Monash medicine to be taught in the United Arab Emirates

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Our faculty is a broad community and whilst the research effort continues regardless of the time of year, the atmosphere heightens when undergraduate students return from Christmas and mid-year holidays. On behalf of the faculty, I extend a warm welcome to all students studying with us for the first time in 2005. For several decades, the faculty only had medical students, whereas we now have undergraduate courses in many health sciences and health research disciplines. Health care and medical research are centred around teamwork, and the rich variety of experiences available to our undergraduates gives us special opportunities to increasingly build excellence in interdisciplinary education and to better prepare our students for the workforce.

Several exciting initiatives started last year in the faculty continue to develop. A working group, in partnership with Professor Marilyn Liddell, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Monash University Malaysia, is planning for our new Malaysian medical school. Building plans are well advanced and several staff appointments have been made. The faculty is delighted to welcome two accomplished physician scientists who will provide leadership for our new school. Professor Anwar Zaini is an eminent endocrinologist whose past appointments include a term as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Malaysia. His appointment as dean of the Malaysian medical school is a major coup for Monash. Professor Khalid Kadir has accepted appointment as professor of medicine in Malaysia. Professor Khalid, an eminent graduate of our own university, and whose PhD was obtained at a Monash affiliated institution, has held major leadership positions in Malaysia including a period as Dean of Medicine. It is fair to say that we could not have started with a more outstanding leadership team.

Perhaps the most exciting development is that our first cohort of 50 students has enrolled for the Monash Malaysia medical course. The students will spend their first two years in Melbourne before returning to Malaysia in 2007 when building construction is finished and staff recruitment for phase one has taken place. I extend a warm welcome to these students and I am sure that their undergraduate experience will be a rich one.

Professor Chris Browne, who has done so much good work in leading the development of our new MBBS program in Australia, has accepted a role leading the faculty’s new international education implementation unit. Chris’s group, which is working with Malaysian colleagues on the implementation of the Malaysian course, has recently triumphed by securing a contract to deliver the Monash medical course at the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Though the course will be delivered under the auspices of the University of Sharjah, it is testimony to the quality of our new course that in this internationally competitive environment, a major Middle Eastern university has selected the Monash course over the many US and European alternatives. On behalf of the whole faculty, I extend congratulations to Chris and his team.

Relationships with our alumni continues to be a priority for the faculty. The Dean’s and Alumni Lecture Series began with the second Rod Andrew Oration, which was delivered by Professor Stephen Cordner, Director of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. Stephen discussed some of the Institute’s pioneering work in identifying victims of major disasters, including war and internal violence – an area unfortunately all too topical in recent times. Each year the Oration is followed by lectures given by several newly appointed faculty professors, giving both alumni and staff an opportunity to become familiar with their research areas. A major component, the alumni debate, was hosted by Dr Sally Cockburn. Further details about the remainder of this year’s Dean’s and Alumni Lecture Series appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

I encourage as many alumni and staff members as possible to attend these and future functions. They represent a unique opportunity to catch up with old friends, and to hear about advances in medical science.

The faculty was particularly fortunate in making several new professorial appointments last year. Professor Harald Schmidt took up appointment as Chair in Pharmacology. Professor Schmidt is an outstanding European pharmacologist who brings new strengths in cardiovascular pharmacology and lipid identification. Professors Iain Clarke and Brian Oldfield joined the Department of Physiology and bring considerable research strengths in neuro-physiology, especially in the field of obesity research.

Several new appointments are currently being made throughout the faculty, reflecting the fact that there is no place in Australian health sciences more exciting at the moment than our faculty at Monash.

Finally, I would like to mention some changes in faculty organisation. Following the recent school structure review, an eighth school, the School of Applied Clinical and Public Health Sciences, has been established. This school brings together the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the Monash Clayton campus and the Institute of Health Services Research at Monash Medical Centre. Both will maintain close interaction with their parent clinical school, and develop increased academic collaborations in applied health sciences. There have also been some new developments in the central faculty office. The associate dean posts in teaching and learning, and in research, were elevated to deputy dean positions with responsibility respectively for teaching and quality, and for research. I am very pleased to announce that Associate Professor Tony Luft and Professor Michael Berndt, who’ve been doing a superb job, have indicated a willingness to continue in these roles. Current deputy dean, Professor Leon Pitterman, will continue an appointment as senior deputy dean with special responsibility for international and student affairs. A new position, Deputy Dean, Strategic Development, responsible for planning in some of the major research and teaching initiatives in which the faculty is now involved, will be occupied by Professor Warwick Anderson. This group will continue to work collaboratively with the Executive and throughout the faculty, as it evolves as one of the world’s major health sciences teaching and research facilities.

The faculty is very much a family, involving students, staff and alumni. I hope this continues to be a great year for you all.

Ed Byrne
Introducing Monash Institute of Medical Research

Victorian Premier Mr Steve Bracks, officially launched the Monash Institute of Medical Research (MIMR), on 1 February 2005.

The new Institute consolidates the medical research efforts of Monash University and Southern Health, bringing together the Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development (MIRD), the Centre for Inflammatory Diseases and the Centre for Women’s Health Research. It also formalises links with several clinical research groups from Monash Medical Centre and other Southern Health facilities.

The newly formed Institute is dedicated to taking basic biomedical discoveries from the scientific bench to the patient’s bedside and then onto the wider community.

Dean of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Professor Ed Byrne said, “MIMR epitomizes Monash University medical faculty’s commitment to medical research at the highest level. In conjunction with our high-quality teaching program, this Institute is positioning Monash to be at the forefront of medical care and biotechnology both now and in the future.”

The formation of MIMR has come about in response to evolving scientific and research priorities. In 1991, when MIRD was established, it brought together like-minded scientists working in related fields. Over a decade later, the consolidation of a range of medical research activity under one umbrella, is providing the greatest opportunity for advancement.

At the launch MIMR’s interim Director, Professor David de Kretser said “Over the past decade, our research has expanded beyond the confines of reproduction, requiring broader collaborations with colleagues in other fields.”

“Through evolving informal links we have highlighted the appropriate mix of different skills required to solve various complex biomedical and clinical problems,” he said.

Mr Bracks said “consolidation of medical research and biotechnology in Victoria is producing great results. MIMR heralds a new era of medical research by combining clinical research and teaching with high-level patient care.”

“This Institute will help us achieve our goal of being among the top five biotechnology clusters in the world.”

A sample of MIMR’s research activity

- Infection and inflammatory disease
- Immune response and rejection
- Baby health research
- Women’s health
- Male infertility
- Prostate cancer
- Cardiovascular disease
- Functional genomics and human disease
- Stem cell and agricultural cloning
- Urological research

MIMR is located at:
27 – 31 Wright Street
Clayton 3168

Phone 03 9594 7100
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Email info@monashinstitute.org
Web www.monashinstitute.org
Monash medical course to be taught in the UAE

A collaboration between Monash University and the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates is raising Monash’s profile in the Middle East and helping to cement its reputation as a global university.

As part of a multi-million dollar agreement, Monash’s MBBS curriculum and teaching materials are being adapted to form a new medical course that will be delivered at the University of Sharjah. In addition, the agreement uses Monash expertise in determining the infrastructure needs of the University of Sharjah’s purpose-built medical facility.

Professor Ed Byrne said Monash is delighted to be entering into a partnership with the University of Sharjah. “This is an opportunity for Monash to be a part of an exciting project which will help build a significant relationship between Australia and a stable, moderate and friendly part of the Middle East.” He said it was testimony to the quality of the Monash MBBS course that it was chosen over other offerings from Europe and the US.

The ruler of Sharjah, His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, recently opened the university’s impressive new medical facility, which houses the three health sciences colleges of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry. A 300-bed teaching hospital, soon to be built adjacent to the medical college, will cater for students undertaking their clinical years.

Monash medical faculty’s delegation to Sharjah, headed by Associate Dean, International Education, Professor Chris Browne, has been assisting to ready the medical facility for its first intake of students who are due to begin at the new facility in September.

Professor Browne and his team have been involved in a wide range of activities in preparation for the arrival of the students, which has included customising the Monash MBBS course to suit the local conditions. This required sensitivity to cultural and religious considerations, as well as development of learning materials which were relevant to the local environment. A subtle example, for instance, was the removal of references to cystic fibrosis in patient centred learning activities, in favour of thalassemia, which is a far more predominant illness in the UAE and therefore of greater relevance to the country’s medical trainees.

The team was also involved in advising on fit out for the clinical skills labs, tutorial facilities and anatomy museum, as well as participating in recruitment of key academic personnel, including professors of anatomy, biochemistry and family medicine. In addition the team has been helping to establish links between expatriate staff working at the university, who were familiar with local issues and who could provide local expertise once the Australian team had returned home.

Ms Jennifer Lindley, a member of Professor Browne’s team, said that the experience gained through participation in this project would benefit the development of Monash’s MBBS curriculum at home. She said the project was providing exposure to alternative modes of delivery and expertise in the development of a curriculum that could cater to a range of cultures; an undoubted advantage in a multicultural student setting such as exists at Monash.

In addition, the Sharjah experience was overlaying a global perspective on health care training and helping to define the graduate attributes required of a global community. Ms Lindley said that the project would help show where Monash graduates sit within the context of a broader world view.

The University of Sharjah has literally risen from the desert sands over the last decade. Its magnificent buildings are now a major landmark in the region.

Professor Browne said the very existence of the university, as well as the new medical school, was a testament to the vision and resolve of Sheikh Dr Sultan to establish Sharjah as the pre-eminent centre for world class education and research in the gulf region.

“Sheikh Dr Sultan is president of the university and takes a close personal interest in all of its developments. It is common to
see him ‘dropping in’ for a visit on Thursdays, the equivalent of Saturday in our western calendar, to meet with the Chancellor and senior university management for an update on progress of the university’s development,” he said.

Once construction of the teaching hospital is completed, there are plans for another new, purpose-built facility, this one housing medicine and health sciences research activity, and situated between the existing college buildings and the hospital.

Professor Browne said he hoped the co-existence of three state-of-the-art facilities – for medical education, medical research and clinical medicine – will lead to an expansion of the already healthy and growing relationship between the University of Sharjah and Monash University.

Sharjah is the third largest of the seven emirates in the UAE and prides itself on being the educational and cultural capital. The University of Sharjah, which was established in 1997, is a not-for-profit university, currently with about 5600 predominantly Middle Eastern undergraduate students in eleven colleges. Once fully operational the university expects to enrol about 1600 students in medicine and pharmacy.

For further information or details regarding the relationship between the University of Sharjah and Monash University, please contact Professor Chris Browne at: chris.browne@med.monash.edu.au

Name change for School of Nursing

In line with more widespread changes occurring in many universities across Australia, the school is very pleased to announce that it has received University Council approval to change its name to the School of Nursing and Midwifery, from the start of 2005.

The school recommended this change of name in order to better acknowledge the rapid growth and development of midwifery within the school since the introduction of the Bachelor of Midwifery in 2003.

Master of Nursing now offered in Saudi Arabia

Earlier this year, the School of Nursing and Midwifery enrolled its first cohort from the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh.

Students attend tutorials at a teaching site set up within the hospital conducted by staff who are approved Monash University honorary lecturers.

The students come from many countries, including Egypt, Jordan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This is the first time such a program has been offered in this way in the Kingdom.

Several of the students aim to come to Australia to complete the research component of their award.

Centre for Multi-disciplinary Studies in Rural Health

The centre for Multi-disciplinary Studies in Rural Health (CMDS) is a major research and education program within the Monash University School of Rural Health (SRH).

This Centre has a special focus on nursing, allied and indigenous health in rural communities and drives these programs for the School of Rural Health from its base at the office of the Head of School in Moe. Within these designated areas its brief is to undertake research activities that address health problems of special importance and relevance for rural and regional populations and that, as a consequence of the multi-faceted nature of these problems, involves collaborations between investigator from the biomedical, social and population sciences. It also undertakes educational activities that encourage and support the recruitment, professional development and retention of rural health professionals from the wide range of disciplines it represents.

Special attention is also given to articulating CMDS activities with the undergraduate and postgraduate medical programs at our four regional clinical schools. These clinical schools, distributed across Victoria in different population settings, provide an ideal platform for the research and educational activities of the centre.

Although the main weight of its activities currently occurs in the Gippsland area, the centre is committed in the longer term to operating as a multi-site unit through all our clinical schools and their catchment populations.

‘... the project would help show where Monash graduates sit within the context of a broader world view.’
Eggs from embryonic stem cells could benefit sterile women

Monash researchers have developed a process that causes embryonic stem (ES) cells to develop into ovarian structures containing eggs.

The researchers believe the process could in future be used to develop eggs for sterile women that contain the women’s own genetic material.

In 2003, international scientists demonstrated that ES cells could spontaneously develop into structures containing eggs when maintained in a culture containing foetal calf serum. However the result has not been able to be replicated.

In response, Dr Orly Lacham-Kaplan from the Monash Immunology and Stem Cell Laboratories has developed a simple, repeatable system to support the development of ES cells into ovarian structures containing eggs. The system has involved only mouse ES cells.

She presented her findings recently at the annual meeting of the European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology.

“Further studies revealed that two genes specific to eggs were indeed expressed in the structures so we believe it is an ovary-type structure that contains oocytes,” she said.

“Once the embryoid bodies were in an environment with growth factors sufficient for differentiation and they were not exposed to the factors responsible for the differentiation into male reproductive cells, they spontaneously differentiated into female reproductive cells even though they were originated from male ES cells.”

An unhealthy silence

In all areas of health, including obesity, drug and alcohol addiction, skin and lung cancer, high blood pressure and cholesterol, men record a higher percentage of problems than women.

On average, women live four years longer than men, are more likely to visit a doctor and will talk to friends and family about their health issues. Men, meanwhile, resist visiting the doctor, and, for the most part, will not discuss their health issues with anyone.

Professor David de Kretser, the director of Andrology Australia, says if men are reluctant to speak about their general health, they are even more silent on issues related to reproductive health.

“Women’s health is leagues ahead,” Professor de Kretser says. “They have targeted education campaigns, and there are many support groups for women and their friends and family. But men rarely even speak to their mates about health issues, particularly when it comes to difficulties related to sexuality and reproduction.”

In 1999, the Federal Government funded the Australian Centre of Excellence in Male Reproductive Health, now known as Andrology Australia, a centre within the Monash Institute of Medical Research.

The centre brings together Australian researchers who work in men’s reproductive health and focuses on prostate disease, testicular cancer, erectile dysfunction, deficiency in androgens (a hormone associated with male sexual development) and male infertility. As well as advancing research in these areas, the centre provides education programs for the community and health care professionals.

It is estimated that in Australia, one in 20 men are infertile, one in 200 suffer from testosterone deficiency, about 50 per cent of men will experience prostate problems and one million will have erectile dysfunction. On top of that, 550 Australian men are diagnosed with testicular cancer each year.

Despite these alarming statistics, a study released last year by Andrology Australia found that men were unable or unwilling to locate information about their reproductive health.

The reasons included negative community attitudes towards male reproductive health issues and traditional masculine attitudes that discouraged men from seeking information. Furthermore, it found that insufficient training of general practitioners in men’s health issues and limited community education on male reproductive disorders meant that even if men did seek information, it was difficult to come by.

Professor de Kretser says that in the past there has been a lack of good quality and unbiased information available to men suffering from reproductive health disorders but that it is essential men have access to this information.

“Obviously, reproductive health disorders are affecting large numbers of the Australian population, and so it is vital to provide information describing the causes, symptoms and treatments,” he says.

“Over the next four years our primary objective will be to cultivate an understanding of men’s reproductive health in the community and to encourage men to seek advice on treatment and management.”

Professor de Kretser admits there is still much that is unknown in areas of men’s reproductive health and that ongoing research is necessary if better treatments are to be developed.

For information on Andrology Australia or men’s reproductive health issues:

Go to the Andrology Australia website: www.andrologyaustralia.org

Consult your doctor; or

Contact Andrology Australia 1300 303 878

‘...men rarely even speak to their mates about health issues...’
A cure for Crohn’s Disease may be a step closer thanks to a generous donation of funds to support research into the ailment.

Monash Medical Foundation recently established the Les and Eva Erdi Fellowship in Crohn’s Disease Research following a $125,000 pledge aimed at arresting the debilitating effects of the disease.

The pledge of $25,000 per year for five years, is the second such donation made by Mr Les and Mrs Eva Erdi to medical research at Monash, and will help advance research into an ailment which effects an estimated 10,000 Australians, mostly young people aged between 15 and 24 at onset.

Crohn’s Disease causes inflammation in the small intestine that can cause changes in the bowel wall. There is currently no proven cause and no cure. Its sufferers may experience severe abdominal pain and diarrhoea, sometimes with weight loss, tiredness and vomiting.

Mr Erdi, chairman of the Erdi Hotels Group, said that he and Mrs Erdi hoped their donation would help improve life for young people suffering from the disease.

The inaugural recipient of the Les and Eva Erdi fellowship is scientist and dietician Dr Jane Muir from the faculty’s Department of Medicine at Box Hill Hospital. In association with Professor Peter Gibson and dietician Ms Sue Shepherd, Dr Muir will investigate the effect diet, in particular the western diet, may have on the disease.

Mr Erdi said the donation would have achieved its purpose if it led to a cure or helped to arrest the disease.

“...hoped their donation would help improve life for young people...”

Forensic pathology was helping to ease the anguish of families whose relatives were missing as a result of war or internal violence, Professor Stephen Cordner told a 150-strong audience recently.

Professor Cordner, the director of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and professor of forensic medicine at Monash University, was speaking at this year’s Rod Andrew Oration on May 10.

He said the work of forensic pathologists after war or civil unrest was essential for justice and humanitarian reasons. The rapid growth and visibility of this work in the 1980’s and early 1990’s had given families hope that answers about the fate of their loved ones could be provided once war or internal violence had ended.

Identification is so important because we now have international courts and tribunals. They need evidence, including forensic evidence, to recreate the circumstances of what happened and to consider the guilt or innocence of the accused.”

He said that the perpetrators of high-scale atrocities, such as occurred in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Katyn Forest (in Poland) during World War II, were no longer assured of impunity. Forensics work had facilitated a massive shift in the dynamics of making war and committing abuses in the fog of war. Heads of state, he said, were no longer immune from prosecution and conviction.

“Justice is our most important tool to ensure these atrocities don’t happen again.

“The story is terrible, but the messages are hopeful. First, the advance of criminal law into theatres of war is the best hope we have of arresting the cycle of revenge and counter revenge that characterises many conflicts. Secondly, among the many disasters that befall populations ravaged by war is the misery of the families of the missing. Big steps to address that are being made.”

Professor Cordner, has undertaken tours of duty in East Timor and Kosovo and spent a year consulting to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

To see a transcript of Professor Cordner’s lecture, go to: www.med.monash.edu.au/alumni/deanslectures2005.html
The tsunami which devastated parts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand and several other countries on December 26 last year is said to have claimed nearly 300,000 lives and left countless people homeless.

The one solace to come from such tragedy was the readiness of people from across the globe, and from all walks of life, to band together and provide practical, financial and physical support to rebuild the shattered communities.

These next two articles show that support can come in many ways, sometimes obvious and other times, perhaps not so.

Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha, senior lecturer in the Department of General Practice, spent a semester at Sri Lanka’s Kelaniya University before the tsunami hit. The friendships he made there have inspired him to launch an appeal to help in the rebuilding efforts.

Monash medicine student, Mr Sandro Demaio visited Sri Lanka with his father, a general practitioner, in the weeks following the disaster. His experiences have already shaped his views of medicine, and what it means to be a provider of medical care.

Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha

Medical students at Sri Lanka’s Kelaniya University, I discovered during my time there, are very much like their Monash counterparts. They represent the cream of the country’s undergraduates and are, for the most part, intelligent, hard-working and polite. The major difference is that all of them kept addressing me as ‘Sir’!

I was fortunate to spend a semester as an honorary senior lecturer at Kelaniya University’s department of community and family medicine, courtesy of a Victorian Rotary District 9810 University Teacher’s Award.

The award, which is granted annually, supports an Australian university academic to teach in a ‘low income country with Rotary clubs’. It provides an opportunity to teach in a different environment and to share Australian teaching skills and techniques with colleagues overseas. At the same time, one learns how people in other lands, who care about similar issues, go about handling them.

Kelaniya was one of Sri Lanka’s first universities to recognise general practice as a discipline in its own right. The medical curriculum is taught over five years. Students get a term of weekly lectures on family medicine.

The department’s clinic provides free primary health care to the people of the area and gives students the opportunity to observe GP consultations first hand. The 4th year students are allowed to take histories from patients prior to them seeing the doctor; a video camera in the consultation room allows patient encounters to be observed by the teacher and other students from an adjacent room. These consultations are videotaped so that the students can ‘see themselves as others see them’ and receive feedback from the teacher and colleagues.

One of my teaching tasks was to give each group of students a tutorial on the management in general practice of diabetes and hypertension – both common diseases in Sri Lanka. I have over the years acquired a good collection of models and charts, so I took these along and used them as teaching aids. Since my entire secondary and tertiary education was in Sri Lanka, I am, despite many years in Australia, still fluent in the local Sinhalese language, with the result that using colloquialisms, local idioms and indigenous examples was not difficult.

Sri Lankan family physicians have much in common with Australian GPs including ongoing efforts to establish credibility and respect for general practice, as well as the difficulty of getting young doctors to undertake practice in rural areas. In Sri Lanka as in Australia medical students are taught and influenced mainly by hospital doctors in large tertiary referral centres. At graduation their entry into the profession is necessary to meet the country’s requirement for a large workforce of doctors working in primary health care.

Mine was a fantastic experience; a wonderful opportunity to interact with Sri Lanka’s doctors of tomorrow, to influence their attitudes and give them confidence to develop into competent and dedicated medical practitioners.
Spotlight on Sri Lanka

It was Aristotle who once made the pertinent observation, “How can I teach if not to a friend?”

Thanks to the Rotary Clubs of Victoria, I have had a most rewarding and enjoyable experience teaching overseas – making many friends among Kelaniya’s staff and students and many are the emails I still receive from them.

The only problem, I have to admit, is that they still keep addressing me as ‘Sir’!

Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha
Senior Lecturer
Department of General Practice

Postscript:
Following the tsunami that devastated the south-east coast of Sri Lanka on December 26th last year, leaving over 35,000 dead, Dr Wijesinha with former colleagues at the medical faculty of Kelaniya University has set up a fund to support two medical students in Sri Lanka who lost their families in the disaster. In a land that has no Centrelink type social insurance, the fund will provide a monthly stipend for these students until they graduate.

Those interested in contributing to this fund are requested to communicate with Dr Wijesinha:

Phone 03 8575 2222
Email sanjiva.wijesinha@med.monash.edu.au

Sandro Demaio

On the 18th of February 2005, I embarked on a 10-day journey of a lifetime, travelling to Sri Lanka’s Akkaraipattu region, to help deliver medical aid to those affected by the tsunami.

Akkaraipattu region is a 12-hour drive from the capital, Colombo, situated on the south-east coast of Sri Lanka, a region where an estimated 20,000 residents were killed when the tsunami struck.

Together with my father, a general practitioner, I had gone as part of the Australian Medical Mission, which comprised four doctors, two nurses, a medical student and a child-care worker. Our task was to deliver medical aid at either the local hospital, or at one of a number of aid camps housing between 50 and 350 families displaced by the tsunami.

The medical aid we delivered was grass roots. The doctors worked in a general practice capacity, manning outpatient clinics at the hospital and medical clinics in the camps. My role involved dispensing pharmaceuticals, vaccinating, wound dressing and providing public education for the patients, including hygiene and first aid.

The time I spent in Sri Lanka was one of the most emotional experiences of my life, causing me to constantly reflect on and reshape my views of medicine, my studies, my future, Australia and the world. Though specific experiences were particularly challenging, I will never forget one young man who presented with fever and pains. The doctor, used to Australian medical supports wanted to perform a blood test. But it was soon evident that this was not possible, in fact, very little in the way of medical investigations was. The region did not have the facilities to perform blood tests or x-rays and the ECG machine was six hours drive away. I suddenly realised how vulnerable doctors become once their support mechanisms – both human and technological – were removed. It occurred to me that the medical profession I am going to be a part of is incredibly lucky and I found myself developing a lot of respect for the doctor at Akkarapattu hospital. He was responsible for all 50 beds and very ill people, while lacking the diagnostic tools Australian medicos have come to expect.

My experiences in Akkarapattu reinvigorated my passion for studying, practicing and shaping the future of Australian medicine. It made me appreciate what fantastic opportunities come with a medical degree and the level to which this knowledge empowers a person and allows them to make a real difference.

The feeling of having giving a young teenager, orphaned by the tsunami, long over-due pain relief and antibiotics for a chronic infection, education on hygiene and a tetanus injection that will keep protecting them long after I am back home, is just wonderful.

Sri Lanka also gave me another view of the world. I was reminded how ‘small’ and interconnected the planet is and that while TV advertisements and brochures allow us, as Australians, to remove ourselves from the situation, we all live on the same globe. It made it truly evident that even as I wrote these words, people in Akkarapattu were mourning for their lost ones, struggling to find food and water, rebuilding their homes and ultimately recovering from the tsunami.

While I struggle to find words that even loosely illustrate my time in Sri Lanka, my true emotions and experiences are indescribable. I have come back with much to think about, a wealth of experiences to use in life and medicine and a dedication to changing public health, local and global, for the better.

I know that the disastrous things I saw there will never leave me, acting forever as a reminder to work towards my new goals.

Sandro Demaio
2nd-year MBBS student
The School of Nursing’s Professor Margaret O’Connor was one of several Monash medical faculty’s staff to be named in the Australia Day Honours list this January.

Margaret received the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to the development and establishment of palliative care services in Victoria.

The honour acknowledges Margaret’s 20-year contribution at the forefront of service-delivery to the dying and their families.

Margaret’s career in palliative care nursing began in 1985 when Melbourne CityMission established the first domiciliary service created specifically to care for the dying at home. Since then she has been involved in initiating or expanding palliative care services for several agencies, including Melbourne Eastern Palliative Care Association; Sisters of Charity and Order of Malta consortium; and Eastern Palliative Care. In 2003, Margaret was appointed the inaugural Vivian Bullwinkel Chair in Palliative Care Nursing at Monash University.

With a career rich in diversity, including positions in clinical care, management, strategic planning, education and academia, Margaret has developed research interests in planning, delivery, and ethics issues surrounding end-of-life care. She has an enduring passion for bringing practice and theory closer together, combining clinical service with her research and education roles.

She is the present vice-chair for Eastern Palliative Care and chair of its ethics committee. She has been a board member of Palliative Care, Victoria and has represented Victoria on the Council of Palliative Care, Australia.

The faculty extends warm congratulations to Margaret, as it does for all other award recipients, on this richly deserved honour.

Mr John Allen
Executive Director, Monash Medical Foundation

John Allen joined the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences as the Executive Director of the Monash University Medical Foundation in May 2005.

John brings a wealth of broad-ranging fund-raising experience to the Foundation with over 20 years experience in the not-for-profit sector working in animal welfare, youth welfare, health and the environment. These areas reflect his personal interests believing that a person can be more effective when they have a genuine interest in the cause.

He has particular experience and interest in program development, marketing and strategic planning to enhance funding opportunities.

John said he was really looking forward to working with the Foundation Board in his new role. “They are an enthusiastic group of people with a passionate interest in medical education, teaching and research,” he said. “My job will be to provide the day-to-day ‘engine room’ to maximise the talents that the board provides. I believe that together we will deliver some exciting financial backing for some of the faculty’s projects”.

John is a past President of the Fund-raising Institute Australia (Victoria), and continues his association with the Institute as a current board member. He is also a director of the Lost Dogs Home.

John can be contacted at the Foundation:
Phone 03 9905 0749
Congratulations: Alumni, students and staff

The following is a sample of some richly deserved honours, awards and prizes received by members of the faculty community in recent times.

Professor Stephen Holdsworth, head of the Southern Clinical School; recently awarded the Kincaid-Smith medal, Australia’s highest award for outstanding achievement in research into the treatment of diseases of the kidney and urinary tract.

Professor Paul Zimmet, from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Monash and director of the International Diabetes Institute, was awarded the Banting Award of Diabetes UK (formerly the British Diabetes Association).

Professor David Healy, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and his team; successful grant from the BUPA Foundation, the largest medical research charity in the UK, for the project: Analysis of Perinatal Outcomes for Mothers and Singleton Babies after Assisted Reproductive Technology.

Ms Shyamala Nataraj, an Indian national who is studying for the Master of International Research Bioethics in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, has been nominated one of the Thousand Women for Nobel Peace Prize 2005. Ms Nataraj has spent the past 16 years in the field of HIV/AIDS-related women’s health issues, working with sex workers, governments, hospitals and community organisations in India’s Tamil Nadu region.

Ms Renee Testa and Mr Carlo Ziiono, both students in the School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine’s Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Neuropsychology program, have won awards following their presentations at the 6th World Conference on Brain Injury, which was held in Melbourne in May. Ms Testa won the Luria Encouragement Award for outstanding PhD student oral presentation and Mr Ziiono the Travel Award for Outstanding Post Graduate Student Abstract.

Ms Lauren Ely, PhD candidate in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, received a high commendation in the 2005 Victorian Premier’s Awards for Medical Research, for her work in determining why the body rejects organ transplants.

Associate Professor Shaun Jackson, from the Australian Centre for Blood Diseases at Monash, has been awarded the Amgen Medical Research Award for his work on a new treatment for coronary heart disease and stroke.

Dr Bebe Loff, the first law graduate to complete a PhD in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine. Bebe’s area of expertise is health and human rights and her thesis is a collection of case studies examining the potential contribution of a human rights framework to the analysis of health issues.

Below is a list of faculty community members who were named in the Australia Day Honours list in 2005.

AO

Associate Professor Alison Mary Street, MBBS 1971 (Monash), Haematology Unit, Alfred Hospital

For service to medicine, particularly in the field of haematology, and as a significant contributor to the management of congenital bleeding disorders and minimisation of transfusion transmitted infection.

AM

Professor Warwick Peter Anderson, School of Biomedical Sciences, Monash University

For service to health and medical research through leadership roles with the National Health and Medical Research Council, to the development of medical science at Monash University, and to hypertension and renal physiology research.

Professor Stephen Moile Cordner, Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University

For service to forensic medicine, particularly as a contributor to the development of forensic pathology in Australia and internationally.

Professor Garry Lawrence Jennings, MBBS 1969 (Monash), MD 1986 (Monash) – Department of Medicine, Alfred Hospital

For service to medicine in the areas of cardiothoracic research and public health, to the Baker Heart Research Institute and The Alfred Hospital, and to professional and health-related organisations.

Professor Margaret Mary O’Connor

School of Nursing, Monash University

For service to the development and establishment of palliative care services in Victoria.

Professor Richard Ernest Ruffin, MBBS 1970 (Monash), MD 1984 (Monash) - Department of Medicine, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, SA

For service to respiratory medicine as a leading clinician, researcher, educator and mentor to colleagues.

OAM

Dr James Edward Turner, Grad Dip Fam Med 1995 (Monash), Wollongong NSW

For service to medicine and to the Illawarra region as a general practitioner.

Ambulance Service Medal

Mr Anthony Gerrard Walker, B Paramedic Studies 2001 (Monash)
kept in close liaison with his undergraduate group, many of whom travelled from afar to attended his funeral on January 20 this year. Dr John Campbell and Dr Bill Bettts presented his eulogy. Tragically, Stewart had developed Motor Neurone Disease three years ago.

We will miss Stewart because of his humanness, his humour, his organising skills and especially his sincere warm greetings that we can recall consistently over 44 years. After all, who else but Stewart, would uniquely call me “Jonno”.

We extend our sympathy to his wife Elizabeth and children Marcus, Megan and Tristan.

Professor John Murtagh, with acknowledgments to Drs John Campbell and William Bettts

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**Dr Stewart John Bowman (1941 - 2005)**

The Monash Medical Alumni was saddened by the passing of Stewart Bowman who was a very distinguished alumnus and much-loved colleague. He was a great character with a real sense of fun and fellowship. It has been said that he was to the medical faculty as Campbell McComas was to the law faculty, except that Stewart preceded Campbell.

Stewart, who was in the first intake of students in 1961, was considered to be the first medical student to set foot on campus. Apparently he inspected the “farm” site on hearing of his admission and came across a man inspecting building plans in a shed. “Hello my good man, I am looking for the Faculty of Medicine” said Stewart. The man, himself considered a character, replied “I am the Faculty of Medicine”! It was none other than Professor Rod Andrew.

I recall turning up to the fledgling medical school on orientation day wondering what to expect. A distinguished looking bearded man, resplendent in academic regalia, limped onto the stage and gave a dynamic welcoming speech which he punctuated with wonderful jokes and tall stories. He then led a bawdy rendition of the medical students’ theme song to the strains of the German national anthem. This person, whom we thought was a faculty heavy, was none other than Stewart himself. He would repeat this welcome each year during his time on campus.

Stewart was handicapped by a severe hip problem during early high school days, causing him to miss considerable schooling. He battled on bravely to become an outstanding student and debater at Hampton High School. He never complained about his hip and eventually underwent very complex surgery in recent years.

Stewart was a driving force behind many early student social functions including staff-student meetings. The Notting Hill pub meets and the formation of MUMUS. After graduation Stewart underwent a comprehensive self generated GP training program, including anaesthetics and obstetrics. He entered general practice in Frankston where he remained practicing for 33 years. He was greatly respected and loved by his patients and colleagues.

Stewart was the first President of the Association of Monash Medical Graduates and
dr Stewart John Bowman (1941 - 2005)

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**Professor Jeremy Anderson (1953 - 2005)**

Professor Jeremy Anderson, the former director of the Monash Institute of Health Services Research has passed away at the early age of 52.

Professor Anderson, who battled cancer for nine months, was director of Monash’s Centre for Clinical Effectiveness before joining the institute where he was interim director for 18 months from 2001.

In 2003, Professor Anderson took up the position of professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of Melbourne, but continued his association with the institute through a range of projects.

Australian Cochrane Centre director Associate Professor Sally Green said Professor Anderson was an innovative leader who led with generosity, humility, enthusiasm and humour. “He was an exceptional man who encouraged fun at work and inspired us to question and test our boundaries,” Associate Professor Green said.

“He delivered orations which made difficult concepts understandable, full of quotes from philosopher and social critic Bertrand Russell and images from the Museum of Modern Art. Who could resist being inspired to try and improve their practice by this clever, quirky, charismatic leader of opinion and change?”, Professor Anderson is survived by his wife, Heather, and children, Zoe and Joe.

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**Professor Jeffrey Richards (1951 - 2005)**

Monash academic, clinical psychologist and pioneer of internet-based therapies, Professor Jeffrey Richards has passed away at the age of 55.

Professor Richards joined Monash as professor of primary care research in February 2003. In that same year, he received the Distinguished Career Award from the Australian Association for Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy in recognition of his contribution to behaviour research and therapy.

Head of the Department of General Practice, Professor Leon Pitterman, said Professor Richards had learned early in his professional career to combine his dual passions of clinical practice and research.

He said Professor Richards was a tireless advocate for quality research into mental health care, particularly in areas relating to innovative new treatments and modes of delivery. In 1998, Professor Richards and his then student who later became his colleague, Dr Britt Klein, began developing an internet-based treatment for panic disorder. The project evolved into the development of internet-based treatments for several psychological disorders.

Professor Richards maintained an active interest and involvement in health psychology and was involved in research into erectile dysfunction, cardiovascular disease, stress, depression and tinnitus.

Professor Pitterman said as well as his professional achievements, Professor Richards was a gentle, kind, considerate and humble man.

Professor Richards is survived by his mother Jean, brother Andy, partner Marita (Mc McCabe), daughters Sasha, Erica, Hayley and Imit, four grandchildren, two stepsons Matt and Mark and an extended family.
Here’s what’s coming up in the rest of the series in 2005.

13 September 2005
Rust-proofing our Blood Vessels: Oxidative stress and new concepts in treating hypertension –
Professor Harald Schmidt

8 November 2005
Reflections on Child Abuse and Child Protection –
Professor Chris Goddard

Date As indicated
Venue South 1 Lecture Theatre
Building 64
Monash University, Wellington Rd
Clayton

Times for all sessions
4 pm - 6 pm

For up to the minute details, please check the faculty events page at
www.med.monash.edu.au/events

These are free lectures. Confirmation of attendance would be appreciated to ensure adequate seating. Please indicate your attendance by telephone on 03 9905 5971, fax on 03 9905 0750, or email to alumni@med.monash.edu.au

Celebrity spring clean to help stop child abuse

Through its involvement in the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse (NRCPCA), Monash and its collaborators, are finding increasingly novel ways of initiating research and identifying solutions to the problem of child abuse.

Professor Chris Goddard, head of social work in the School of Primary Health Care, and director of the NRCPCA, will again this year get right behind the Celebrity Garage Sale, and urges us all to do the same.

The Celebrity Garage Sale, which is an initiative of the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF), a research collaborator with the NRCPCA, has been held in Australia since 2003. Its objective is to raise the profile of child abuse prevention programs in the community.

Household goods and memorabilia belonging to celebrities – in previous years these have included Guy Pearce’s car, Kylie Minogue’s bra and Paris Hilton’s dress – will be publicly auctioned, with proceeds going to support the work of the ACF.

Professor Goddard, whose children are keen “bidders” in the garage sale – they particularly love picking up autographed CDs – said that the NRCPCA collaboration between Monash and the ACF was unique. He said it was the only one of its kind in Australia between a national child welfare agency and university. As the ACF’s research partner, Professor Goddard said the NRCPCA was keen to see the garage sale do well.

This year’s Celebrity Garage Sale will be held on Sunday 9 October at National Storage, Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne. Further information is available from the Australian Childhood Foundation:

Phone 03 9874 3922.
MMADoGS II

MMADoGS II was played on 21 March 2005 at the fabulous Melbourne Metropolitan Golf Club in Oakleigh. Melbourne turned on a beautiful autumn day for this auspicious event, which is fast becoming a highlight on the Monash medical alumni events calendar. This year, the field comprised about 80 players, some of whom came in from overseas, just to play a round of golf with their fellow MMADoGS.

Students too were amongst the field this time, mingling with their teachers and mentors, and, no doubt, getting tips on everything from a decent suture to the perfect golf swing.

The shotgun start was an improvement on last year’s arrangements, meaning that everyone started and finished around the same time, and most importantly, reached the clubhouse in time to have a drink and savour the nibbles.

As at the inaugural golf day in 2004, MMADoGS II was sponsored by AMA Financial Services, who were also represented on the course.

John Murtagh, who many will know as the face of Monash medical alumni, was on hand to offer the players encouragement and to plug the work of the alumni committee. Emcee duties were admirably handled by Greg Fox.

After a hotly contested game victory went to the following:

Terri Sullivan
Graeme Dowling
Peter Drake
Paul Grubb
John Tait (New Zealand)
Michael McQueen-Thomson (Murray River)
Ron Trower and Michael Gross (on a barely-breathing 27 points)

As usual there were no lack of contenders for the Best Feat of the Day, though this year’s nominations did cause some controversy. Having been nominated for arriving late and not following instructions, Jackie Hughes and partner were later let off on appeal.

The rest of the nominations for Best Feat of the Day were:

Matthew Armstrong (who skipped a green and played the wrong pin on the 7th);
Peter Downie, who (preferring the company of the Premier and his Health Minister, arrived late to begin play on the 12th hole);
Peter Kerr (who lined up for a lovely drive on the 6th, showing a great stance and a powerful swing, only to nudge the ball a meager seven inches from the tee).

But the award was eventually given to Ian Bejer, who, stepping out of his partner’s line, fell backward into the bunker, causing considerable damage to his pride.

Zelko Lovric, last year’s Best Stableford score winner, did a sterling job of engraving and returning the trophy, and whilst it was a bit of a challenge to pry it away from him, this year’s worthy recipients, Jock Sowerby and Michael McQueen-Thomson finished on a respectable score of 42 points.

Congratulations to all the winners. We hope you will come back next year to defend your titles.

MMADoGS III will be played on 27 March 2006. Contact Carol Rodgers in Professor David Healy’s rooms on 9562 7455 to make sure you get on the list for next year.
School of Biomedical Sciences to form an alumni group

The School of Biomedical Sciences is setting up an alumni group for all graduates from biomedical sciences (those who have completed a major study in one of the biomedical sciences such as anatomy, biochemistry and molecular biology, cell biology, immunology, microbiology, pharmacology and physiology) and graduates from radiography and medical imaging.

A newsletter introducing the alumni group will be sent to graduates in the next few weeks. The newsletter will highlight some of the developing areas in biomedical science, radiography and medical imaging, as well as profile graduates in these areas.

The purpose of the group is to provide a forum for graduates to maintain contact with colleagues and to facilitate professional networks. It will also be a vehicle for providing information about benefits and facilities available to graduates at Monash.

Part of any strong alumni group is the opportunity to contribute in an on-going way to the university community, and group members may be invited to participate in presentations for current and prospective students, provide job profiles and help identify markets in which employment opportunities may exist for Biomed Science graduates.

If you would like to be part of this initiative, phone Carlena Carter:

Phone 03 9905 5165

Reunions

These reunions are coming up. If you haven’t received your invitation yet phone the alumni office now:

Phone 03 9905 5971

15-year Reunion of the MBBS Class of 1990

Saturday, 10 September 2005
The Argo
64 Argo Street, South Yarra
$60 per head, covers drinks and finger food

Further information:
Alex Mirakian alexmirakian@yahoo.com.au
or Karin Leder
karin.leder@med.monash.edu.au

10-year Reunion of the MBBS Class of 1995

Saturday, 26 November 2005
Cinque Lira
Monash University, Wellington Rd
Clayton

Further information:
Emma Warnecke
Mobile 0425 819 768
or Alison De Souza
Mobile 0418 530 225

Like a hand organising your graduation year reunion?

Did you know that the Monash Medical Foundation can help you organise your graduation-year reunion? Staff in the Foundation office can provide a range of services to make sure your reunion celebrations go off brilliantly. These services are offered to all disciplines – medicine, nursing and health sciences. And best of all, they’re free of charge.

Some of our services include:

- Provide address lists for your graduation year
- Design and print simple invitations, mail out invitations and other promotional material
- Pay a holding deposit on a venue (to be repaid when registrations come in)
- Accept registration payments on behalf of your organising committee (saves you having to open a bank account) and payments can be accepted via cash, cheque, or secure online credit card facility
- Suggest venues, entertainment, etc
- Organise guest speakers (if required) from within the faculty and university community
- Organise campus tours
- Produce simple presentations (power point, booklets, etc)

What we require of you:

- A formed organising committee
- A minimum of four months planning time
- Acceptance of the university’s privacy policy and agreement to repay deposit fees
- An opportunity to promote the work of the Foundation, either during the function itself, or via advertising and promotional material

So if you’re thinking about planning your reunion, contact the Foundation Office:

Phone 03 9905 5971
Email alumni@med.monash.edu.au
Melbourne Entertainment Books 2005 - 06
Did you notice the Entertainment Book 2005 - 06 flyer included with this newsletter? The book offers discounts and two-for-one deals on a range of dining and entertainment experiences throughout Melbourne and has been a hit with Melbournians over the past several years.

If you've used the book before, you'll know what great value it represents. At 25–50% off the bill at some of Melbourne's finest restaurants, users can recoup the book's $60 purchase price very quickly indeed.

Monash Medical Foundation is promoting the book to all readers of this newsletter because it represents such good value. It also helps support the Foundation's activities, with $12 from each copy sold going towards the Support for Students in Need Fund.

For your copy, and to support students in need, please complete and return the flyer to the address shown, or telephone Kerri Rolfe at the Foundation Office on 9905 5971 for further information.

Win $200 worth of Monash books and merchandise
Every month until the end of the year one lucky Monash alumnus, chosen at random, will win an online gift voucher worth $200. The voucher can be spent on the huge selection of books at the Monash bookshop or on any items in the Monash merchandise range, including clothing, gift ware, stationery and souvenirs.

To be eligible to win, simply go to the Monash alumni web page at www.monash.edu.au/alumni/ and update your contact details. Make sure you include your email address if possible and you may soon be shopping for Monash goods online.

States of Mind: Psychoanalysis Applied
"States of Mind: Psychoanalysis Applied" is the theme of a new Certificate in Psychodynamic Thinking offered by the Department of Psychological Medicine. The course would be of interest to those wishing to improve their understanding of psychodynamics as it influences personal development at the individual, group and organisational levels.

Course co-ordinators Dr Jocelyn Dunphy-Blomfield and Dr Stanley Gold, have chosen areas of universal interest and have invited people from various fields to offer a series of seminars on topics including Mind Madness and Self; Neuroanalysis Critiqued; The Creative Vision: Psychoanalysis and Art; The Creative Imagination: Psychoanalysis and the Writing Mind; The Organisational Environment; and Psychoanalysis and the Political.

Contact Melinda Sonogan, the course administrator, for further details:
Telephone 03 9594 1478
Email melinda.sonogan@med.monash.edu.au

Keep us informed
Have you moved, or are you about to move? Keep us informed of your new contact details so we can continue to deliver this newsletter.

Simply photocopy this page, fill in the information and fax to (private fax) 03 9905 0750, or go to www.monash.edu.au/alumni/faq/address.html to update your details online.

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Year of graduation ___________________________
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