Welcome to the September issue of Research e-news. This quarter, researchers were awarded grants from beyondblue: the national depression initiative, Alzheimer’s Australia and the Department of Health and Ageing. Congratulations are extended to everyone who was awarded a grant and to those who received Scholarships or had their PhD passed.

Postgraduate Research Scholarship applications were recently announced. This includes the Australian Postgraduate Award, the Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry) and the Monash Graduate Scholarship. The closing date for applications is October 31. Visit http://www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/scholarships/ for more information or contact the Postgraduate coordinator in your Department.

Featured in “Meet the Staff” are Jo Mitchell, Jane Tracy, Kerry Brydon, Tom Jeavons, Rebecca Scholes and Rhona Macdonald. These profiles will provide readers with a good understanding and appreciation of the range of research that is being conducted within in the School.

For contributions to the December issue of the newsletter, contact me on 8575 2251 or by email stella.koritsas@med.monash.edu.au

Happy reading

Stella Koritsas
Editor

Grants Awarded

Department of General Practice

The cancer support group program for survivors of gynaecological cancer and their family members. Department of Health & Ageing, Building Cancer Support Networks Grant Program. Markovic M & Wray N. $80,154.


Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria


Publications

Department of General Practice


Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria


Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies

**Meet the Staff**

**Department of General Practice**

**Ms Jo Mitchell**

Jo Mitchell has been working as a research fellow in the Department of General Practice for 1½ years. She recently received an NHMRC public health scholarship and commenced her PhD. Jo has a varied background having worked in the sport industry for 12 years in marketing and media before moving into an athlete counselling program. Inspired by the direction her counselling work was taking, Jo moved from London to Adelaide to train as a clinical psychologist.

Since moving to Monash University, Jo's research focus has been on the development and implementation of internet based treatment programs for mental health disorders such as panic disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder.

Jo's PhD research also looks at online interventions but with a focus on health promotion, not treatment. Her PhD draws together theory from positive psychology, internet delivery and health promotion. Looking specifically at interventions that help increase personal wellbeing, health and happiness in an adult community population. She is also working on a related project with the Australian Institute of Sport, using the internet to enhance personal wellbeing in athletes and university students.

**Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria**

**Dr Jane Tracy**

Jane has been with the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria (CDDHV) since its inception in 1998 and prior to that had worked in the Monash Developmental Disability Unit and the Paediatric Developmental Disability and Spina Bifida Clinics at Monash Medical Centre. She is a General Practitioner, now working exclusively in Developmental Disability Medicine, and has an adult son with developmental disabilities and therefore has both a professional and personal commitment to the area. Jane is the Educational Director of the CDDHV and greatly enjoys teaching undergraduate medical students. She and Dr Teresa Iacono recently submitted a paper to an international journal on a joint research project in which they looked at the impact of a particular teaching session on the attitudes of medical students towards people with a disability. During her time at the Centre Jane completed a postgraduate degree in higher education (GCHE) in order to enhance her capacity to work with other Centre staff in producing high quality teaching sessions and resource materials in Developmental Disability Medicine for undergraduate and postgraduate students. In 2005 Dr Tracy and her colleague Dr Mary Burbidge collaborated with other CDDHV staff, people with disabilities and Monash University's Centre for Learning and Teaching Support to produce the Centre's new CDROM teaching resource, Healthcare Scenarios in Developmental Disability Medicine. This interactive multimedia product has learning objectives in attitudinal, knowledge and skills domains and has proved to be a very useful teaching tool complementing current teaching sessions. In 2004 Jane was awarded a Faculty Teaching Award and in 2006 was nominated for the Carrick Award for Australian University Teaching.

**Department of Social Work**

**Ms Kerry Brydon**

Kerry Brydon joined the Department of Social Work in 2003 after spending more than 20 years in the child protection field. Initially on joining the Department of Social Work she coordinated Distance Education fieldwork. From mid 2004 she assumed the coordinating role for the Bachelor of Social Work offered in Singapore. This is the first time that an Australian University has offered a social work degree offshore and the programme is so far proving successful. With in excess of 40 students enrolled in the programme it is both challenging and stimulating. The degree is wholly taught in Singapore with Monash staff offering twice yearly workshops and local tutors offering weekly classes. The coordination role entails some teaching in Singapore programme and coordination of the skills and fieldwork subjects along with student support and monitoring. As well the role includes forming links with the local social services sector, working towards full accreditation of the degree with the Australian Association of Social Workers and developing future offshore offerings for Singapore.
Monash Kerry teaches in the skills programme and is also undertaking PhD studies to critically review and evaluate the offshore degree with particular reference to the fieldwork subject.

**Department of Health Sciences**

**Mr Tom Jeavons**

Indoor environmental exposures and their association with respiratory health problems have been the focus of research carried out by Tom Jeavons from the newly created Department of Health Science within the School of Primary Health Care at the Peninsula Campus.

He has recently returned from the Healthy Buildings 2006 Conference of the International Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate held in June at Lisbon, Portugal. The conference, with over 700 participants from 52 countries, provided a useful forum for medical researchers, building engineers, environmental chemists and microbiologists to discuss current issues related to health and the indoor environment.

His paper on Microbial Exposure in the Home Environment and Poorly-controlled Childhood Asthma described a case-control study of 34 asthmatic children in Melbourne which was nested within a randomised-controlled trial (RCT) of paediatric asthma best practice guidelines in general practice. The work involved collaborations between Monash University’s Department of Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine, the Department of General Practice and the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne, and the Centre for Public Health Research, at Massey University, NZ.

The cases were asthmatic children whose parents reported emergency treatment during the study period; the controls were asthmatic children who did not have emergency treatment matched with cases on the study arms of the RCT and by age. Although a significant statistical difference could not be demonstrated, cases had higher levels of exposure in bedrooms to airborne viable moulds, higher dust levels of a marker of fungal biomass (ergosterol), bacterial endotoxin, and house dust mite allergen (Der p1). Exposure to dust mite allergen, Der p1, was the strongest predictor of asthmatic children requiring emergency treatment (OR = 2.32); some association was seen between exposure to bacterial endotoxin and severe asthma (OR = 1.71).

More recently, Tom’s interest in exposure assessment has been extended to potential endotoxin exposures in recycled water used for domestic non-potable purposes. This is part of a much larger project involving the Department of Epidemiology & Preventative Medicine and CSIRO in the CRC for Water Quality and Treatment. Use of treated recycled water in domestic households is seen as a central component of future water management strategies but risk management currently focuses on microbial pathogens and research characterising potential exposure to endotoxin has not been performed previously in Australia.

**Department of Physiotherapy**

**Dr Rebecca Scholes**

Rebecca completed her Bachelor of Physiotherapy at the University of Melbourne in 1997. In 1998, Rebecca commenced work at St. Vincent’s Hospital, Melbourne as a Senior Physiotherapist in Cardiorespiratory Clinical Education. Rebecca completed her PhD focusing on prediction of pulmonary complications in patients following upper abdominal surgery in 2005 at the University of Melbourne. Rebecca is currently a Lecturer at Monash University in the newly established Monash Physiotherapy course where she co-ordinates the cardiorespiratory curriculum throughout the course and is currently undertaking the Graduate Certificate in Health Professional Education. Rebecca is also the Victorian Clinical Co-ordinator for the Australian Examining Committee for Overseas Physiotherapists (AECOP). This year, Rebecca was honoured to be awarded the title of “APA Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapist” as a reflection of her advance knowledge and expertise in this field. Rebecca is the inaugural recipient of this specialist title awarded by the Australian Physiotherapy Association. Rebecca is currently focusing on research into the virtual patient environment and multiprofessional education whilst concurrently developing Years 3 and 4 of the physiotherapy course curriculum.

**Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies**

**Ms Rhona Macdonald**

Rhona is a research assistant at the Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies (MUCAPS), Peninsula Campus, where she has worked since 2000. Originally employed as a Library Assistant at the State College of Victoria, Frankston from 1979 to 2000, Rhona feels priviledged to have witnessed and experienced the challenges and changes which have shaped the way in which information is delivered and consumed as a result of technology, the Internet and the World Wide Web.
At MUCAPS, Rhona manages the co-ordination and development of search strategies for research projects and reviews. She is the trials search co-ordinator for the Cochrane Prehospital and Emergency Health Field based at the Centre, and is information co-ordinator for the Australian Prehospital and Emergency Health Research Forum.

Rhona’s primary research interests are in knowledge management, information management and health informatics. However, now in the final stages of completing a Masters Degree in Library and Information Management, Rhona’s major areas of investigation have included online health information standards and models of delivery; perceived quality and usefulness (by lay persons) of health information on the Internet and, the impact of online health information on the doctor-patient relationship.

As Editorial Assistant for the Centre’s quarterly online Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care, Rhona organizes and manages a variety of tasks relating to the journal’s content, peer review process, web graphics and editorial support.

Upcoming Funding Opportunities

VicHealth Conference Support Scheme

Monash/King’s College London Research Travel Grants

The Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences Bridging Postdoctoral Fellowships

Faculty Travel Grants
Round 1 Travel Grants are usually advertised each year in October (for travel between 1 January and 31 July) in the weekly Medicine e-Bulletin http://www.med.monash.edu.au/intranet/research/grantschemes.html

Ian Potter Foundation General Grants and Travel & Conferences Program

Monash Postgraduate travel grants
Applications are accepted year round http://www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/scholarships/grants/postgradtravelgrants.html

Conference Activity

The Canadian Conference on Men’s Health
March 21-23 2007, Victoria, Canada http://www.menshealthcanada.ca/main.cfm?cid=177

AGOSCI 007 Licence to communicate

27th International Symposium on Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine

The American Occupational Therapy Association 87th Annual conference and Expo
April 20-23 2007, St. Louis, Missouri http://www.aota.org/nonmembers/area28/links/link01.asp

15th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine

2007 World Physical Therapy International Congress
June 2-6 2007, Vancouver, Canada http://www.wcpt.org/congress/index.php

28th Stress and Anxiety Research Society (STAR) conference

International Doctors’ Health Conference: Wellbeing

Hotlinks

http://www.healia.com/healia/index.jsp?

Healia is a health search engine that provides comprehensive online information for consumers, patients, health professionals and researchers.


A guide for GPs to learn how to use a core set of internet sites to find evidence based, clinical information. Written by A/Professor Peter Schattner and Karen Young for the Monash Division of General Practice

www.trauma-assist-online.org

Trauma Assist Online is a new website developed by Monash University and the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund. The website provides information about traumatic events, responses to trauma, self-care following exposure to trauma, and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The website also provides you with the opportunity to register for a research study conducted by a Monash University research team on the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
Congratulations to Rhian Parker whose PhD thesis titled “Negotiating the ‘normal’ body: women, doctors and cosmetic surgery” was accepted in July 2006.

Congratulations to Dr Jan Coles who was awarded the Vera Scantlebury Brown Research Scholarship in Maternal and Child Health 2006 for the further development of her PhD (women's health and the impact of childhood sexual violence on early mothering).

Brett Williams from the Centre for Ambulance and Paramedic Studies interviewed Dr Jane Tracy from the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria about developmental disability medicine, curriculum and clinical practice. The interview has been published in the Journal of Emergency Health Care (Volume 4, Issue 2). Visit http://www.jephc.com/full_article.cfm?content_id=366# for a transcript of the interview.

The Thelma Cardwell Foundation Award for Research and Education

We are delighted to announce that Dr Ted Brown (Senior Lecturer at Monash University) together with Dr Rachael McDonald (Lecturer in Paediatric Occupational Therapy Research, Institute of Child Health and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, NHS Trust, The Wolfson Centre, London, UK) and Dr Mei Hui, Associate Professor, School of Occupational Therapy, College of Medicine, National Taiwan University Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, together received this WFOT award at the congress. The award will fund a research project to examine attitudes and barriers to evidence-based practice and research utilisation among children's OTs who practice in Australia, UK and Taiwan. Congratulations Ted.

If you have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or are concerned you may have, then you are invited to register for the Trauma Assist Online research study. The study will investigate the effectiveness of internet delivery of a PTSD treatment program. The 10-week cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) treatment program is delivered via the internet with email support from a psychologist. This research follows on from the success of a similar Monash University research study - Panic Online - for the treatment of panic disorder.

The main eligibility requirements are that you reside in Australia, are aged 18 years or older, you have a primary diagnosis of PTSD (as assessed by one of our psychologists), and you have an email address and internet access. Participation in the study involves no financial outlay on your part. To register for the research study and/or view the information website go to www.trauma-assist-online.org.