SPH e-News
News from School of Population Health, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences, University of Melbourne
Issue# 2. December 2005

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1. Latest News

The School of Population Health website has a new section titled "Ethics". See www.sph.unimelb.edu.au

It provides information from the School of Population Health Departmental Human Ethics Advisory Group (DHEAG), including the different types of application you can make, links to forms, how to submit an application, the approval process, DHEAG meeting dates and deadlines, and members' contact details.

There is also a link to the Melbourne Research and Innovation Office (MRIO) Human Ethics web site.

If you have any comments/suggestions for the School's DHEAG web pages, please forward them to Karen O'Brien at sph-dheag@unimelb.edu.au.

2. Head of School News (T. Nolan)

We come to the end of 2005 with terrific news of success and recognition for School of Population Health staff. Associate Professor Peter Greenberg (MEGA Epidemiology) has been appointed Chair of NHMRC’s Health Advisory Committee and Professor Janet McCalman (Centre for Health and Society) has been elected to the Academy of Social Sciences.

Congratulations also Dr Mark Jenkins (MEGA Epi) for his newly won NHMRC project grant (Germline mutations in mismatch repair genes: prevalence, risk of cancer, and environmental modifiers of risk) and to Dr Melanie Matheson (MEGA Epi) who has been awarded a Melbourne Early Career Researcher Grant (Genetic modifiers of environmental risk factors for longitudinal changes in asthma) for 2006.

I am delighted to welcome Dr Kevin Rowley to Centre for Health and Society as Senior Research Fellow and Claudine Chionh as a Data Coordinator in the Key Centre for Women’s Health in Society.

We have completed interviews for two very important Chairs for our School, the Chair in Epidemiology and Biostatistics and the Chair in Health Promotion (and Director of the VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Social Wellbeing). We had superb national and international applicants for these Chairs and have made offers of appointment to the preferred candidates in each. I hope to be able to make announcements about these appointments early in the New Year.
I was heartened to read in The Age on Friday December 16 the editorial piece by former Dean Richard Larkins (now VC at Monash) on the current situation with Universities. (http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/ideologues-trample-our-universities/2005/12/15/1134500957281.html). Let’s hope that both political parties take note of where tertiary education is going.

Finally, to all our staff, students, honorary fellows, collaborators, colleagues and friends I extend my best wishes for Christmas, Chanukah and the holiday season. I’m going to do my best to have a bit of a break, recharge the batteries, and get ready for another productive year. I especially want to thank you all for your outstanding contributions this year. It’s been a particularly challenging one for many of us, but I think we have got through it well and I am sure we are in good shape for 2006.

3. Teaching and Learning
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3.1. Coursework News (C. Bennett)
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New Graduates: The end of 2005 marks the course completion for many graduates across SPH postgraduate teaching programs, and we were very pleased to see the number of students graduating with outstanding academic records. This year we will also introduce a course completion questionnaire that will be sent to all our new graduands along with a letter from the School congratulating them on the successful completion of their degree. We already have an intensive student evaluation program at the subject level, but this survey is designed to tell the School more about how our graduates view the entire course, what attracted them into the program in the first place, whether the program lived up to expectations, what worked, and what could work better. We are also very interested in how the course has, and/or will, shape our graduates professional development and career opportunities. As with all our evaluations, we take these very seriously and look forward to continuing to evolve and strengthen our programs with the benefit of this additional student input.

SPH Alumnus: This year, we are also inviting our new graduates to keep in touch with us via an alumnus email address sph-alumni@unimelb.edu.au so that we can begin to grow an active network of graduates. We also invite past students to contact us at this email address with their current contact details so that we can add these to our alumnus list. More on this in 2007.

Semester Break: We hope that all our continuing students enjoy a relaxing break,
especially those who are returning to visit family and friends in their own countries at this time. We also hope that students taking summer subjects have a productive time and enjoy the different experience and pace afforded by studying at this time of year.

3.2. Undergraduate News (M. Guillemin)

As you know the School of Population Health has extensive involvement in the undergraduate medical curriculum. 2005 has been a particularly exciting and challenging year in that we completed the roll out for the revised Health Practice subject. The aim in revising the subject was to make it more clinically relevant and better aligned with the rest of the curriculum. Evaluations are now in and I am pleased to say that we think we have achieved our aim. We have also identified some areas that need more work but we already have some great ideas on how to improve this. This revision has required an enormous amount of work and dedication. Special thanks to:

- Katie Dumas (HP 1-5 Administration) for all her hard work, initiative and keeping us on track.
- Heather Rowe (HP 3 co-ordination) – despite being new to this, Heather has risen to the challenge with great dedication and enthusiasm.
- John Waller (HP 2 co-ordination) – for his willingness to start the semester from scratch with a terrific outcome.
- Peter Greenberg (EBP co-ordination and teaching in HP 2 and HP 3) – We are grateful for Peter for his expertise and enthusiasm in taking up the Evidence Based Practice co-ordination with short notice, following the excellent lead of Jeremy Anderson.

We will be looking for tutors in Health Practice or Evidence Based Practice in the undergraduate medical program for next year. This is a great way of becoming involved in undergraduate medical teaching. The areas covered are: population health, evidence based medicine, social health, gender and health, ethics, and indigenous health. We are looking for generalists rather than specialists, so if you are interested or have students who may be interested, please contact Katie Dumas at kdumas@unimelb.edu.au.

3.3. RHD News (J. Fisher)

No news this month.

3.4. PG Student News (J. Stone, K. Hammenberg, S. Kingsland)

Higher Degree Research Committee will be looking for two new student
representatives - an international and Australian student rep. Duties include attendance to monthly 1-hour meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. Karan Hammarberg and Jen Stone have been the reps for the past two years and if anyone has any questions about the position please feel free to contact either of us at k.hammarberg@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au or j.stone3@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au.

3.5. SPH Academic Programs Office (Liz Lagias)

Key Dates for 2006:
Enrolment for New (Local) students: 8th and 9th February
Enrolment for New (International) students: 22nd February
Course Welcome/School Orientation Session (All Courses - Local and International): 22nd February 5.30-7.30pm (Venue to be advised)

4. Centres/Units News

4.1 School Office (L.Taylor)

4.1.1 SafetyMAP V4 and EMS ISO 14001 Internal Audit Results
As mentioned in the November School Newsletter the results of the SafetyMAP/EMS audit indicated there were 7 EHS Areas For Improvement (AFI) across the School. The Auditor and the Faculty EHS Officer have revisited the School and most of the AFIs have been upgraded to Conformances. The AFIs included completions of EHS training programs for staff and supervisors, manual handling and ergonomic assessment and risk management. Thanks to the staff in the Program Evaluation, MEGA Epi, IT Service and Academic Programs for their assistance with this process.

The Centre for Health and Society and the Key Centre for Women's Health in Society will be audited in April 2006.

4.1.2 Victorian Public Health Research & Education Council (VPHREC) Survey of Research Funding
The School has participated in the VPHREC survey of research funding and publications for the 2004 calendar year. The purpose of this survey is to:
* determine the trends in public health research funding
* promote dialog between VPHREC, the Department of Human Services and VicHealth about the future directions for public health research and education in Victoria
* provide an informed basis for discussion regarding the promotion of Victoria's strengths and public health research capacity in Victoria
The results of the survey for the School indicate total research income for 2004 of $12.8M from National, State, International and Non-peer reviewed funding.

4.1.3 Budget Review Working Group
The Faculty has established a Budget Review Working Group with representation from all School Managers and/or Finance Officers. The main tasks for this group are to develop a costing model for the Faculty's academic programs - all undergraduate and postgraduate courses and subjects. We will be commencing with the MBBS!

4.2 Centre for Health and Society (D. Scobie)

New appointments:

Dr Kevin Rowley commenced as the new Senior Research Fellow in the Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit on Monday 5th Dec. Kevin joined us from the St Vincent's Department of Medicine. He has a long history of working in Aboriginal health which more recently has included collaborations with the Rumbalara community.

Dr Hans Baer (currently at Univ of Arkansas, Little Rock, USA) will commence in a new joint Medical Anthropology appointment with SAGES in January 2006. Hans’ appointment will be split 70% School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Science (SAGES) and 30% CHS.

Dr Deb Warr has been appointed as the RD Wright Research Fellow in CHS for 2006.

Staff news:

Belated congratulations to Martha Macintyre on being appointed President, Australian Anthropology Association.

Congratulations to Janet McCalman on her election as Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

Publications and events:

Assoc. Professor John Fitzgerald conducted the successful “Dangerous Consumptions” colloquium held at the School of Population Health on November 24-25. The colloquium received 55 registrations from research services and government.
An opinion piece by John Fitzgerald on the issue of the global heroin market appeared in The Age on December 6.

The same edition also featured a letter on the issue of asbestos co-authored by Assoc Professor Tony LaMontagne.

The Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit was delighted to launch the “Victorian Aboriginal Ethics Project Report” on 28 November. The report was compiled by Paul Stewart and Dr Priscilla Pyett in conjunction with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and puts forward six models which provide a framework aimed at boosting the input Aboriginal people in Victoria have on research ethics. The report was launched by Professor Ian Anderson, and speakers included VACCHO Executive Officer Jill Gallagher and Dr Kerry Breen from the NHMRC.

Grants:

Assoc. Professor Marilys Guillemin and Dr Lynn Gillam have been awarded an ARC Discovery Grant on the subject of research ethics.

Recent research publications and commentaries:


4.3. Centre for MEGA Epi (M.Lenaghan)
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A huge thank you for the work and company of the following staff whose current contracts are ending 31/12/05:

Billie Aceska, RA/Interviewer, Australian Breast Cancer Family Registry
Jackie Arbuckle, RA/Interviewer, Australian Melanoma Family Study
Dr Anne Mitchell, Snr Research Officer, Victorian Paediatric Cancer Family Study
Dr Kerry Murphy, RA/Interviewer, Australian Colorectal Cancer Family Study
Sandra Roche, RA/Interviewer, Australian Colorectal Cancer Family Study
Helen Rodais, RA/Interviewer, Australian Melanoma Family Study

4.4. Program Evaluation Unit (T. Mayhew)
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Staff News:
Temporary staff departure: Margaret Kelaher will be commencing maternity leave at the end of December to prepare for the birth of her child, due at the end of January. Margaret will be on leave for 12 months.

Congratulations to:
Rob Carter & Gail Younie who finally tied the knot in August.
and….
Bree Rankin & Marj Moodie who won the inaugural PEU Christmas door/desk competition for the best decorated Christmas door. Come and check out the prize winning door and the other entries.

Publications:
Book chapter
Refereed Journal Article

Research Activities:
Jane Pirkis has secured funding of $80,000 from Auseinet to synthesise the ‘learnings’ from the 160 suicide prevention projects that have been funded under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. Alan Headey will be working on this project with Jane, and Penny Mitchell, Philip Burgess and Jo Robinson will be providing expert advice.

The Health Economics group had successes with two collaborative NHMRC project grant applications. The “Avert” project about Improving outcome after Stroke: A large multicentre, randomised controlled trial of very early mobilisation (AVERT), with Dr Helen Dewey and Dr Julie Bernhardt of the National Stroke Research Institute is the highest funded project grant in 2005 at 2.86m. The other project is with Professor Ron Borland and James Balmford of the Cancer Control Research Institute about “Maximising the effectiveness of interactive automated programs for smoking cessation”. The group will be responsible for the economic evaluation component for each project.

Short Course workshops:
Two short courses in Health Program Evaluation were delivered by the PEU from 16-23 November. Attendance exceeded expectation with 19 participants attending Short course 1 "Scoping Health Program Evaluation: Planning, Negotiation, Approaches and Criteria Selection" and 12 participants attending Short Course 2 "Data Collection, Data Analysis and Reporting in Health Program Evaluation". This caps off a very successful year in which the course was delivered over three workshops to a total of 66 participants.

4.5. Key Centre for Women's Health in Society (A. Tattam)
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Manderson goes to Monash:

Federation Fellow Lenore Manderson and her team are moving to Monash University. Professor Manderson and Dr Milica Markovic, Dr Roseanne Misajon, Dr Bhensri (Poy) Naemiratch, Narelle Warren and Kathleen Nolan will be leaving Melbourne at the end of 2005 when Professor Manderson takes up a professorial position at Department of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine.
Planning Day:
Key Centre staff held a successful Planning Day, facilitated by Dr David Irving (DVDC) on December 12 and many big and small decisions were made about 2006 and beyond.

GRANTS:
Understanding women’s experience of unplanned pregnancy and abortion
ARC linkage grant 2006-2008 - $236,000 + VicHealth (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation) $75,000
The partner organizations with this project are the Royal Women’s Hospital and VicHealth.

Investigators
Professor Doreen Rosenthal, Dr Heather Rowe, Dr Shelley Mallett, and Ms Annarella Hardiman, (Royal Women’s Hospital)

Further details at
http://uninews.unimelb.edu.au/articleid_2996.html

Male infertility: the long term psychological and social consequences for men and their relationships
Andrology Australia ($31,923)
Investigators
Dr Jane Fisher

Feasibility of the methods of an early parenting intervention RCT
Melbourne Research Grant Scheme
($30,000)
(invited application – NHMRC submission category 5 “near miss”)

Awards and promotions:
Congratulations to the following staff:
Senior Lecturer Dr Jane Fisher who has been promoted to Associate Professor position.
Dr Lisa Amir has been awarded a three year NHMRC health professional fellowship and will be taking extended leave from the Centre to undertake research on breastfeeding at Latrobe University.

Health guide launch:
“674- A pocket guide to keeping well on the street” was launched at Frontyard Young
People’s Health Service by Dr Rob Moodie, CEO of VicHealth (and CHS Honorary Professor in Public Health). It contains up to date information on Hepatitis C, mental health, the safe use of injecting drugs, sexually transmitted infections, contraception and pregnancy, plus a list of places where young people can get help.

674? Where did that number come from? 674 is the number of young people who were interviewed as part of Project i, the longitudinal study of homeless young people in Melbourne and Los Angeles. The voices and perspectives of young people are included in the pocket guide along with key research findings. Produced by Project i researchers, and funded with a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation, “674” has been distributed to key locations in Melbourne and beyond.

Early demand for the booklet was overwhelming with 3000 copies distributed within a week of the launch. New stock is to be delivered in the new year.


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Physical activity and SES status
People living in Melbourne’s poorest suburbs are far less likely to exercise than those in wealthy suburbs, according to findings from the VicLANES project. The study of 2349 people from across the metropolitan area revealed that only 46 per cent of people from the city’s poorest suburbs do enough exercise to maintain good health.


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Other news: Please check our website for the latest news releases: http://www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/news/

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Social Determinants of Health Short Course
2006 course (preliminary notice)
Register now for the University of Melbourne short course on the social determinants of health. Presenters at this 3-day event will include Professors Ichiro Kawachi and SV Subramanian from Harvard School of Public Health and Anne Kavanagh from University of Melbourne's Key Centre for Women's Health in Society.

The course is especially developed for policy-makers, health promotion practitioners plus public and community health professionals. Participants will be exposed to international perspectives and research on income inequality, socio-economic status, poverty, social capital and neighbourhoods and health and will see local datasets 'bought to life' to illustrate the importance of these concepts in Australia.

Dates to be announced early in 2006
Places will be limited – to register your interest, please email Katie Symes, KCWHS ksymes@unimelb.edu.au Tel 8344 4417.

And finally…

Bursting condoms, troubles with the pill, and men who don’t discuss contraception.
No this is not the Key Centre Christmas party. These are some of the challenges facing women who choose to use the Morning-after pill, and a snapshot of findings from the work of KCWHS Research Fellow Dr Louise Keogh.


4.6. Diabetes Vaccine Development Centre (MJ. Gleeson)
No report this month.

4.7. Centre for International Mental Health (J.Burchill)
No report this month.
4.8. Sexual Health Unit (K.Fairley)

Publications since last issue:


Research news:
Dr Marcus Chen has been successful in obtaining an NHMRC Public Health Fellowship for the next four years. During this time, Marcus will be working at MSHC in two main areas; Chlamydia screening and microbicide research.

5. Seminars/Events

No report this month.

6. IT News (N.Golovachenko)

As the end of year approaches, SPH IT is busy planning for the Christmas break as well as for 2006.

Part of this planning process involves making sure that all server data is successfully backed up and stored offsite. As well as making sure that all the file and printer servers are updated and fully operational during the christmas break.

In January 2006 SPH IT will be scheduling several short outages to perform preventative maintenance.

We will inform all staff in January 2006 when these outages need to occur.

We would like to encourage all staff to please shutdown their computers during the christmas break and whenever possible.

Not only does it save power, but if something serious was to come out and infect computers over the Christmas break, it would also help any mop up/recovery processes. Unfortunately it seems that malicious people tend not to take as many breaks as normal people.

More news about our new and exciting plans for 2006 in the next newsletter.