



Monash Matters

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Fieldwork preparation workshops for 2007

Sincere thanks to all agencies and educators who have offered us fieldwork in 2007. We are covered for first year and almost there for second years in semester one. We have appreciated your support and warm response; we look forward to meeting up with everyone in March. Brochures regarding preparation workshops have been forwarded to all Monash University fieldwork educators by mail. Please contact us if you haven't yet received your brochure.

The first workshop on Monday, 19 March is quite different in content to that of 2006. It focuses on preparing everyone for the student placements in 2007.

The second workshop run by Dawn Best on Friday, 30 March, focuses on supervision skills and facilitating student learning. It is particularly beneficial for new supervisors and those wanting to brush up on these skills. Dawn Best is highly respected throughout Australia for her expertise in professional supervision and mentoring. We know her workshop will be invaluable to all those attending. This workshop is available to other disciplines and non-Monash University fieldwork educators for a fee of \$95. Lunch will be provided and we are sure you will find the day well worth your attendance.

Information and registration forms are available from Sylvie Smith via email: sylvie.smith@med.monash.edu.au.

Certificates of attendance to meet Acc OT requirements will be provided to all participants at both workshops.



Introducing Dr Rachael McDonald

Rachael McDonald trained as an occupational therapist in Adelaide, South Australia. She completed a postgraduate diploma in biomechanics (Strathclyde University, Glasgow) before being awarded a research fellowship to complete a PhD thesis on the effectiveness of adaptive seating for children with cerebral palsy, awarded February 2004 (UCL, London). Rachael then worked as a lecturer in children's occupational therapy research at the Institute of Child Health/Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust in London, UK, where she also held a clinical caseload in the assistive technology service. Rachael commenced as a senior lecturer in occupational therapy, at Monash University on 1 February and looks forward to meeting and collaborating with her clinical and research colleagues.



Introducing Sylvie Smith

A warm welcome to Sylvie Smith who has commenced in fieldwork administration for the occupational therapy program at Monash University.

No stranger to Monash University, Sylvie Smith has worked with the School of Nursing since 2001 as a clinical officer at the

Peninsula campus. She has developed systems and established sound working relationships with student nurses, university and agency staff. Sylvie commenced on a temporary contract with the Department of Occupational Therapy in November 2006, working Mondays and Wednesdays in this busy role. For any administrative fieldwork matters you may contact Sylvie on 99044471 or email sylvie.smith@med.monash.edu.au.

Submission of research proposal related to clinical fieldwork education

A research proposal entitled 'Promoting positive clinical fieldwork education: determining significant predictors of health science students' successful fieldwork performance' has been submitted to the Ian Potter Foundation for potential funding. The authors of the grant are Dr Ted Brown, Dr Liz Molloy, Dr Maryam Zoghi, Mr Brett Williams, Dr Lisa McKenna, Ms Pamela Kirke, Dr Karen Stagnitti and Ms Anita Hamilton. This is a multi-professional and cross-university submission. The purpose of this study is to investigate potential predictors that contribute to successful clinical fieldwork across multiple healthcare professions. The research will only progress if funded. We will inform you regarding this outcome and seek your interest in participating if the application is successful. Participation will be voluntary and entail the completion of a short standardised questionnaire. For questions about the study, contact Ted Brown at ted.brown@med.monash.edu.au.

Welcome to all 2007 students

The 2007 academic year is now well underway. We welcome back our second- and third-year students and particularly welcome our new group of first-year students who have enrolled and will be attending their orientation day on Thursday, 21 February.

Our ENTER cut-off score for 2007 entry was 86.15. The cohort also includes a group of mature aged students.

International student opportunities

Interplast funded Hand Therapy Program – Bangladesh

Interplast Australia has for the first time approved funding to support a Hand Therapy Program in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In May this year, two local occupational therapists/hand therapists (Jane Aarons and Alison Hardman) will be funded to join the surgical team who volunteer their time to developing countries. The aim of the program is to provide basic training to the locally trained occupational therapy students in the management of simple hand conditions commonly encountered at their rehabilitation hospital. The educational program will focus on prevention of burns contracture, scar management, basic principles of splinting, wound healing and oedema control. Therapy training will ideally follow on from the surgery performed by the volunteer surgical team with a long-term goal of reducing poverty and suffering associated with lack of resources and education.

It is planned that Monash University occupational therapy students will be given the opportunity to be involved once the program becomes established. It is envisaged OT students will assist in enriching and developing the program further whilst completing an international fieldwork placement.

Alice in South Africa

One of our first-year students in 2006, Alice Buzgau, spent some of her holidays working in South Africa. Alice has written:

I volunteered to observe occupational therapists at Astra School in Cape Town, South Africa. At Astra, 200 students were physically disabled and another 100 students had intellectual or behavioural learning difficulties. Half of the students spoke English and half spoke Afrikaans, which sometimes lead to a language barrier and was a major frustration for myself.

My first experience of Astra was at the school assembly. I was overwhelmed by the spirit around me, the children were full of enthusiasm and smiles despite their obvious physical and/or intellectual disabilities. These children came from low-socio economic backgrounds where crime, HIV and poverty were major part of their lives. Their beautiful voices stirred my heart as they sang worship songs; they then said the Lord's prayer and listened to the principal give a motivational speech which almost brought me to tears. He described the unfortunate history of the African people and how as students they have an amazing opportunity to learn emphasising that "people may think that



children with special needs are not an asset to society, but you are valuable and we can all make a difference in Africa. It could start with a prayer, a dream, or a goal. We should all ask ourselves what does God want me to do for Africa?" The assembly ended with the national anthem; the children sung as loud as they could, clapping and swaying. In a world falling apart around them, these South African children with special needs could still sing.

My time at Astra was an amazing experience and an eye-opener to differences in cultural and social issues. The occupational therapists at Astra do amazing work, especially considering the lack of resources. At times the OTs had to take on other roles due to a lack of allied health professionals. I was also impressed by their remarkable effort of improvising for equipment and funding. For example, children waiting years for wheelchairs were compensated with a baby seat on wheels.

As a volunteer I had the time to bring joy to these children. Spending time with them, listening and taking them swimming are treats that the staff did not have the time to do. It didn't take me long to fall in love with Africa and these beautiful children. They taught me to respect and accept others even though they are different, even though their life story may be unbearable. I have learned a lot from them.

I also spent three weeks volunteering at Ebyown Children's Village in Johannesburg, where orphaned or abandoned children suffer from HIV or other disabilities. The stories these children have, the things they've been through, the issues they face every day can be so shocking to us westerners. We may choose to turn a blind eye by saying "Oh, that's terrible" then continue on with our lives. There were days when I felt overwhelmed or depressed by what I



had seen and heard. However, seeing the children's beautiful faces the next day, bringing them a smile, hearing them laugh definitely made it all worthwhile and a rewarding experience. I want to encourage OT students to make the most of their summers and vacations, volunteering in different cultural settings. My time in South Africa has also impassioned me to do more for these children. I hope I can go back as a qualified occupational therapist to make a difference in the growing pandemic of HIV.

I would like to thank Ruth Watson, Renee Rischmuller, all the OT staff at Astra and St Josephines and also Rebecca Allen and Pamela Kirke who made this opportunity and amazing experience possible.