News from Head of School

It has been a year of high activity and the School of Population Health has taken several further steps forward in research and coursework development. This final Newsletter for 2002 highlights many of the successes that SPH staff have achieved. Rob Carter has won a 5-year NHMRC Career Development award, 4 NHMRC Project Grants were awarded, and among those who were unsuccessful were 4 of our staff who were submitting for the first time as new investigators. In this most competitive of mechanisms, they received excellent critical appraisal of their work, and stand in good stead for success on resubmission next year. One of the 4 Australia-wide inaugural NHMRC Population Health Capacity Building Grants was awarded to an SPH-Cancer Council consortium.

On the course development side, there have been substantial steps forward. Our new Masters in Social Health and Masters in International Mental Health have been approved by Academic Board. There has been considerable planning and progress in our international health subject plans for 2003 and 2004 in collaboration with AIHI. Our newly created courses for Semester 8 and 9 medical students in Evidence-based Medicine and in Public Health in Medicine have been launched. Particular recognition should go to Don Campbell and David Dunt and their tireless committee members, tutors and helpers. Lori McLeod has kept the whole process under control and supported the academic staff in many ways. The Medical History Museum and its curator, Ann Brothers, have now formally become part of SPH through the CSHS. With the appointment of a new academic in medical history in the New Year, we look forward to an expanded role of the Museum in many aspects of research and education.

The Vaccine and Immunisation Research Group (VIRGO) has been busy planning for a number of major studies in 2003, including a clinical trial in adolescents of the recently publicised vaccine against human papilloma virus, the most important cause of cervical cancer. I hope to be able to make an announcement soon of another important SPH development in the vaccine development area, though not related to an infectious disease.

Our plans for the co-location to 207 Bouverie are nearly completed and we will go to tender early in the New Year hoping to commence fit-out works in February and a move in early May, just before the rain comes and the roof starts leaking again at Malvina Terrace (CSHS)! EBU staff should be moving to 723 Swanston St shortly, so it’s finally coming together.

I hope you all have a peaceful and relaxing Christmas break, and I look forward with you all to a 2003 which will be as successful as this year has been. My thanks to all of you for all your commitment and professionalism, and your enthusiastic embrace of the changes that we are making. Particular thanks go to Maggie Lenaghan for the superb Newsletter production!

Professor Terry Nolan

What’s inside…
New Grants/Awards/Contracts – Postgraduate News – Staff News
Staff Out and About – Upcoming Events - Publications – Staff Profile – and lots more…

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NEW GRANTS/AWARDS/CONTRACTS

Clare Delany, and Emma Kowal were both recently awarded NHMRC PhD scholarships and Mark Lutschini, was awarded with a NHMRC Indigenous Research PhD scholarship.

Dr Shyamali Dharmage, Epidemiology & Biostatistics, has been awarded $40,000 by the Career Establishment Grant Scheme of The University of Melbourne to conduct Stage 1 of the 35-year follow-up of the Tasmanian Asthma Study, which will be the second largest population based longitudinal study of asthma in the world. She was also awarded the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust Grant ($20,000) in collaboration with Prof John Hopper and Dr Mark Jenkins by the Victorian Asthma Foundation to continue the work of the TAS.

Dr Jane Pirkis, Centre for Health Program Evaluation, has received three grants in recent months:

- Australian Research Council for a study examining journalistic news values, and medical, health professional and lay discourses on suicide and mental illness; $175,000 (with Prof R Warwick Blood, University of Canberra, and Prof Graham Martin, University of Queensland).
- National Health and Medical Research Council for an evaluation of the introduction of Case Conferences for Consultant Psychiatrists as new item numbers on the Medicare Benefits Schedule; $99,800 (with A/Prof Philip Burgess, Mental Health Research Institute).
- Australian Rotary Health Research Fund for a study examining the relationship between media reporting of suicide and actual suicidal behaviour; $50,000 (with A/Prof Philip Burgess, Mental Health Research Institute).

Dr Dorota Gertig, Centre for Genetic Epidemiology, was awarded NHMRC funding for a new research project: Epidemiology of Hereditary Haemochromatosis. Hereditary Haemochromatosis (HH) is a common genetic disorder of iron overload that results in a wide spectrum of disease, varying from non-specific symptoms to severe damage to liver, heart, pancreas and joints from iron deposition. It is easily treatable by regular blood donation, and population-based screening for HH has therefore been advocated. In this study the aim is to address gaps in the existing data on HH regarding dietary and lifestyle factors that contribute to the variable clinical picture of HH. The study will be based on the Melbourne Collaborative Cohort Study and will provide important data on the risk factors that influence variability in clinical presentation and the association of the two principal mutations. (See also Uni News 18 November 2002)

This work stems from a report commissioned by the Department of Human Services entitled “Genetic screening for hereditary haemochromatosis from a public health perspective: a review of the scientific literature and major issues”. A summary of this work has been accepted for publication in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health and will appear in the next issue (Volume 26, Issue 6).

The Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit has won a 2002 Victorian Public Health Award.

The award is in the category: Public Health Development. This category is open to teams, organisations and partnerships who have identified public health needs and have responded by building capacity to meet those needs. The criteria were:

- Leadership and strategic approach
- Originality and innovation
- Relevance and applicability
- Capacity to enhance public health practice
- Strategic partnerships and alliances
- Use of an evidence based approach
- Quality and peer review processes
- Evaluation plan
- Achievement of objectives and/or health outcomes
- Communication and dissemination of findings

Associate Professor Rob Carter, Program Evaluation Unit, was awarded an NHMRC Population Health Career Development Award.

A group led by Dr Jisheng Cui, Centre for Genetic Epidemiology, Prof John Hopper, Centre for Genetic Epidemiology, and Prof Stephen Harrap, Dept of Physiology, has been successful in obtaining a 3 year NHMRC Project Grant ($70,000 per year) for analysing genetic and environmental risk factors and their interactions for common cancers and cardiovascular disease. This funding is due to commence in 2003. Jisheng Cui is also one of the chief investigators in Dorota Gertig's recent NHMRC grant.
POSTGRADUATE NEWS

2003 SPH Postgraduate Programs Highlights
Postgraduate Enrolments increased by an impressive 20% between 2001-2002. Part of the brief of the establishment of the School of Population Health was to increase postgraduate enrolments, and this increase amounts to an excellent start.

The new suite of Social Health courses, and the new Master of International Mental Health were approved by University Council on 14th November. The APC process is complex and rigorous, with each course approved by 6 committees. Congratulations to the CSHS and CIMH!

A variety of new subjects were approved from SHU, AIHI. These will enhance the number of subjects available in the MPH. The flexibility of the MPH has been also strengthened by the introduction of specialisations in international health, primary health care and social health. These add to the specialisations already available in epidemiology, biostatistics, women's health, program evaluation, health economics, and economic evaluation.

CSHS ‘Conversazione’
On November 11th the Centre for the Study of Health and Society Postgraduate Departmental Group hosted its annual Conversazione. At this informal symposium, staff and students of the Centre presented updates of their research in an atmosphere promoting cross-pollination of ideas and experiences. This year’s Conversazione was highly successful with more than half of the Centre’s 50 postgraduate students contributing. A wide variety of research topics, ranging from yoga to health policy initiatives was presented. Themes identified included emerging issues and strategies for multidisciplinary health research.

Launch of CSHS Social Health Postgraduate Program
The new postgraduate Social Health program was launched by Lin Martin, Chairperson of the CSHS Advisory Committee and the University’s Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar, on Tuesday 26th November in the Plaza Conference Centre (Room 1). The Social Health program comprises a Graduate Diploma and Master of Social Health (by coursework and minor thesis). Students undertaking the Social Health Program will be able to major in one of three streams: Health Care History, Health Ethics or Medical Anthropology, or undertake a comprehensive interdisciplinary degree.

Advanced Medical Science Research at the Centre for the Study of Health and Society
Following on from the success of last year's cohort, this year's cohort of AMS students undertaking Medical Humanities at the CSHS have completed their coursework and are ready to launch into their research projects. Staff and students alike are excited by the range of innovative research projects being undertaken. Results will be presented at a conference day in May 2003.

CSHS introduced a series of research workshops this year for their AMS students. Interest from other Centres and Departments led to the workshops being made available to other students undertaking their AMS year. Designed to relieve the workload of individual supervisors and give students opportunities to discuss aspects of the research process relevant to their projects, the workshops ran successfully throughout semester 2 and will continue in 2003. Workshops for the current AMS cohort have included time-management, literature searching and reviewing, writing skills for research reports, referencing, data analysis, the ethics application process and conference presentation skills. CSHS will consult with coordinators from other areas regarding student needs next semester to further develop the workshop series.

Annual AMS BBQ, November 2002
**STAFF NEWS**

**Ms Jiami Zhang** has joined the Centre for Genetic Epidemiology 2 days per week to assist Dr Jisheng Cui to conduct statistical analyses on genetic and family environmental correlations between blood pressures and related risk factors. Jiami is also pursuing her PhD part-time in the Department of Statistical Sciences, La Trobe University, and is expected to submit her thesis in May 2003. This work is funded by the University of Melbourne Early Career Research Grant Scheme and Melbourne Research Grant Scheme. The research project is based on data from the Victorian Family Heart Study led by Prof Stephen Harrap, Department of Physiology.

**Martha Morrow**, KCWH, will be seconded to the Australian International Health Institute for 3 years from 18 November 2002. Her main focus will be research capacity training (through workshops and collaborative research) in developing countries of our region. She'll continue to supervise students and teach within the MPH (in the new International Adolescent Health subject, as well as in Health Planning & Evaluation, and various not-for-credit short courses), and undertake relevant consultancies. Her first overseas activity at AIHI will be a training workshop on Adolescent Health Program Planning for clinicians and community workers in Binh Duong, Vietnam, 2-5 December 2002.

**Strengthening Koori Communities**

In October the VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit held a 3-day workshop in Melbourne for Aboriginal health workers, managers and people working in Aboriginal organisations. The workshop was organised in collaboration with Victorian Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), and also with Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. The need for the workshop was the result of consultation with Koori Community groups about what it was that Community members wanted in the way of skills development. Entitled *Strengthening Koori Communities: how to do a needs analysis*, the workshop provided an introduction to research method focusing on planning a needs analysis.

The workshop was well attended and feedback was extremely positive. All participants received a certificate of attainment and many chose to complete the requirements for a TAFE accreditation. It is planned to hold a second workshop early next year, focusing on evaluation skills. The two workshops and associated curriculum development were funded by a special grant from the Victorian branch of the Public Health Association.

**Kim Dorrell**, Centre for Genetic Epidemiology/Epidemiology & Biostatistics, has been appointed as **Health and Safety Representative (HSR)** for the School of Population Health. We will hear more about the Faculty’s Green Office Program from Kim during 2003.

Congratulations to **Susan Hemer** and **Ainsley Newson** for recent successful PhD completions.

**Dr Katrina Alford**, who transferred from School of Rural Health to CSHS a few months ago, and PhD student, **Susan Day**, have commenced work on an ARC-funded project entitled: *Work on Rural and Urban Private Medical Practitioners: Relative costs, returns & work value*.

**ARE YOU CONSIDERING DEVELOPING A NEW COURSE?**

The deadline for the submission of proposals for new courses for 2004 (including business plans) is June/July 2003. Specific dates will be circulated early 2003. Staff are strongly advised to speak with the Postgraduate Programs Manager and the School Manager about proposed new courses. The APC new course approval process is lengthy – best to start it now.

Contact Marina Larsson, Ext: 49339
Email: m.larsson@unimelb.edu.au

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*Strengthening Koori Communities Workshop, October 2002*
STAFF OUT AND ABOUT

Centre for Genetic Epidemiology
John Hopper, Jisheng Cui, Gillian Dite and Roger Milne attended and posted research results at the AACR Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research Conference from 14-17 October and attended the subsequent NCI Breast Cancer Analytic Working Group Meeting, 18 October in Boston. This trip was partly funded by the National Cancer Institute breast and ovarian cancer family registries.

Jisheng Cui attended the 13th Genetic Analysis Workshop (GAW13) and the 11th Annual Meeting of the International Genetic Epidemiology Society (IGES) from 11-17 November in New Orleans. He gave an oral presentation at the GAW13 and posted research results at the IGES.

Program Evaluation Unit
Associate Professor Rob Carter was invited to give a presentation on Thursday 7th November to the Annual Joint Australasian Faculty of Occupational Medicine and the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine Meeting on Health Economic Evaluation.

John Hopper attended the 1st International Symposium on Cancer Prevention, 4-5 November, Montreal, Canada, hosted by the Lucie and Andre Chagnon Foundation. Discussion included the CAN$1 billion cancer prevention budget.

Centre for the Study of Health & Society
Earlier this year Jenny Lewis was invited to present her paper, ‘Partnerships in sickness and in health’ at the Structure and Organization of Government Research Group of the International Political Science Association “Knowledge, networks and joined-up government” conference. Jenny more recently attended the Public Health Association of Australia Annual Conference in late September where she presented her paper entitled ‘Networks of influence and issues of importance: health policy in Victoria’.

Following this conference in Adelaide Jenny travelled to Canberra a few days later to attend the Australasian Political Studies Association Annual conference to present another paper entitled ‘Making connections and setting the agenda: health policy networks and issues in Victoria’.

Key Centre for Women’s Health
Martha Morrow has returned from study leave, which took her to several destinations, mainly in connection with her research interests in tobacco control and adolescent health. She spent a month at WHO in Geneva (with the Tobacco Free Initiative and Child & Adolescent Health and Development), with Annemieke Brands at WHO she prepared a draft “Fact Sheet on Gender and Tobacco”. This was followed by a week in rural France revising a paper with co-authors on health beliefs and concerns among secondary students in Vietnam (this work was fitted in between harvesting of mirabel plums & blackberries and wandering in the forests near Vittel). She then spent a month at the Nuffield Institute for Health (International Development Unit) at the University of Leeds, UK, and several weeks in China undertaking a consultancy for WHO Manila. The latter included conducting workshops in Beijing and Chengdu on “Planning Community Interventions for Tobacco Control”.

After her return to Melbourne Martha spent three weeks working at the School of Public Health, La Trobe University with Simon Barraclough, during which they revised their joint paper on tobacco control policy and gender in Southeast Asia.

UPCOMING EVENTS

"Through lens and Speculum - views of medical student life" is a new exhibition just opened at Medical History Museum. Told through the pages of Speculum, the medical student magazine first published in 1884, and through the display of archival photographs, this exhibition examines the student experience, both formal and informal, from 1860s to the present day.

Medical History Museum
2nd Floor
Brownless Biomedical Library
Hours: Mon-Fri, 9.00 - 5.00pm (Sat by prior arrangement)
Enquiries: Ann Brothers
Tel: 8344 5719
e-mail: brothers@unimelb.edu.au

SPH Information Evening.

3 February 2003
6:30-7:30 pm

This session concentrates on Postgraduate Training in Epidemiology & Biostatistics at a Postgraduate Diploma and Master level in 2003 for prospective applicants. Following the information session there will be refreshments and the opportunity to meet with staff.

Venue: Ground Floor Lecture Theatre
200 Berkeley Street, Carlton
Enquiries: 8344 9231
PUBLICATIONS 2002
(Since previous issue, September 2002)

Abramson M, Dharmage S, Thien F, Walters EH. Sensitisation to airborne moulds and severity of asthma. (letter) BMJ. 2002: bmj.com/cgi/eletters/325/7361/411#25053, 29 Aug


Chau PH, Yip PSF, Cui JS (2003). Reconstructing HIV incidence in Hong Kong using data from HIV positive tests and AIDS diagnoses. Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series C (accepted and revised)


Dharmage S. Indoor allergens and asthma (conference paper). Conference proceedings of the National Asthma Conference 2002; p6-8


Send contributions for next newsletter to m.lenaghan@unimelb.edu.au

Invitation to all SPH staff from the Social Affairs Committee

End of Year Function 2002
Buffet Breakfast at the Fairfield Boathouse (www.fairfieldboathouse.com, Melway Map 30, J12)
Date: Friday 13 December 2002
Time: 8.30am for 8.45am
Cost: $22.00 per head
Last chance to buy tickets this week!
Looking forward to seeing you all there.

RSVP to an SAC representative:
Jenny Burchill 9411 0308 burchill@unimelb.edu.au
Cathy Francis 9496 4427 c.francis@unimelb.edu.au
Asmira Korajkic 8344 0823 asmira@unimelb.edu.au
Judi Maskiell 8344 0694 j.maskiell@unimelb.edu.au
Joni Law 8344 4416 jycl@unimelb.edu.au
Nora Li 8344 9350 n.li@unimelb.edu.au
Get to know …

**Associate Professor David Dunt,**
*Director, Program Evaluation Unit (PEU), Centre for Health Program Evaluation*

David is a public health specialist and epidemiologist with major interests in health program evaluation, health services research with particular interests in the integration of health services predominantly in the primary care sector. Over the years David has evaluated and researched a wide variety of health programs and services in the fields of health promotion, health technology assessment, palliative care and the care of severely intellectually handicapped children.

David is a medical graduate of the Royal Melbourne Hospital Medical School at The University of Melbourne. He has a PhD from Monash University on the topic of the health care of Greek and Italian women during pregnancy and labour. David also undertook a MA (prelim) as a one-year full-time course in the Department of Sociology, LaTrobe University. He is a Fellow of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine (of the Royal College of Physicians, UK). David’s fellowship recognises further substantial contribution to Public Health, within the Faculty beyond that recognised for Membership.

David currently holds the position of Director, Program Evaluation Unit, Centre for Health Program Evaluation. The Centre for Health Program Evaluation, formerly the NHMRC National Centre for Health Program Evaluation (NCHPE) consists of the Program Evaluation Unit and the Health Economics Unit, (Director; Professor Jeff Richardson), Faculty of Economics and Business, Monash University. PEU has 16 FTE staff members (including visitors and equivalent staff). PEU has published 182 academic papers, 183 technical and other reports and has attracted over $11 million funding for research and teaching since its inception.

David was awarded the NHMRC Travelling Fellowship in Clinical Sciences – Epidemiology in 1977 and the Monash University Post-Graduate Scholarship (Medical) (1971-1974). He was a post-doctoral student in the Department of Community Medicine, St Thomas’ Hospital Medical School, London 1975-1976.

Recent research headed by David at PEU has been undertaken within four research streams. Recent research projects:-

- National Evaluation of the After Hours Primary Medical Care Trials
- Integration of the General Practitioner into the Wider Healthcare system
- Evaluation of the Southern Health Care Network Coordinated Care Trial
- Statewide evaluation of the Nurse-Practitioner pilot project in Victoria
- Public Health and Health Promotion Support & Evaluation Resource Unit (SERU) - a guide for Divisions of General Practice
- Development of an evaluation framework for proposed supervised injecting room facilities for intravenous users in Victoria

David initiated the Graduate Diploma in Epidemiology and Biostatistics (GDEB) in 1991 and has been involved in the development and delivery of a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses at the university. His postgraduate teaching currently includes supervision of PhD students, development and delivery of distance education courses in health services research and the Corporate Postgraduate Award program courses in health program evaluation offered to public servants of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services by intensive and distance education teaching. David is currently a member of the Semester 8-12 School of Population Health Working Party for the New Medical Undergraduate Curriculum.

David’s leisure time interests include learning Italian (and speaking it very badly). Lesley, David’s wife is Chief Book Editor at Penguin Books. He is an avid moviegoer and has a keen interest in the theatre and reading and tries to get to the gym three times per week. He has two daughters Emily, 25 and Alice 23, both of whom by now are thankfully employed.