experience

If you are interested in networking with Monash students in your field, please let us know. In the future, there will be increased opportunity to enrich students’ experience through connecting with relevant alumni. Please contact alumni@med.monash.edu.au or +61 3 9905 9329.

Alumni contact directory

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If you are interested in making a donation to the teaching or research of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, please contact us or visit www.monash.edu.au/giving/donations.html.

Graduate nurses are well supported in decisions to initiate medication

The results of new research undertaken at Southern Health by recent alumna Loretta Garvey have shown that graduate nurses are receiving support and guidance in the workplace when initiating patient medication.

New alumna Loretta Garvey said that medication administration was a key aspect of nursing practice which requires decision-making and this raised the question about how well graduates undertake the responsibility.

Previous studies have found that nurses had an overall deficit in pharmacological knowledge and competency (Bullock and Manias, 2002, Loemark, Smidle, Wikblad, 2006) and avoided the use of printed resources, preferring to ask an experienced staff member when nurse initiating medication (Aitken, Dunning, Manias, 2005). This study revealed new information, demonstrating that graduate nurses were confident in their decision-making for medication administration and more than 80 per cent of participants referred to hospital policies, on-line reference databases and instructions on medication charts when deciding when and what medication to administer. Participants reported supportive environments and other human decisional supports available in the Southern Health setting.

“The topic became personally relevant when I realised that as a newly graduated registered nurse I would be working in an area of nursing practice in which I had never before had the sole decision making responsibility. Through undertaking this research I have broadened my knowledge in not only this area of nursing but many other facets including the importance of nursing research.”

Ms Garvey undertook the research as a requirement of a Clinical Honours Bachelor of Nursing Degree while simultaneously completing a Graduate Nurse Program at The Alfred Hospital. Her previous studies identified her as a budding researcher when she won the Vice Chancellor’s Undergraduate Research Scholarship in 2005. This assisted her in undertaking study for her Honours thesis on the subject of the practice of graduate nurses initiating medication to patients.

“Until this research was undertaken there has been limited research in the USA and UK and no research has been found on the Australian experience in the area of nurse-initiating medications,” she said.

“These all impact upon the new nurses performance and ability to make sound clinical decisions.”

Ms Garvey is now a graduate nurse with The Alfred Hospital and also working casually at Monash University in Clayton assisting with first- and second-year medical students as a clinical teaching assistant.

Seeking multi-generational Monash families

If you have two or three generations of Monash graduates in your family, we’d like to hear from you. Please call Leanne Cutler on +61 3 9905 9329 or email alumni@med.monash.edu.au.
At the Global Health Forum

Above: Attending the Global Health Forum were Professor Anuar Zaini, Head, School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Monash Malaysia and Dr Deborah Zion of the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine’s Human Rights and Bioethics Unit at the Alfred Hospital. Dr Zion investigates the health of asylum seekers through Australian Research Council funding.

Right: Some medical graduates will remember Dr Basil Hetzel, Founding Head of the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the Alfred Hospital who spoke at the recent Global Health Forum.

Monash International Spring School for Public Health and Preventive Medicine

The Spring School hosted by the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine will be held from 26 November – 1 December 2007. This is an opportunity for health professionals from all fields to update knowledge and learn new skills. Short courses will cover health research, preventive medicine and public health topics, addressing global health issues and locally relevant themes. Program information can be found at www.med.monash.edu.au/epidemiology/shortcrs or email shortcrs@med.monash.edu.au.

Healthy Start for a Healthy Life: The Wintour’s Tale

Monash’s Healthy Start to Life research initiative is holding a satellite conference of DOHaD 2007 (5th World Congress on Developmental Origins of Health and Disease) on 1-2 November 2007 at the Marriott Melbourne. More information: www.healthystarttolife.monash.org/dohad

Frontiers in Vascular Medicine


New science and medical database available to alumni

Alumni with Monash Library membership can now electronically access the science and medical database, Scopus. More details about Scopus can be found at www.lib.monash.edu.au/news/2007/05-scopus.html. The annual fees for alumni library membership and links to the library database list can be found at www.monash.edu.au/alumni/privileges.

New practice development course

In 2008, Monash University, in conjunction with the University of Ulster, will launch the new Master of Practice Development course. The field of practice development is an expanding international field being introduced within the health and other practice settings to create and sustain change in patient/client delivery. This new Masters program will be of interest to health care professionals, educators and managers. For more information call +61 3 9904 4156 or jenny.lai@med.monash.edu.au.

7th International Practice Development Conference

‘Portraits, Panoramas and Palettes’ – 31 October – 2 November, Langham Hotel, Melbourne. This conference is for health professionals, nurses from all fields, allied health staff, managers and educators who are interested in developing or changing their practices to enhance and improve client, patient and service users outcomes. For full details, please see www.monash.edu.au/cmo/practicedevelopment/.
Reunions

1967 Monash medical alumni
40 year reunion

Date: Saturday, 17 November 2007
Time: 7 pm
Location: Werribee Mansion
Reunion coordinator: Dr John Campbell

1977 Monash medical alumni
30 year reunion

Date: Saturday, 17 November 2007
Time: 7 pm
Location: Hilton Hotel, Melbourne
Reunion coordinator: Dr John Griffths

1982 Monash medical alumni
25 year reunion

It’s time to get the band back together (metaphorically speaking)! Sally Cockburn is looking for a posse of her old classmates to organise a 25-year reunion in September/October this year. If you can help, please contact the Foundation on +61 3 9905 5971.

1997 Monash medical alumni
10 year reunion

Date: Saturday, 27 October 2007
Time: 8–11 pm
Venue: Feddish@Fed Square, Melbourne CBD
Reunion coordinators: Lior Rauchberger and Michelle Leadston
(Please note that the above is the confirmed date. The editor apologises for an unconfirmed date being published in the prior edition).

Peninsula nursing and midwifery celebrates 20 years

Alumni from all Monash nursing courses, their families and friends are invited to the School of Nursing and Midwifery’s 20th birthday celebrations on Saturday, 17 November at 3 pm at the Peninsula campus.

Guests will be treated to music and refreshments in Building E and can enjoy displays from the inception of the school until now, and lab tours.

Please contact Patricia Booth regarding enquiries, donations, loans of memorabilia or RSVPs on +61 3 9904 4355 or patricia.booth@med.monash.edu.au.

Gippsland nursing alumni are especially welcome to join in the fun with their Peninsula colleagues.

Find a friend

Do you ever wonder what happened to that old Monash friend that you had such a good time with? Please contact us and we’ll do our best to put you in touch with that old friend. Your name, course and year of completion will be needed as a starting point. If your friend’s contact details are on file, we can send your contact details to him or her, with your written permission. (The Australian Privacy Act does not allow us to give out contact details without prior permission). More and more alumni are using this handy service. Please email alumni@med.monash.edu.au or call +61 3 9905 9329.

Reunion enquiries

If you have questions about one of the above reunions or if you are interested in holding a reunion but are not sure how to ‘get it off the ground’, then contact the Monash University Medical Foundation on +61 3 9905 5971 or alumni@med.monash.edu.au. More information can be found online at www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni.