We have moved...

In June, CDDHV staff packed up all their belongings and headed East to Notting Hill, close to Monash University, Clayton Campus.

Our new home provides exciting opportunities for collaboration with University colleagues as we share the building with Monash University’s Department of General Practice, the Primary Care Research Unit, the Monash Clinical Psychology Centre, the Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology and the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

Facilities in the new premises include a lecture theatre and teaching rooms and the building is also home to a number of students including undergraduate medical students on rotation with the Department of General Practice, and postgraduate clinical and research students from each of the Centres based in the building.

Our new clinic rooms are well equipped and designed with viewing rooms attached to further increase our capacity to educate students of all health disciplines in the area of developmental disability health.

The CDDHV is excited about the educational, clinical and research opportunities that the move has created and we are looking forward to further collaboration with our colleagues across the health disciplines within the School of Primary Health Care.

Our new address is:
Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria
School of Primary Health Care
Monash University
Building 1
270 Ferntree Gully Rd
Notting Hill VICTORIA 3168
T: +61 3 8575 2300
F: + 61 3 8575 2270
www.cddh.monash.org

Adaptation of the Victorian Population Health Survey for use with Adults with Intellectual Disability (VPHS-ID)

Dr Teresa Iacono from the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria (CDDHV) is leading a research team conducting a pilot study that will ensure people with intellectual disabilities can contribute to information about population health. Perhaps at no other time has the need for valid health measurement tools been more important for people with intellectual disabilities living in the community. Economic and political forces are such that the allocation of resources across community groups are driven by an evidence base (Sheldon, 2005). In recognition of such international cont.
and national trends, the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS) has developed and conducted the Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS) with the general population. People with intellectual disabilities, however, were not part of the population group. Given the health disparities experienced by this group (Beange, Lennox & Parmenter, 1999), Disability Services, DHS funded the current project to ensure the policy and service needs of people with intellectual disabilities could be represented.

The current study aims to develop, validate and pilot a survey for use with people with intellectual disabilities that will allow meaningful comparison of findings with information from the VPHS about the general population. Having adapted the VPHS for use with Adults with Intellectual Disabilities (VPHS - ID) researchers are ready to embark on the next stage of the project. A pilot study of 50 adults with intellectual disabilities living in shared supported accommodation services in Southern and Grampians regions of DHS is planned to begin in October 2007. The VPHS-ID contains questions about a person’s use of health services, nutrition, asthma, physical activity/inactivity, mental health, and social factors, to name a few. Issues about the use of proxy responders for adults with intellectual disability are also of interest given that support workers will answer the VPHS-ID on behalf of people in their care. Validation of the survey and methodology requires that some data be collected from people with intellectual disabilities themselves; this will be done by way of health checks and wearing of a movement sensor for one week. It is anticipated that the VPHS-ID will be a valid measure to document the health and wellbeing of the Victorian population of people with an intellectual disability. Such information will be bench-marked against data from the general population to inform policy and service development.

The principal researcher, Dr Teresa Iacono is working with team members from Monash University, Stella Koritsas and Alexandra Phillips (CDDHV), School of Primary Health Care, Professor Helen Keleher (Department of Health Sciences). External collaboration and members of the research consortium are Associate Professor Jeff Walkley (Department of Medical Sciences) and Dr Keith McVilly (Division of Disability Studies), RMIT University. The team has been working closely with DHS, Disability Services and the authors of the VPHS.

A New Medicare Item for Health Assessments for People with Intellectual Disability

A/Prof Bob Davis

After much anticipation 2 new Medicare items for general practitioners for the health assessment of people with intellectual disability came into effect in July 2007. Items 718 and 719 will remunerate GPs $199.60 and $222.05 for clinic and home assessments respectively. These items recognise the health vulnerabilities of this group and the proven benefit of having systematic review of health problems and also allow GPs to work with practice nurses. Information about these new items is now on the Medicare website http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs. Our research has shown that this group sees their GP about 5 times a year but usually for immunisation or medication review. Doctors need more time to fully assess and manage some of the complex issues found in this patient group.

These new health assessment items will encourage GPs to review health problems in people with intellectual disability identified in the consensus statement available at www.iassid.org/pdf/healthguidelines-2002.pdf. Areas to be covered in the item include dental health, hearing, vision, nutrition, bladder and bowel function, medications, immunisations, daily living skills, breast, testicular examinations and PAP smears (when these apply), dysphagia, vitamin D deficiency, mental health review, epilepsy status, thyroid (in Down syndrome), sexual health and review for signs of abuse. Resources like the Comprehensive Health Assessment Program (CHAP) (Lennox et al.) are currently being used by government and non-government agencies to collect health information and can be used in conjunction with these new items. At the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria we are already working with practice nurses and GPs to develop training packages and resource materials to support general practitioners and practice nurses in the roll out of this new item. Useful materials including information packages on the different causes of intellectual disability and blank sheets for patient held records are available at our website www.cddh.monash.org

Meet the staff

Dr Sylvia Bowden MBBS FRACGP

Sylvia has worked as a General Practitioner since 1982 where she began her medical career as part of a multidisciplinary team in community health. She currently works as a GP in a private practice in the Inner Melbourne area. Sylvia joined the CDDHV team in 2005 where she worked on a research project examining medical handover for people with developmental disabilities moving from institutional care to community residences. She is now employed part time as a GP educator which includes undergraduate medical teaching and working on other projects.

Sylvia interest in women’s health and has seen her employed as a Medical Officer at the North East Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) and a Shared Care Affiliate Practitioner for the Royal Women’s Hospital, the Mercy Maternity Hospital, the Northern Hospital and Sunshine Hospital. She was a board member of the NW Melbourne Division of General Practice from 2003 to 2005 and an active committee member of the Down Syndrome Association of Victoria for a number of years.

Sylvia also has a strong interest in Developmental Disability Medicine and hopes to work with Victorian Divisions of General Practice in order to increase the learning opportunities for GPs regarding the health inequalities experienced by people with developmental disability.

The IASSID Health SIRG 2007 – Prato, Italy

The CDDHV hosted the IASSID Health SIRG meeting in Prato, Italy between 21-23 May, 2007. This was attended by over fifty of our international medical colleagues from the Netherlands, Ireland, France, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Israel, Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, England, Scotland and Wales. The Tuscan setting of the venue of the Monash Centre in Prato provided a fantastic back drop for the quality of the presentations and the active discussion that ensued from the round tables. The theme for the conference was Chronic Disease Management, with keynotes providing a framework for the discussion of the round tables.

Health problems of people with intellectual disability often fall into the category of chronic disease so the conference had a practical focus for those of us trying to improve health outcomes. Dr Ellen Nolte from the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine presented on her findings from a review of the management of chronic disease by health systems in the developed world. We could see that the changing focus of health care systems away from models built around acute hospital care brought with it opportunities to use this process to develop structures that better service the health care needs of people with intellectual disability. Dr David O’Hara presented on developing models of chronic disease management and was able to show some ways where new technologies could be used as tools to facilitate health management in the challenging group of the more mobile and integrated people with mild to moderate levels of intellectual disability.

The CDDHV continues to take a lead role both nationally and internationally in looking at giving people with intellectual disability better lives through better health.

Enjoying the facilities at Monash University Prato Centre,
Left: Ms Stella Koritsas, Ms Jenny Butler, and Dr Helen Beange
Above: Dr Deborah Elliott, A/Prof Bob Davis, A/Prof Hélène Ouellette-Kuntz
6th European Congress on Mental Health and Intellectual Disability

The European Association for Mental Health and Intellectual Disability in collaboration with the University of Zagreb, Croatia hosted the 6th European Congress on mental health and intellectual disability.

The CDDHV’s Dr Teresa Iacono, Dr Jennifer Torr and Ms Jennifer Galea and their collaborators in mental health projects from Scope, Dr Nick Hagiliassis and Mark DiMarco attended, presenting a total of four papers and one poster. The congress was attended by delegates from 32 countries and provided a unique opportunity to hear various perspectives and discuss issues associated with intellectual disability, mental health and wellbeing.

There were a number of streams, which enabled us to attend presentations ranging from pharmacology and diagnosis to support worker/carer issues. There were also opportunities to see and hear about the practices in European countries, their experiences of deinstitutionalisation, direct service provision and integration. Much of the research was relevant to the CDDHV clinical work, education program development and our research. Areas of particular interest included Alzheimer’s disease and Down syndrome, challenging behaviour and its effects on direct support staff, counselling people with intellectual disabilities, barriers to accessing specialist and generic mental health services, and multidisciplinary approaches to developmental disability mental health.

Keynotes were delivered by leaders in the field of mental health in intellectual disability. Professor Nigel Beail presented his work on psychotherapy, Professor Tony Holland on psychiatric research, Professor Bill Lindsay on sex offending and Emeritus Professor Anton Dosen on the developmental perspective in mental health assessment.

Pre-congress workshops ranged in content and audience, including the application of psychodynamic intervention with people with intellectual disability, psychopharmacotherapy, dementia and autism spectrum disorders.

The conference allowed members of CDDHV to inform the European community of the clinical, educational, advocacy and research work that is being undertaken here in Victoria. We hope it will lead to collaborative opportunities both within Australia and internationally.

The next European congress will be in Amsterdam in 2009.

Alzheimer’s Disease and Down Syndrome – Pathways of Care

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dr Jenny Torr and Dr Teresa Iacono from CDDHV Monash University, and Associate Professor Chris Bigby from La Trobe University are conducting this study.

We are seeking parents or other family members, or paid support workers. We are interested in finding out about the issues faced by people who provide daily care to adults with Down syndrome who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

If you would like to find out more about the study ….

Contact Dr Teresa Iacono by phone on 03 8575-2259, or email: teresa.iacono@med.monash.edu.au.

For all newsletter inquiries please contact the editor Jenny Galea on 8575 2262 or email Jenny.Galea@med.monash.edu.au.