Welcome to the first issue of SPHC e-News and to the beginning of another academic year which promises to be as busy and exciting as 2007. Having moved from our historical home in East Bentleigh to new premises in Notting Hill... the gateway to Monash..., this newsletter coincides with the announcement that our School building will be officially opened by the State Minister for Health, Daniel Andrews, on May 15 and that we are already expanding to take additional space at 270 Ferntree Gully Rd, to be shared with our Faculty's Centre for Medical and Health Science Education (CMHSE). This will provide valuable space for research, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, including teaching of international medical graduates under Neil Spike’s leadership. In addition to housing General Practice, the largest Department in the School, this site now houses 3 Centres: the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria (CDDHV); Child Abuse Research Australia (CARA); and the Collaborative Centre for Gambling Research and Treatment, together with Clinical Psychology, and the Units in Multicultural Health, Ageing, Obesity, and Chronic Disease Management. Coupled with the other branches of the School at Peninsula (Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice, Health Science, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy), and at Caulfield (Social Work), the School makeup represents, in an academic environment, a model for integrating teaching, training and research in all aspects of Primary Health Care - unique in the Australian context. With over 150 full-time equivalent staff (excluding sessional and honorary) and over 1000 students, our School represents the largest growing entity in the Faculty. Student numbers in the School increased from 850 in 2006 to 982 in 2007, a 15% increase, whilst the Peninsula Campus numbers increased from 387 to 543, a 40% increase in the same period, with staff numbers also increasing from 130 to 159. Further increases at Peninsula will take total numbers in the School to over 1200 students in 2008. As our undergraduate numbers reach capacity at Peninsula, we are seeing the emergence of new postgraduate programs and substantial research growth, including HDR enrolments which are already numbering 30 in the School. Research income from
competitive grants rose from $2.7m in 2006 to $3.1m in 2007, exceeding the target of a 10% p.a. increase. There is however no room for complacency.

I can truly say it is an exciting time to be at Monash. We have a new Dean, Professor Steve Wesselingh, who is extremely supportive of Primary Care and a new and visionary Chancellor, Dr Alan Finkel, who was installed at a magnificent ceremony on March 13 and who also happens to Chair the Advisory Board of CARA in our School. The developments in our School parallel the spectacular growth in the bioscience area at Monash with the opening of the Centre for Synchrotron Science in 2007 and the completion of the magnificent STRIP 2 and 3 buildings at the end of 2008.

However, buildings alone do not create success. It requires people dedicated to fulfil the ambitions and visions of the senior leadership, who are also internally driven to succeed and achieve to the maximum of their ability. I am pleased to say that our School has an abundance of such talent. This was demonstrated in 2007 with a number of staff taking our prestigious awards including NHMRC Ethics (Dr Teresa Iacono), VC Teaching Award and National Carrick Award (Dr Jane Tracy), Carrick Award for Academic Administration (Ms Julieanne Tilbury), Thelma Caldwell Award for Research in OT (Dr Ted Brown), NHMRC Post Doc Fellowships (Craig Fry, Natalie DeMorgan), NICS Fellowship (A/Prof Danielle Mazza). In addition, in 2007 our staff produced 102 refereed papers and wrote or edited 14 texts.

2008 is already shaping up to be another stellar year of achievement (see opposite for details of the Sylvia Docker Award recipient, Ms Rebecca Allen, for her outstanding contribution to the field of Occupational Therapy). With continued augmentation of the School as a whole, several high-profile projects and key research collaborations coming to the fore within the next 12 months, I look forward to continued growth and success and to reporting our journey in subsequent editions of this newsletter.

I conclude with a special vote of thanks to Katy Symmons who has taken on the task of editing our regular e-Newsletter.

Prof Leon Piterman AM
Head of School

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Dr Keith Nelson

Keith completed his PhD in Chemistry at Monash (platinum based anti-cancer therapeutics) and then joined CSIRO as a research manager. He then moved into a sales role at a pharmaceutical company and after two years moved into a business development role and finally a science and technology management role. After two years in Science and Technology Management, Keith took up a role at the CRC for Cardiac Technology as Deputy Director and Business Development Manager.

In 1999, Keith and his family (Wife: Lucinda, Children: Thomas 6yrs, Georgia 4yrs, Zoe 3yrs and Hamish 18mths) relocated to Melbourne from Sydney. Keith then worked in business development roles with Melbourne University and then RMIT where he spent the last 5 years prior to starting at Monash.

Keith and family live in the Dandenongs on 4.5 acres and have an extensive orchard including 30 olive trees and 24 grape vines (Shiraz, Cabernet, Merlot), 1 horse, 1 pony, 1 dog, 3 cats and 14 chickens.

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School Office Staff:

Faye Alphonso - Manager, Finance and Administration Operations
Tel: 8575 2210
Marion Daniels - Receptionist
Tel: 8575 2200
Jenny Green - PA to HOS and HOD
Tel: 8575 2213
Joy Karton - Administrative Officer, Finance and HR (Peninsula Campus)
Tel: 8575 2237
Terri Mathias - Administrative Officer, Finance and HR
Tel: 8575 2209
Jenny McGrath - Administrative Officer Finance (Peninsula Campus)
Tel: 9904 4365
Keith Nelson - School Manager
Tel: 8575 2234
Susan Redman - Administrative Officer, Academic Support (Peninsula Campus)
Tel: 9904 4111
Katy Symmons - Communications and Conference Manager
Tel: 8575 2214
Angela Tucker - Administrative Officer, General and Student
Tel: 9904 4466
Helen Vella - Senior Administrative Officer, Graduate Studies
Tel: 8575 2216
Silvia Vogel - Educational Courseware Developer
Tel: 8575 2218
Kate Warner - Administrative Officer, Finance and HR (Peninsula Campus)
Tel: 99044369
Annabel Whitby - Administrative Officer and Conference Coordinator
Tel: 8575 2215
Awards

Recognition for OT lecturer
20 February 2008

Sylvia Docker Award: Rebecca Allen, Senior Lecturer, Department of Occupational Therapy

Department of Occupational Therapy Senior Lecturer Rebecca Allen, has received the Sylvia Docker Award. The award is the highest recognition given to occupational therapists in Australia to honour those who have outstanding contributions to occupational therapy.

Ms Allen’s colleague Pamela Kirke, said the whole Occupational Therapy Department is delighted for Rebecca and proud of the department’s achievements.

“One given only five awards are made across Australia in each decade we can be proud of the fact that we now have two recipients of the Sylvia Docker award in the department at Monash University.” Ms Kirke said.

Head of Department, Associate Professor Louise Farnworth was awarded the Sylvia Docker lectureship in 2003.

School News & Achievements

Department of Health Science

Dr Charles Livingstone has been invited to South Australia later this month by Dr Tim Costello and Nick Xenophon, MP to speak at a forum on EGMs (‘pokies’) and discuss plans for a proposed Productivity Commission review of EGMs. Charles has received considerable media attention in Victoria and interstate this year, following the release of his report, The Relevance and Role of Gaming Machine Games and Game Features on the Play of Problem Gamblers, prepared for the Independent Gambling Authority of South Australia.

Professor Helen Keleher, Dr Emma Ashton and Dr Ben Smith with Professor Henry Krum of the Department of Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine were awarded a Faculty grant under the Strategic Grants Scheme to conduct a study: Nutritional, physical activity and social isolation evaluation of an older population at high-risk of heart failure.

Craig Fry has passed his PhD, and been awarded a three-year post-doctoral fellowship from the National Health and Medical Research Council and a small MERC e-research to pursue his research program in public health ethics.

Dr Omar Abdulwadud has been invited to join the editorial team of the new Cochrane Public Health Review Group to be led by Professor Elizabeth Waters from the School of Population Health, University of Melbourne. Omar is also invited to attend a two day workshop on the 4th and 5th of March 2008, with the proposed Public Health Review Group editors and the Cochrane Public Health Methods Advisory Group in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The Workshop will address several pertinent methodological and process issues related to Public Health reviews. Omar will be leading a session on “Meeting the needs of and involving people from low and middle income countries” in the workshop.

Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria (CDDHV) - successful in 2008 Monash Strategic Grants Scheme

Director of Research at the CDDHV, Dr Teresa Iacono, Director of Teaching, Dr Jane Tracy and researcher Ms Jennifer Galea were successful in obtaining funding through the Monash University Strategic Grants Scheme. The project, titled “A Comparison of Inter-Professional Education Strategies Using a Video Case Scenario of Developmental Disability” is a collaboration between CDDHV and other departments within the School of Primary Health Care (SPHC). The other investigators are Drs Ted Brown and Rachael McDonald (Occupational Therapy), Professor Jenny Keating (Physiotherapy), Dr Belinda Lewis (Health Science), Mr Brett Williams (Community Emergency Health & Paramedic Practice) and Ms Katrina Recoche (School of Nursing & Midwifery).

This project takes advantage of a unique teaching initiative in Developmental Disability Health within the SPHC and aims to examine the impact of clinical video scenarios on

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the attitudes and learning of students involved in the Inter-professional Education component of their undergraduate degrees.

This research will contribute to the emerging evidence base for inter-professional education. It will also enable CDDHV staff to gather valuable feedback about the impact of the video scenarios of people with developmental disabilities interacting with various health care professionals. These videos form a key component of a multimedia online teaching package created for medical and allied health students. The package is being developed as a result of support received from the Monash University Faculty of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. It has led to a strong collaboration between CDDHV, people with a disability and their significant others, and representatives from the various allied health departments in the SPHC.

It is hoped that these collaborations will build strong links between departments within the SPHC for teaching and research, as well as increasing the profile and understanding of Developmental Disability Health among our Faculty’s students of the health care professions.

**Department of Physiotherapy**

The Dept of Physiotherapy celebrated its first PhD graduate in December 2007. Dr Natalie de Morton’s PhD thesis was titled “Measuring mobility and the effects of exercise for older acute medical patients” and was conducted under the principal supervision of Professor Jenny Keating, Head of the Department of Physiotherapy. Co-supervisors were Dr Megan Davidson and Dr David Berlowitz.

The development of the DEMMI, an advanced method for measuring the physical ability of older people, was the focus of this research. This instrument is quick and easy to use and interpret and supports and advances a modern approach of encouraging full physical ability across the lifespan. It has been incorporated into usual clinical care in hospitals in Australia and overseas and plans are in place with international collaborators to translate the DEMMI into other languages in 2008. The outcomes of this research have also resulted in changes to the provision of physiotherapy services in several Victorian acute hospitals to achieve better outcomes from exercise programs for older acute medical inpatients.

**Kylie Wesley** (3rd year student in 2008) has been awarded the South Eastern Palliative Care Scholarship for her systematic review of physiotherapy services for palliative care

**Sue Slade** was awarded an NHMRC doctoral scholarship commencing in 2008

**Narelle Watson**, doctoral student, has been awarded a PCHRED fellowship commencing in 2008.

**Department of Social Work**

Dr Philip Mendes recently addressed a lunchtime seminar hosted by Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Centre on “Fighting the Drugs War: The role of prohibitionist groups in Australian illicit drugs policy”. In late March, he will be presenting a paper to the Deakin University Community Development and Ecology Conference on “Community Development, Climate Change and the Future of the Welfare State”.

**Conference Activity**

The 13th Ottawa International Conference on Clinical Competence was held in Melbourne from 5th to 8th March 2008. There were 1000 delegates in attendance, from the UK, Europe, Asia, Canada and USA, with Australia, particularly Monash University, well represented. The three main themes of the conference were: Life of the Patient; Life of the Professional; and Life of the Programme.

The academic and honorary academic staff from the Department of General Practice were involved in a range of presentations, listed below:

**Preconference workshops:**
Blueprinting: how to do it best (Neil Spike and Gordon Page)

**Symposia:**
The use of mini - CEX as a summative assessment (Gordon Page, Heather Alexander and Neil Spike)

**Long paper presentations:**
The bridging of medical education and training in Australia (Gordon Page, Neil Spike and Mark Rowe).

**Short paper presentations:**
Outcomes of mindfulness-based health enhancement program for medical students at Monash University (Craig Hassed)
The impact of language on OSCE performance: a discourse analysis approach (Marisa Cordella and Neil Spike)
A theoretical model for community based medical education for undergraduate clinical training in the generalist discipline (George Somers)
5 year experience of a postgraduate diploma course in psychological medicine (Lam Tai Pong)

**SPHC e-News contact**

Submissions and enquiries to:
Katy Symmons
T: 8575 2214
F: 8575 2233
E: katy.symmons@med.monash.edu.au