Welcome to the fourth edition of the School of Population Health Newsletter!

Our Newsletter facilitates communication within the School. We aim to put an issue out every quarter and depend on you to support your Newsletter through interesting, informative and constructive contributions that we will all want to read. Huge thanks to everyone who has contributed so far, and please keep items coming in!

Head of School’s message

Dear SPH colleagues

It is already time for the fourth edition of the SPH Newsletter. Feedback indicates the newsletters are appreciated. Once again, special thanks to Fiona for soliciting material and putting it all together in a very efficient and professional manner.

There has been a lot happening on the teaching front in both our contributions to medical student education, the health science degree and the postgraduate degrees. Special note is made of the successful Epidemiology and Control of Communicable Diseases unit that was offered in the Winter School (June 2009) by Angus Cook and Phil Weinstein. Special congratulations must go to the ‘nursing team’ for the very successful (and sometimes frenetic) orientation and course commencement for the first cohort of students in the new Master of Nursing Science degree. New offerings in second semester include Qualitative Research Methods (Colleen Fisher) and a revamped Foundations of Public Health (Niyi Awofeso) and a new unit in Health Informatics is under development for the 2009 summer school (Keith Lui). Best wishes to all teachers and support staff for a successful second semester.

The UWA planning for the new course structures (to be first offered in 2013) has commenced with several new boards established. Congratulations to Liz Geelhoed who is a member of the Interim Board of Studies for the new BSc degree. The School has working parties developing proposals for units and majors that we would like to offer in the new undergraduate degrees. These proposals need to be finalised and submitted by November 2009.

The University and School are currently experiencing a tight financial situation due to the ramifications to our government funders and the UWA investment returns of the ‘global economic crisis’. In addition, we have recently been advised that the commonwealth department of health will not continue the Public Health Education and Research Program (PHERP) beyond 2010. The School has received PHERP funds since 1988 and these funds have been invaluable to the development, growth and success of the school. The loss of this funding of about $290K per annum provides an additional challenge to maintaining the quality and scope of our teaching programs and the lecturers and administrative support staff will have to find further efficiencies in the delivery of our teaching programs.

There is also much happening on the research front. The assessors’ reports for NHMRC and Healthway grant applications submitted earlier this year have arrived and chief investigators have been busy preparing and submitting responses. A few staff from the School are members of the NHMRC Grant Review Panels that will meet in August to decide on the final rankings of all submitted grants. This is an onerous task and we wish them well. The Research Committee, chaired by Dr Angus Cook, continues to have active engagement of researchers and be an important forum for research development and planning discussion and change. The PHPS continues to do an excellent job in running the seminar and research skills development program and the 2009 series so far has been well attended and it is especially pleasing to see the large number of postgraduate students in attendance and actively participating in the discussions. School staff continue to publish many excellent research articles. Be sure to send a copy to Denise Bracken to have them catalogued and placed on the ‘recent publications’ noticeboard.

The Strategic Planning Drafting Group (convened by D’Arcy Holman) has completed its task and submitted the new plan for 2009-2013 entitled “Partnerships that make a difference”. The plan was the result of much effort including a wide ranging search and discovery process, consultation with stakeholders, and review, debate and “dotmocracy” workshops with staff, students and the Consumer and Community Advisory Council. Special thanks goes to the SPDG for their considerable effort and for producing a terrific new plan. The School Finance and Strategic Planning Committee has accepted the plan as a succinct and clear vision for change in the School and, given the involvement of the whole school in its development, it should be a plan that will be adopted and embraced by all members of the School. The adoption of this important planning document represents the beginning of the change process. We now all have the task of implementing this plan and bringing about...
the visionary changes that will make us a stronger and more relevant academic population health organisation. Various groups such as the Research Committee have already commenced discussions on the actions required to achieve this change and soon we will commence using the plan to engage with and build better partnerships with key stakeholders. I hope that you all will continue to be an important player in this journey.

Best wishes to all.

Matthew Knuiman

School Manager’s message: 2012 - the year it will all change.

Well, second semester started with a flurry for us in Admin, mostly due to the new Nursing course commencing. I must commend the Nursing team [Judith, Rosemary, Yvonne, Olivia and Jannette] on the fantastic effort for getting everything going [and not to forget Fiona’s marketing efforts either]. We will be starting the next cohort in Feb 2010 so it won’t be too long before we hit the roundabout again.

Speaking of Marketing, Fiona, Vicky and I are now officially [re]-trained on the delightful Indesign, the program we are using for this newsletter and all other publications. We spent a stimulating whole weekend at Christchurch zzzzzzzzzzzz.

Our website has been switched over to the new UWA format; Fiona, Bernie, Annette, Jannette, myself and Susie [web editor on Fridays] have all been trained to edit the web. We are still adding to the website so please check your profiles, research groups etc and give us ideas for improvements, changes etc.

You may have heard that Alan Robson has just given the go ahead for UWA to completely change its teaching; the new course structure is set to start in 2012. The reasoning behind this change is to ‘equip our students with a global outlook and a community conscience’. More information can be found at http://www.futureframework.uwa.edu.au/

Students will undertake a 3 year undergraduate degree in one of four bachelor’s: Science, Arts, Commerce and Design; there will also be a BPhil for the top students. Students will study eight units for their major BSc [Population Health] and a number of ‘broadening’ units from other areas.

Sadly, we will be losing our highly recognised Bachelor of Health Science degree so we will need everybody to spread the word about Population Health being a great degree too.

After a Bachelors degree, students can undertake a Masters in their chosen professional areas. The length of time of study will vary between professions, our MPH will still be 18 months whilst Medicine will become a 4 year postgraduate degree.

As you can imagine, these changes are going to take a lot of work, deciding on new units, new undergraduate degrees, articulating these into old or new Masters along with a completely new medicine course.....it will keep us all busy for a while!

The first step is deciding on the undergraduate majors we want and this must be done by November. So, as the School’s Coursework Restructure committee and sub groups make decisions, we will let you know.

On the gossip side for admin, Denise recently became a grandmother, Jannette is counting down the hours until Di gets back from her Ashes tour of the UK and I am also pleased to report that Rachel [ex Tuesday help] survived her Contiki tour of Europe and is now recuperating in Greece. That’s all from me for now....Peta

Congratulations!

Sarah Joyce’s PhD thesis was passed with no corrections - “Demographic, clinical and environmental risk factors for pre-labour rupture of membranes in WA” Now back from a fantastic round-the-world trip, her work has been so controversial that she is forced to work with us again.

Judy Katzenellenbogen’s PhD thesis passed - “Use of data linkage to enhance burden of disease estimates in WA: The example of stroke”

Mehdi’s 443pp PhD thesis is currently on a slow boat to him in Iran - “The relationship between dietary factors, meat consumption, heterocyclic amines, benzo(a)pyrene, meat-derived mutagenic activity and colorectal cancer in WA”

Graham Slaney’s MPH thesis has been passed – “Wrist guards as a public health intervention to reduce the risk of wrist fracture in snowboarders”
A strategic plan for an organisation confirms the reasons for the existence of the organisation and describes its vision for change over the short and medium term. The plan helps to guide strategic development of the organisation if it is thoughtfully developed and is embraced and adopted by all members of the organisation. As identified in the 2007 Review of the School, the School is in many respects at a crossroads, needing fresh new directions in research, an enhanced community and industry engagement, and the whole university is on the verge of fundamental reform of its course structures. Now, more than ever, is a strategic plan with a strong and articulated vision needed to guide the School through the next 5 to 10 years.

As you know, last year the school executive decided that development of a plan should be the responsibility of the whole school and that the primary development role be undertaken by a group that is broadly representative of those likely to inherit the stewardship of the school in the future. This group was known as the Strategic Planning Drafting Group (SPDG) and their brief was to gather and analyse information from a broad range of sources to develop candidate directions for change, conduct consultations within and outside the school, and draft a new plan for 2009-2013. The SPDG was convened in September 2008 by Professor D’Arcy Holman, comprised a group of about 20 staff, was and asked to complete its brief by June 2009. It is a testament to the dedication and commitment of the SPDG that the task assigned to the SPDG was completed successfully and on time. The convener of the SPDG delivered the Strategic Plan 2009 entitled “Partnerships that make a difference” to me on behalf of the SDPG.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who participated in the development of the Plan especially D’Arcy and the members of the SPDG, all the staff and students who participated in the workshops at which candidate strategic initiatives were debated and votes cast, and the Consumer and Community Advisory Council.

The Plan represents about 8 months of effort by a very large number of people and I congratulate the whole school on a very successful outcome. The School Finance and Strategic Planning Committee considered the plan represented a succinct and clear vision for change and has endorsed the plan.

The development of this Plan signals the beginning of the change process. We must now embrace the task of implementing this plan and bringing about the visionary changes embodied in the plan that will make us a stronger and more relevant academic population health organisation.

A number of structures within the School, such as the Finance and Strategic Planning Committee, Research Committee, Teaching committees, and the Consumer and Community Advisory Council have been asked to put forward ideas on how we can achieve these changes over the next 5 years. I ask you all, individually and in groups, to actively participate in this change process.
Dear SPH colleagues,

It is with much pleasure that I announce that we have been advised that the UWA Master of Nursing Science (entry-to-practice) course has been endorsed for accreditation by the Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia (NMBWA). This means that graduates of the UWA MNursSc course will be eligible to apply for registration as a “registered nurse” in WA, on successful completion of their course.

The accreditation of this course is an important milestone for nursing education at UWA and comes well in time for the first intake of MNursSc students, commencing in July this year.

I would personally like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in the School of Population Health, the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, and the wider UWA community for their support and encouragement in the development of the UWA MNursSc course. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the generous spirit of cooperation shown by our principal clinical partner, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Nursing Services, who have not only played a crucial role in the development of this course, but in the genesis of nursing education and nursing research at UWA more generally.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the MNursSc Advisory Committee, in particular the industry representatives, who generously gave their time and expertise to provide invaluable advice in the development of the course. Partnerships with industry are vital to the success of a professional entry-to-practice course like the MNursSc, and we were very fortunate in securing such widespread support.

So now we look forward to ensuring that the UWA Master of Nursing Science course lives up to its promise of excellence in preparing registered nurses for the future challenges in healthcare.

Thank you for your support of “Nursing at UWA”.

Regards, Judith Finn

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SPH’s Master of Nursing Science accredited

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Nomination for NMBWA Researcher of the Year

Judith Finn

Congratulations to W. Professor Judith Finn who has been nominated and shortlisted as a finalist for a Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Award in the category of Researcher of the Year. These prestigious awards are run annually by the Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia and provide an opportunity for health professionals and the community to identify and acknowledge the contribution nurses make to the health and well being of Western Australians. Following nominations, candidates are shortlisted and then invited for interview where finalists are identified. Judith has been listed as a finalist based on her contribution to clinical nursing research principally at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital where she holds the Chair in Nursing Research. The award winners will be announced at a gala dinner at the Burswood Entertainment Complex on 29th August.

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Awards - SPH Research Stimulus Package

Emma Glasson

Terri Pikora

Min Zhang
Awards - AEA

Gavin Pereira - 2009 AEA Early Career Award recipient

Congratulations to Emily Steele, Matthew Soeberg and Gavin Pereira this year’s 2009 AEA Early Career Award recipients.

The aim of this award is to provide early career epidemiological researchers (masters or doctoral students, or those who have graduated with one of these degrees in the past three years) the opportunity to meet others at a similar stage in their training, and to discuss methodological issues with experienced epidemiologists in a workshop style format.

The student workshop will be held on 1st September at this year’s annual scientific meeting in Dunedin, New Zealand. During the workshop the Early Career Awardees will present a brief background outlining one or more methodological problems they have encountered in their research. Each researcher was matched with one or two epidemiologists with expertise in the area (the discussants) who led a discussion involving the presenting early career researcher and the audience. The value of the award is $500AUD and will be presented at the Population Health Congress.

Awards - New Independent Researcher Infrastructure Support Awards

Two SPH researchers are the latest winners:

Min Zhang

“Min won her award for a range of projects which included collaborating with overseas researchers on the role of green tea in helping to protect against several forms of cancer. A joint research program between UWA and China’s Zhejiang University has suggested that green tea and mushrooms could protect against breast cancer - results showed that the combination of green tea and mushrooms decreased the risk of breast cancer and reduced the effect of the malignance of the cancer.”.

Rachael Moorin

“Rachael won her award for work on health services for rural cancer patients and the effect social inequality can have on personal health. She also embarked on studies into the associated cost and level of health care available to seriously injured car crash victims.”

Funded by the DoH, the NIRIS awards have provided more than $785K to over 63 researchers since 2001. Health Minister Kim Hames said the awards supported innovative health researchers by helping them meet the infrastructure costs of their work. “The awards develop and support outstanding new medical and health researchers in WA” Dr Hames said.

(Australian Suburbs Weekly; +Weekend Courier Rockingham)

Awards - Teaching and community achievement

The winners of some student-initiated awards were announced on the night of the UWA Health Ball, which was organised by the UWA Health Science Society.

Congratulating the Health Science Society on a successful Ball, thanking the HSS/HSA and PHPS for instigating these awards, and congratulating the winners and those receiving High Commendation.

A number of awards were presented at the Health Science Ball. All winners received a framed certificate and $100 Myer voucher. Congratulations to all.

Staff Excellence in Teaching/Student Support Award

Congratulations to all nominees, many of whom receiving multiple nominations for this award.: Alex Bremner; Angus Cook; Jane Heyworth; D’Arcy Holman; Rachael Moorin; Ania Stasinska; Louise Stewart. A student judging panel decided the recipient.

Winner: Alex Bremner

High Commendation: Jane Heyworth and D’Arcy Holman

Postgraduate Academic and Community Achievement Award

Winner: Fatima Haggar

Health Science Alumni: Community Achievement Award for Health Science Student

Winner: Esther Dawkins

High Commendation: Gemma Rosato and Warren Raymond
Appointment

Road Safety Council — Appointment of Professor D’Arcy Holman

Here is a Ministerial Statement made in Parliament yesterday about the role of the Road Safety Council Chair and D’Arcy’s honorary appointment. I am sure you will join me in congratulating D’Arcy.

The Road Safety Council’s acknowledgement of D’Arcy’s outstanding qualities for this important role has been suitably described below.

I just thought I would share this information with you and to also confirm that D’Arcy will continue in his role at UWA (we have received some queries).

By Margaret Mathews

Statement by Minister for Police Statement

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [12.09 pm]: Prior to delivering my brief ministerial statement and on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, I acknowledge in the Speaker’s gallery the Agricultural Research Group from Libya. Obviously we welcome them very much indeed.

Last Sunday it was my great privilege to announce that I had appointed Professor D’Arcy Holman as the incoming independent chair of the Road Safety Council. Professor Holman is a world-renowned expert in public health and is indeed the chair in public health at the University of Western Australia’s School of Population Health. His credentials are impeccable and he is someone in whom our state can take great pride. I believe his intellect, knowledge, experience and concern for the public good will prove invaluable as we meet the challenges that lie ahead in road safety and implementing the Towards Zero strategy. Western Australia is very fortunate to have a person of Professor Holman’s calibre in such an important position.

I also believe the outgoing chair, Mr Grant Dorrington, is owed an enormous debt of gratitude from all sides of politics and, indeed, from the people of Western Australia. Twelve years ago road safety in Western Australia lacked focus. Death and serious injuries on our state’s roads were at horrific levels, yet Mr Dorrington welcomed the challenge to become the first chair of the inaugural Road Safety Council. Few people realise that this position does not come with any sizeable remuneration and that it is largely a voluntary role. Few people realise the demands of this job, just in terms of not only time but also emotional stress. I am told that Mr Dorrington endeavoured to personally contact many families of those killed in road crashes to offer his support.

He was always available to the media at weekends, after hours and on public holidays. He never complained about the demands of the position; rather, he maintained his passion and enthusiasm for the role and even agreed to remain in the position while we set about finding the best candidate for the job. Mr Dorrington also leaves our state’s roads in a much safer state than they were in when he took on the role. He started at a time when the annual fatality rate on Western Australia’s roads was 14.1 deaths per 100 000 people. Last year, that figure was down to 9.62 per 100 000. Clearly many lives have been saved directly as a result of his work and efforts amongst key decision makers to raise the profile of this terrible problem. Mr Dorrington has my appreciation and, I hope, the appreciation of the other side of the house as he retires from the post, which Professor Holman will officially assume in November.

I offer both men my congratulations and I hope that members from all sides of the house will join with me in offering Mr Dorrington our thanks and in wishing Professor Holman success for the future.
Award of a different kind

2009 People’s Choice winner

Vincent Fantauzzo

“Brandon”

Melbourne artist, Vincent Fantauzzo has won the 2009 Archibald People’s Choice Prize for his portrait of child actor Brandon Walters. Vincent Fantauzzo was highly commended at last year’s Archibald Prize for his triple-image portrait of his friend Heath Ledger, painted just weeks before the actor’s death. The painting also won the People’s Choice Award.

This year his subject is Brandon Walters, who played the young boy Nullah opposite Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman in Baz Luhrmann’s film Australia. Born in 1996 and raised in an Indigenous community near Broome, Western Australia, Walters was diagnosed with leukaemia at age six but overcame the cancer after a year in hospital. He had never acted before performing in Australia.

Each year a voter for the Archibald painting which receives the most votes is selected to win $2,500 and a $1,000 Myer gift card. The lucky winner is Anne McKenzie from Western Australia who voted for Vincent Fantauzzo’s painting of Brandon. This is the 21st year of the People’s Choice Prize. 33629 people voted this year.
In July this year the University of Western Australia started a new Master of Nursing Science course to enable graduates with a Bachelor's degree in any field to undertake two-years of intensive full-time study leading to eligibility for registration as a ‘registered nurse’ with the Nurses and Midwives Board of WA.

The course commenced with 30 students with backgrounds in a variety of other fields, including biological science, commerce, humanities and education, and included students who had only recently completed their first degree and others with years of experience.

UWA has not previously offered a degree leading to registration as a nurse. The course is an important step towards providing additional entry pathways into nursing and offers a career change for people who are interested in nursing but who don’t want to go back and do another undergraduate degree. Students without any previous education in human biology, are required to complete an 8-week on-line bridging course, before they enrol.

We hope it will enrich the nursing profession with mature, well-educated nurses with experience in lots of different fields. The two-year course will include clinical placements at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and other health agencies in WA, including a rural placement. The course will be predominantly delivered through the UWA School of Population Health in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and is offered in partnership with Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Department of Nursing.

These Commonwealth funded places are part of an Australia-wide initiative, providing 1,000 extra places for nurses. It is expected the number of places in the UWA course will increase over the next couple of years, but the UWA post-graduate course aims to fill a different niche in the market than that already being met by the undergraduate nursing courses at other Universities in WA.

The UWA Master of Nursing Science will bring together the science and practice of nursing within a public health framework to ensure that graduates are well prepared for the current and future challenges facing the health system.

Professor Judith Finn

Media: Pets and health

There have been many studies linking domestic animals to good mental health because they make good companions but now pets are thought to improve physical health as well. Compere says in Australia 63 per cent of people own a pet and about 45 per cent have a dog which research tells us is associated with reduced blood pressure and lowered heart disease. Compere speaks to Dr Hayley Christian, UWA researcher, about evidence that pet ownership ‘contributes to the wellbeing of entire suburbs, towns and communities’ (Radio 4GR (Toowoomba)).
Pet owners take a bow-wow

IT seems that appreciating the local environment has a lot to do with the amount of time you spend walking in your area.

Researcher Hayley Cuff from the University of Western Australia said a recent study showed that dog owners did more walking than non-dog owners.

“Our findings also showed that dog owners perceive their neighbourhood as more attractive than people who do not own dogs,” she said.

Dog owners were more likely to say it was easy to access parks and nature reserves than non-dog owners.

“What this suggests is that because dog owners have higher levels of motivation for walking in their neighbourhood, they develop a greater appreciation of the environment in which they live,” she said.

Susie Willis from the Petcare Information and Advisory Service said that at a time when everyone was encouraged to care for the environment and appreciate the natural world, it seemed that walking the dog could be one of the most simple and effective ways of achieving this at a local level.

“However, pet owners need to be aware of their responsibilities to the environment which include picking up dog droppings, keeping dogs on a lead in sensitive areas such as wetlands or bushland, ensuring that you do not take a pet to a prohibited area such as a National Park and making sure cats wear a bell on collars and are kept in at night,” she said.

Details: Petcare Information and Advisory Service; Phone 9555 9670 for more information and advice.

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Pet subjects:
Dog owners in tune with neighbourhoods

It seems appreciating the environment has a lot to do with the time you spend walking in your area. Australian research published in the American Journal of Public Health shows the research looks at the influence of dog ownership on physical activity and shows that dog owners do more walking than non-dog owners.

“However, it also shows that dog owners perceive their neighbourhood as more attractive than people who do not own dogs.” Hayley Cuff from the University of Western Australia said.

The research found dog owners reported their neighbourhood had more greenery, shade along footpaths and interesting things to look at while walking than people who didn’t own a dog.

“Dog owners were also more likely to say it was easy to access parks and nature reserves than non-dog owners,” Ms Cuff said.

“What this suggests is that because dog owners have higher levels of motivation for walking in their neighbourhood, they develop a greater appreciation of the environment in which they live. They are also likely to see walking a dog as a park as an added bonus rather than a reason for not going,” she said.

“At a time when we are all being encouraged to care for the environment and appreciate the natural world, it seems that walking the dog could be one of the most simple and effective ways of achieving this at a local level,” Susie Willis from Petcare Information and Advisory Service said.

Ms Willis said pet owners needed to be aware of their responsibilities to the environment which included picking up any dog droppings, keeping dogs on a lead in sensitive areas such as wetlands or bushland, ensuring that pets were not taken to prohibited areas such as national parks, and ensuring cats wore bells on collars and were kept in at night.

“Our research shows that pet owners are becoming more conscious of their responsibilities in caring for the environment,” she said.

“We were pleased to find that the general population also believes that this is the case.”

78 per cent of cat owners in 2006 said they always keep their cat in at night compared to 63 per cent in 1994 and, in the same year, 64 per cent of dog owners said they always pick up their dog’s droppings compared with only 33 per cent in 1994.

“61 per cent of the general population felt that the extent to which dog owners pick up after their dogs had increased a lot since 1994,” Ms Willis said.

Many researchers have shown that people who own pets are happier and healthier than people who don’t own pets, and it would seem that this includes dog owners having a more positive view of the environment in which they live.
Interview with Dr Lisa Wood, UWA, who speaks about the paper she will present to Australian Local Government Association Meeting urging councils to reconsider rules against pets in apartment buildings. She says there are ways to accommodate pet owners and non-pet owners. She says many people don’t want to downsize their property because they don’t want to give up their pet. She says it is often up to developers and the body corporate who often tend to feel it is easier not to allow pets. She says allowing pets is a good marketing niche, and that some cafes and restaurants are starting to offer this. She says pets can help to strengthen the social fabric of communities.

MEDIA RELEASE: Healthy communities created by pets

The latest findings on what it takes to have a healthy community will be released next week when the handbook Living Well Together, is launched at the Australian Local Government Association conference in Canberra. Edited by Dr Lisa Wood from the Centre for the Built Environment and Health at UWA, Living Well Together reveals the role pets have in creating social capital.

“Our original research, published in the Journal for Social Science and Medicine in 2005, showed that pets acted as a lubricant for social contact and interaction. The research found that pet owners were more likely to exchange favours with neighbours, to be involved in community issues and to create and benefit from higher levels of what is called ‘social capital’, says Dr Wood.

“Other research from the University demonstrated the role dogs have in motivating their owners to be more physically active. This has a flow-on benefit to the overall health of the owner and the dog. “With growing concerns both within Australia and around the world about the erosion of community well-being, these findings led us to look at how communities are working together to make the most of the benefits pets offer. “Once we started looking, we were staggered to find just how many examples there were of pets helping people from every walk of life. I’m sure that with the release of this publication, we’ll find many more programs,” says Dr Wood.

Some of the examples in Living Well Together are:

• Follow My Lead: an initiative of the Stirling Council in WA to help bring more seniors, women and young people into the Council’s physical activity programs. There are now more than 17 walking groups that involve people whether they have a dog or not. Follow My Lead is largely run by volunteers.

• Three C’s: a “Canines, Coffee and Conversation” program run by the Holdfast Bay Dog Owners Association in SA with the Holdfast City Council. The program involves regular gatherings of dog owners and pets and allows Council to recommend it to owners to socialize their dog in a safe environment.

• PetLinks: a program run in conjunction with the City of Port Phillip in Victoria where volunteers visit older or isolated members of the community to help care for their pets. The personal contact is important in maintaining links between community members and identifying when extra care may be required.

• BowMeow: a program that matches volunteers with pet owners who need assistance in caring for their pet while they are in hospital. The program services the inner city suburbs of Sydney and is supported by the Leichardt Council.

• Dogs on the Domain: an annual event hosted by the Hobart City Council as part of the Premier of Tasmania’s Get Walking campaign. Hundreds of people and their dogs participate in this event.

• The development of a policy to allow pets into a retirement community at Hope Island in Queensland. The residents in the community wanted to spend more time with their pets and the policy, developed with the assistance of a veterinary behaviourist, made this possible.

• A dog health program in indigenous communities in the Northern Territory has significantly reduced the incidence of dog bites and contamination of households from dog waste. The health of dogs has also improved.

• The introduction of volunteer walkers at the Domestic Animal Shelter in the ACT contributed to a 66% reduction in euthanasia rates and increased activity and interaction for the volunteers. Last year, over 95% of dogs available were placed in new homes.

“The handbook shows how pet ownership has resulted in benefits for different members of the community: families, older people, children and individuals. It also provides practical advice on how to get similar programs happening in your area,” says Dr Wood.

Living Well Together can be downloaded free from www.petnet.com.au
City living goes to the dogs

BY EMMA RUGG
The City of Sydney Council is welcoming new research encouraging more ‘pet-friendly’ apartments to be built across the country.

The Living Well Together report, by Dr Lisa Wood at the University of Western Australia, has been presented to the Australian Local Government Association. It recommends new apartment complexes be fitted with dog doors, balconies, soundproofing, tiling and door-to-door windows, making it easier to keep pets in small dwellings.

“Apartments are the most important companion for people, particularly people living on their own, and they actually save the national health bill an annual $4 billion,” said Lord Mayor Clover Moore. “There is quite a deal of research to show that people who have pets are emotionally, physically and mentally healthier than people who do not.”

The Vivas Lease apartments in Jackson’s Landing, Pyrmont Point, hosts one of Australia’s biggest pet-friendly communities. With almost 300 dogs living at the development, residents have even formed the ‘Pyrmont Pooch Party’, which meets regularly to hold parties for their pets and owners in one of the harbour-front parklands.

Resident Stephanie McEwan had searched long and hard for an appropriate place to live with her 9-year-old Fox Terrier, Lance, after moving to Sydney from New Zealand.

Ms McEwan describes Jackson’s Landing as a great meeting place for people with pets.

“When I first arrived here, my biggest point of communication with anybody was through my dog. I met most of my friends through having my dog and walking my dog in these common areas.”

There is no legislation forbidding pets in apartments, although some landlords and bodies corporate ban them.

The RSPCA says there is no problem with keeping either big or small pets in apartments, if owners walk them regularly, make routine toilet trips in the morning and afternoon, and provide stimulating toys while they’re out.

“In New York, it’s common to see bigger dogs in apartments, because some of the bigger breeds are actually more suited to apartments than the smaller ones,” said a spokesperson from the NSW RSPCA.

“Small dogs tend to have a lot more energy, where bigger dogs, like greyhounds, are usually happy to sleep and watch TV by their owners’ side.”

The latest findings of a new study looking at how communities have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, also include pets and their relationship with residents.

Dr Lisa Wood from the Centre for the Built Environment and Health at the University of Western Australia, said the study included some innovative case studies from Queensland.

These include the Gold Coast City Council’s initiative in which dog owners get access to free exercise training seminars and exercises in local parks.

A new policy to allow pets in retirement communities at Hope Island on the Gold Coast is another local case study featured.


“The research found that pets were more likely to change their owners’ lives than any other variable, such as community issues and so on.”

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Pets can play vital role in health and wellbeing

JUST FRIENDS... pets can help people from every walk of life.

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SPH media: The bigger picture of medicine costs

Dr. Anna Hynd, Population Health Unit, UWA, discusses her research into the dangers in skipping doses of prescribed drugs. Hynd explains that she looked particular medicines and concludes the largest drop occurred in drugs for asymptomatic conditions, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and osteoporosis. She calls on the Fed Govt to prevent future increases in the cost of medicine.

Prescription medicines are essential for chronic disease management; helping patients remain healthier and more productive and relieving the pressure on hospitals and other health services. However, recent research suggests many West Australian patients are reducing their use of essential medicines because of the costs, and that low-income patients have been most affected.

The implications of this for patients and the health system are worrying. Our research found that the number of prescriptions filled for certain medicines has fallen significantly since a sharp rise in costs in 2005. My colleagues and I examined Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) dispensing records for WA between 2000 and 2007. We focused on four groups of important medicines to treat high cholesterol, combination asthma treatments, proton-pump inhibitors (for stomach acid disorders), and a group of antipsychotics used to treat schizophrenia. Our study subjects were the highest cost beneficiaries of PBS prescriptions.

Compared to the period before the 24% co-payment increase, the number of high cholesterol prescriptions filled fell by 5%, proton-pump inhibitors fell by 9% and asthma medicines by 8%. There were significantly larger drops in use for concessional patients. It is likely that this will have serious clinical consequences for patients and place an increased burden on the health system. We urge policy makers to be very cautious about any further increases in patient costs.

CATHY O'KEARY
MEDICAL EDITOR

Poor skip vital asthma drugs

West Australians on low incomes are skipping essential medications for asthma and heart disease because they are struggling to pay the increasing cost of government-subsidised drugs, a study has found.

Research published in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health today shows poorer people are having their prescriptions filled only when they have no choice. While the population has increased significantly for drugs listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), the number of low-income patients filling prescriptions for asthma medicines has fallen by 8% since the 24% co-payment increase in 2005.

The implications of this for patients and the health system are worrying. Our research found that the number of prescriptions filled for certain medicines to treat asthma, high cholesterol and stomach acid disorders has fallen significantly, by between five and nine per cent, since a sharp rise in costs in 2005.

The contribution patients make toward the cost of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) prescriptions, or co-payments, has increased markedly in the last four years. Co-payments have traditionally increased with inflation but in 2005 co-payments were increased by 24%; raising the cost of each prescription from $3.70 to $4.60 for concessional patients(aged and disability pensioners and other low income groups) and from $23.10 to $28.60 for general patients. These increases may seem small for some patients, but are substantial for low income earners and chronically ill patients, who often require multiple medicines.

It is likely that this will have serious clinical consequences for patients and place an increased burden on the health system. We urge policy makers to be very cautious about any further increases in patient costs. 

Struggle for pricey scripts

Filing areas under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme have left low-income groups struggling to pay for some medicines, according to a study by Dr Anna Hynd, a researcher from the University of Western Australia. Asthma medications and cholesterol-lowering medications are amongst the prescriptions affected.

MEDIA RELEASE

Locations: Perth, Wollongong

Concessional patients and $32.90 for general patients. Safety net thresholds have increased by the equivalent cost of eight prescriptions since 2005.

In our research, my colleagues and I examined PBS dispensing records for WA between 2000 and 2007. We focused on four groups of important medicines; medicines to treat high cholesterol, combination asthma treatments, proton-pump inhibitors (for stomach acid disorders), and a group of antipsychotics used to treat schizophrenia. Compared to the period before the 24% co-payment increase, the number of high cholesterol prescriptions filled fell by 5%, proton-pump inhibitors fell by 9% and asthma medicines by 8%. There were significantly larger drops in use for concessional patients.

It is likely that this will have serious clinical consequences for patients and place an increased burden on the health system. We urge policy makers to be very cautious about any further increases in patient costs.
Researcher to test benefit of tea

BY BRENDA CHEW

A study of anti-cancer properties in green tea across two continents has led to an award for an independent researcher in Canning.

Wilson resident Min Zhang, from the School of Population Health at the University of WA, won a $10,000 grant from the New independent research in infrastructure award 2009. The grant will go towards researching the medical properties in green tea, which Ms Zhang has been working on for the last decade.

“The $10,000 will go towards the infrastructure cost,” she said. “Some of the cost associated with my research will include the communication services, accounts system, computers and so on.

“With support of the grant, I can update my computer and its network.

“A powerful laptop will be extremely useful for fieldwork in China.”

Ms Zhang said she was working in a number of collaborative projects with researchers in China.

Ms Zhang, the director of Lu Cha (Green Tea) Sino-Australian research collaboration, said the project aimed to identify modifiable factors, particularly green tea, with leukaemia, breast and colorectal cancer.

“My efforts required liaisons with Chinese collaborators and laboratory staff in the conduct and preparation of pilot study results,” she said.

Ms Zhang said she was glad when she found out she won the grant.

“It is great news that I won the grant as the award recognises outstanding and new independent researchers,” she said.

“I believe that it will make a significant difference in my research outcomes with the grant supported by WA Department of Health.”

Wilson resident Min Zhang was in China in April for her research about medicinal properties found in green tea.
Local wins $10,000 research award

A SECRET Harbour resident and University of WA health researcher is one of five West Australians to receive a $10,000 New Independent Researcher Infrastructure Support (NIRIS) Award.

Associate Professor Rachael Moorin PhD, from UWA’s School of Population Health, works across a broad range of health issues, including health services for rural cancer patients, the health effects of social inequality and health care financing.

Prof Moorin is also the director of the UWA node of the Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health.

Health Minister Kim Hames said the awards supported innovative health researchers by helping them meet the infrastructure costs of their work.

“The awards develop and support outstanding new medical and health researchers in WA,” Dr Hames said.

“The NIRIS awards assist recipients to develop their independent research career, provide recognition of their achievements, and support the development of innovative health research here in WA.

“Since 2001, the NIRIS Awards, which are funded and delivered by the Department of Health, have distributed $785,000 in research support to 60 WA-based researchers.”

Researcher wins grant

A SECRET Harbour resident has won a $10,000 research grant from the State Government to help with the infrastructure costs of her health-based research.

University of Western Australia School of Population and Health Associate Professor Rachael Moorin was one of five to win a 2009 New Independent Researcher Infrastructure Support Award, which aim to develop and support outstanding new medical and health researchers in WA.

Associate Professor Moorin works across a broad range of health issues including the provision of health services for rural cancer patients, the health effects of social inequality, and health care financing.

She is also the director of the university node of the Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health.

Health Minister Kim Hames said the awards helped recipients in developing their independent research career, provided recognition of their achievements, and supported the development of innovative health research in WA.

Mr Hames congratulated the five researchers who secured grants.

“This is important work in helping us understand and treat serious illness, prevent accidents and refine health policy,” Dr Hames said.

“All our recipients are outstanding new independent researchers and their work is supporting WA as a significant centre for cutting-edge health and medical research.”

The awards, which are funded and delivered by the Health Department, have distributed $785,000 in research support to 63 WA-based researchers since 2001.
Medical Research Awards

Researchers investigating the anti-cancer properties of green tea and the use of physical exercise to relieve the side effects of prostate cancer treatment are among the recipients of the 2009 New Independent Researcher Infrastructure Support Awards. State Health Minister Kim Hames said five WA researchers had received awards of $10,000 each to help meet the infrastructure costs of their research.

“These awards are aimed at developing and supporting outstanding new medical and health researchers in this State,” the minister said.

Award recipient Dr Daniel Galvão from Edith Cowan University (ECU) is looking at how physical exercise can help relieve negative side-effects of hormonal treatment for prostate cancer, with the aim of developing clinical guidelines for the use of physical exercise as a strategy to reduce treatment side-effects and improve quality of life for prostate cancer survivors.

Dr Lynn Meuleners from Curtin University’s Centre for Population Health Research is investigating crash risk factors for older drivers in the year before, and the year after, cataract surgery. Her research will produce guidelines to improve road safety for the State’s growing older population.

Associate Professor Rachael Moorin from the School of Population Health at UWA works across a broad range of health issues, including the provision of health services for rural cancer patients, the health effects of social inequality, and health care financing.

Dr Giuseppe Verdile from ECU’s School of Exercise, Biomedical and Health Sciences is investigating the brain’s production and regulation of the protein beta amyloid, which has a key role in Alzheimer’s disease.

Dr Min Zhang from the School of Population Health at UWA is involved in a number of research projects, with the major focus of her work in identifying modifiable factors, in particular green tea, associated with the incidence of, and survival from, adult leukaemia, breast and colorectal cancer.

The Department of Health funds the awards.
Students in the news

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Wednesday April 22, 2009**

**“DRINK, NOT DRUNK”**

**STUDENT ALCOHOL PROGRAM TARGETS BINGE DRINKING**

Health Promotion students from The University of Western Australia aim to reduce binge drinking at the University and increase knowledge of the negative health effects of excessive alcohol consumption.

The Student Alcohol Program will work with UWA’s Health Promotion Unit to raise awareness of the University’s Tertiary Alcohol Project and an on-line questionnaire evaluating risky drinking behaviors. Their efforts will culminate in the University’s annual Health Day to be held on Tuesday April 28 on the UWA Oak Lawn and at the UWA Tavern.

Getting drunk is increasingly accepted as a ‘normal’ part of the Australian drinking culture and alcohol is a major drug of concern in the community. National Health Surveys have shown that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level has increased from 8.2 per cent in 1995 to 13.4 per cent in 2004-05 (ABS 2006).

Road injury, suicide and assault are the most common causes of alcohol-attributable death for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also shows that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also shows that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also shows that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also shows that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also shows that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also shows that the proportion of people drinking at a risky level for young people aged 18 to 24. Research also.

Ms Gan said the campaign would also include advocacy for supportive academic and social settings within UWA. “For example, the release of exam timetables earlier in the semester may help students optimise their exam preparation,” she said.

“With job losses created by the global financial crisis, the already high anxiety levels of future workers – students – are soaring in the face of an uncertain future,” Ms Gan said. “In response to these tough times, the purpose of the campaign is to promote mental health and well-being. Head Hunters will focus on important key risk factors that are changeable. “The importance of sufficient and regular sleep will be promoted during Health Day with a relaxation tent. This is a direct response to many studies linking sleep loss – a common feature of university life – with poor mental health. Healthy food choices and social belonging will also be targeted, as they are two key contributors to good mental health.”

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The students hope their activities will raise awareness on campus about the risks of binge drinking as well as collecting information about student drinking patterns.

**Missing - Media statement, around Wednesday April 22, 2009**

The fourth Health Promotion student group were studying safe sex. There was a press clipping from the Catholic Church containing a somewhat negative comment on their fine work - if anyone has a copy of the media statement or the answering story, could you please send it to the School Manager, Peta Tilbrook? Many thanks!

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Tuesday April 21, 2009**

**CAMPAIGN AIMS TO HELP STUDENTS COPE WITH STRESS**

A Health promotion student group at The University of Western Australia is launching a campaign to help students deal with the stresses of university life. The group, called Head Hunters, is mounting a three-month campaign “Unwind your Mind” offering the best approaches to de-stressing. It will culminate next Tuesday, April 28, in Health Day, a promotional and educational exhibition on campus.

Head Hunters representative Annie Gan said WA Health Department statistics revealed mental illnesses affected one in five Australians and the age group at highest risk includes university students. “With job losses created by the global financial crisis, the already high anxiety levels of future workers – students – are soaring in the face of an uncertain future,” Ms Gan said. “In response to these tough times, the purpose of the campaign is to promote mental health and well-being. Head Hunters will focus on important key risk factors that are changeable. “The importance of sufficient and regular sleep will be promoted during Health Day with a relaxation tent. This is a direct response to many studies linking sleep loss – a common feature of university life – with poor mental health. Healthy food choices and social belonging will also be targeted, as they are two key contributors to good mental health.”

Ms Gan said the campaign would also include advocacy for supportive academic and social settings within UWA. “For example, the release of exam timetables earlier in the semester may help students optimise their exam preparation,” she said.

“We hope to create a legacy of healthy minds that sees being mentally healthy as a baton to be passed on to future students, the workforce and the community at large. We want happy students, happy workforce and a happy community.”

Students were encouraged to rest and sleep in style within the ‘Relaxation Tent’ at UWA’s annual Health Day, held on Tuesday, April 28.

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**Tuesday April 21, 2009**

**STUDENTS BOOST EXERCISE AWARENESS**

A group of fourth-year Health Science students from The University of Western Australia’s Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences aims to improve physical activity levels among UWA students by the end of the year.

The Student Physical Activity Reminder Taskforce (SPARTA) will launch its initiative next Tuesday, April 28 at Health Day, a promotional and educational exhibition held on campus with the UWA Student Guild, UWA Sports and the UWA School of Population Health.

SPARTA member Kirsten Rosato said physical inactivity was a major public health problem in Western Australia. “It contributes to obesity, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type II diabetes and some cancers,” Ms Rosato said. “Research has shown that engaging in regular moderate-intensity physical activity improves physical and mental well-being, quality of life and life expectancy. “International studies have shown that university students are faced with high academic workloads, time pressures, social distractions and low incomes – all contributing to poor levels of physical activity.”

Ms Rosato said a 2006 Health Department study found that 26 per cent of university students were not sufficiently active to maintain optimum health. Previous studies had shown students did not meet the daily recommended 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity.

Professor Fiona Bull, from the UWA School of Population Health, said all West Australians should try to include regular activity and lead an active lifestyle. “The UWA campus is a great environment for getting involved in new and popular activities, sports and recreation,” Professor Bull said. “Looking after your health can be a low priority for some students, so promoting different ways to be active is important.”

Health Day is aimed at promoting the benefits of physical activity, raising awareness of facilities already available to students and advocating for further facilities on the UWA campus. SPARTA representatives and their mascot Spartacus were available on Health Day, Tuesday, April 28, from 12pm to 2pm on the Oak Lawn near the UWA Guild Village.
Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research

Training workshops for researchers - pilot

53 researchers and PhD students from SPH and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research attended three pilot workshops in April. The workshops were facilitated by Anne McKenzie and Bec Hanley, a UK consumer advocate.

The aim of the workshops was to:

• Raise awareness of the contribution consumers and the community can make to research when involved as active partners.
• Identify and address barriers to consumer and community participation.
• Equip researchers with an understanding of ways to start involving consumers and the community as partners in their research work, and to develop good practice.
• Encourage and support researchers and students who have an interest in consumer and community involvement in research and/or a role in supporting existing participation initiatives.

The workshops were interactive and people had an opportunity to discuss the barriers to consumer and community participation, meet other researchers who are currently involved in consumer and community participation activities and listen to presentations from health consumers and Jill Thompson, a PhD student from Sheffield University in the UK. Jill is currently undertaking her PhD on exploring the relationships between the consumers and professionals in health research.

The feedback from the workshops was very positive and constructive with people having an opportunity to put forward their ideas about the supports that are needed to implement and sustain consumer and community participation. 44 people said they anticipated to make changes to how they work as a result of attending the workshops.

Following are some comments from researchers on what they liked most about the workshops:

• The international perspective and real life examples.
• Learning the process of dealing with the “How to” involve consumers in research.
• Varied, interesting and interactive.
• Being reminded about the stages; how, when etc.
• Consumer perspective session was very informative.
• Active participation; hearing other’s ideas; positive feedback and expertise of workshop leaders.
• Raised awareness of the benefits.
• Excellent format of workshop. Great variety in discussion groups, facilitated discussion, presentations, guest presentations.
• The exercises where ideas were generated – some very interesting.

Feedback from the workshops has been used to inform the development of a training package for researchers on the ‘how and why’ of involving consumers and the community in research.

The next training workshops for researchers will be held in December 2009 as a 2 day Summer School course.

See http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/courses/summer-school/involvement-research for more information or contact Anne McKenzie on telephone 64888176 or email Anne.McKenzie@uwa.edu.au.
SPH out and about - bringing them to us

18th Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA) National Conference “Go West, Make Health Promotion a Priority”

With more than 500 state, national and international delegates, the recent 18th AHPA National Conference ‘Go West, Make Health Promotion a Priority’ held in Perth (17 - 20 May 2009) did just that, allowing plenty of learning and networking opportunities away from the day-to-day hustle and bustle of the office.

UWA was a sponsor of the event and as well as an exciting range of presenters and invited speakers, this conference had a major exhibition and trade display for companies, organisations and services which play a significant role in health promotion. SPH was well represented having our very own stall promoting our undergraduate and post-graduate courses to prospective students (see pictures). Many thanks to the CBEH research team for setting-up and manning the SPH display and drumming up a lot of interest.

With the theme of ‘Evidence, Advocacy and Action’, the dynamic program showcased leaders in health promotion and provided fantastic opportunities for everyone to participate, network and share their experiences with others. Conference keynotes came from varied backgrounds and disciplines, including Senator Louise Pratt (Senator for Western Australia), Professors Rob Moodie (Chair, Global Health, The University of Melbourne), Penny Hawe (Markin Chair in Health and Society, AHFMR Health Scientist, University of Calgary) and Mike Daube (Director, Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA, Curtin University of Technology), Mick Gooda (Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health), Tori Saint (Research Assistant, Flinders University) and Trisha Broadbridge (REACH Foundation). Each gave powerful presentations with different messages and outcomes for us to consider. Keynotes updated us on grass roots interventions, groundbreaking research and facing adversities (personal and professional).

The conference was more than just presentations, symposiums, workshops and networking, with the Local Organising Committee making a conscious effort to host a ‘health promoting’ conference. Examples of ‘walking the walk’ and ‘talking the talk’ also included a number of lunchtime activities being offered – chair exercises, stretching, strengthening and stabilisation, ‘Finding 30’ through short walks outside along the foreshore and even laughter yoga!

The conference dinner MC’d by our own Professor Billie Giles Corti, changed gears and networking moved aside for dancing. During the evening Dr Bill Kean introduced Dr Gauden Galea who gave a pre-recorded DVD presentation of the Eberhard Wenzel Memorial Oration. Trevor Shilton also gave a ‘Ray James Tribute’ speech and announced the National AHPA Ray James Award which is expected to commence in 2010. After the formalities, the music was turned up, and attendees hit the dance floor (and some the stage to sing with the band) and danced the night away.

By Gina Wood
In brief

UWA PG Expo
Thursday 14 May, University Club.
Splendidly personned by Jannette Barrett and Di Valli, the UWA Postgrad Expo was a great success and the SPH section was kept busy for the whole afternoon.

Stirling Highway expo
Monday 3rd August.
Many thanks to Rachael Moorin for doing a great job of promoting our BHSc course and the School in general.

UWA Open Day - Albany campus
Thursday 6th August.
Many thanks to Ania Stasinska for going all the way to Albany to promote the School and our courses.

4th International Congress for Innovations in Nursing
27-29 May, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.
SPH joint-sponsored the Welcome Reception and a booth with UWA (thanks to Judith and Ian and helpers for setting up).

In addition to Judith and (honorary SPH personage Ian), attendees included Yvonne Hauck, Rosemary Saunders, Louise Schreuders, Sonya Rogal and Sally Wilson (the latter wearing both her UWA and Curtin hats).

RCNA Nursing and Health Expo
Sunday 24 May, Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.
RCNA Nursing and Health Expo booth - huge thanks to Judith and Ian for setting up the booth and to the whole nursing team for attending the expo and personing the booth.

UWA Open Day - Crawley campus
Sunday 9th August.
Open day was very successful with a steady flow of enquiries throughout the day and full lecture theatre. Courtney Taylor spoke from the student perspective and Myra Robinson gave the graduate perspective. There was a higher proportion of people asking about Health Science that in previous years and parents indicated that they had heard about the high profile health science has in the workforce. A number of staff and students assisted on the health science display. Ania Stasinska did the pre-day planning and organisation; Jane, Vicky, Fiona and Jannette were there on the day. Students who assisted were: Courtney Taylor; Alex Clark; Kate Ryan; Stephanie Scott; Rachel Dennis; Laura Shearwood; Hannah Barrington; Anna Pitman; Saifuddin Essajee.

Photos to right: Health Science booth, UWA Open Day
Taking SPH to them - Conferences

iHEA World Congress on Health Economics in Beijing

The International Health Economics Association (iHEA) held the 7th World Congress on Health Economics in Beijing, China July 12-15. The theme was “Harmonizing Health and Economics”. Over 2000 delegates attended more than 1200 presentations in 270 sessions with up to 15 rooms active for each concurrent session.

The conference included three Plenary Sessions over the four days. Mr Han Qide gave the first, presenting China’s extensive health reform process, the achievements so far and challenges ahead. Prof Uwe E. Reinhardt presented second, giving an entertaining overview of the issues (joking health reform is never finished so there will always be a demand for health economists) and questions left unanswered in Health Economics as he saw it, with an explicit call to the early career and young researchers to think outside the box. Prof Reinhardt made a point of the incomplete approach of characterising consumers and patients as fully informed, free of emotion, distraction or self-control issues, as if they were Mr Spock from Star Trek.

The second Plenary Session involved a discussion panel of Dr Winnie Yip’s presentation of specific challenges and issues of various aspects of China’s US$850 billion health reform process as it attempts to find the balance between providing a universal health system and maximising the beneficial effects of a free market. Aspects Dr Yip focused on were the major inequalities currently prevalent in the Chinese health system around rural insurance rates, reliance of public finance and rapid inflation of cost and care demands with a corresponding decline of efficiency. Dr Yip also discussed the 2014 goal of a 30-40-30 percentage split between government funded, social insurance and out of pocket health spend.

Prof Michael Keene presented his paper “Sources of Advantageous Selection: Evidence from the Medigap Insurance Market” for the final Plenary Session. The paper, co-authored with Hanming Fang and Dan Silverman, is also the 17th Arrow Award Winner (an award provided by iHEA for the best paper in Health Economics each year). The presentation highlighted a major gap in the current Health Economics research and policy approach in assessing why some health reforms do not achieve their desired purpose – the redesigned health care products are not understood by the consumers, especially the elderly population in the USA. Resulting from consumer misunderstandings of the attributes of different health insurance plans, predictions around their purchasing and usage behaviour are invalidated. This tied in with Prof Reinhardt’s point about Mr Spock consumers and patients in health economics models and brought the conference full circle.

Throughout the concurrent sessions our Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health (ACERH) colleagues from Australian National University (ANU) and the University of Queensland (UQ) presented in several sessions, including two organised sessions. One of the more prominent representatives for ACERH at the congress was Dr Francesco Paolucci, ACERH Research Fellow, who presented three times himself and chaired a session. Dr Paolucci will be visiting the School of Population Health as a visiting scholar with the intention of enhancing our collaboration between ACERH nodes in August or September this year. Our own Dr Rachael Moorin chaired a session on the final day relating to Health Equity issues in various Asian countries and Dr Anura Amarasinghe presented a paper on the cost-effectiveness of physical activity counselling subsidies.

One of the most frequently raised issues throughout the conference was the translation of research to policy and practice, no doubt a familiar problem for any field of health and medical science. This should produce some interesting papers and results for the next iHEA World Congress held in Toronto, Canada July 10-13 2011. The Toronto congress has the theme of “Transforming Health and Economics” providing opportunity for a diverse range of health economic related presentations to continue the major themes and issues raised.

By David Gibson
For more information: iHEA www.healtheconomics.org;
ACERH www.acerh.edu.au
7th International Conference on Diet and Activity Methods (ICDAM 7)

Theme: Diet and Physical Activity Assessment: From the Individual to the Environment, Washington, DC

SPH was well represented at this recent conference which has a particularly strong focus on measurement technologies and methodologies. Diet and physical activity are lifestyle and behavioural factors that play an important role in health and the etiology, prevention, and treatment of many chronic diseases. Accurate data on diet and physical activity are critical in understanding how these factors may impact health and functional status over the human lifespan. Professor Billie Giles-Corti presented a pre conference workshop on advances in the use of GIS methods in studies exploring the relationships between urban design and healthy lifestyle, particularly active lifestyles. Professor Fiona Bull presented a symposia on Global Surveillance of Physical Activity: Progress and Challenges. Both sessions were very well received. Indeed, the conferences overall was exceptionally well attended in all sessions, including the last session on a Sunday afternoon, such was the quality of presentations, scope of the programme and interest in this field. The conferences in co sponsored by the National Cancer Institute, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences and held every 3 years. Rome will host the next event in 2012, and in 2015 it will be coming down under. More information on this year’s event, including the programme, is still accessible via http://www.icdam.org/index.cfm

By Fiona Bull
Creating Good Health Through Good Design Seminar

University Club, 28 July 2009

The Centre for Built Environment and Health's (C_BEH) foundation corporate sponsor, Minter Ellison, co-hosted and sponsored a special seminar event to support the Centre's research work at the University Club on Tuesday 28th July. Ms Margie Tannock, partner at Minter Ellison and one of C_BEH's Advisory Board members, along with the rest of a very active and committed Advisory Board, were keen to bring together key industry, academics and government participants to provide an opportunity to showcase some of the Centre’s research in key areas relevant to health and planning.

An overview of the Centre’s development and key research interests that brings together planning, urban design, transportation planning and health was provided by the Centre’s Director, Professor Billie Giles-Corti. Dr Hayley Christian outlined the role the built environment plays in addressing the obesity epidemic, especially in reducing sedentary behaviour, with aspects of the latest research findings from the longitudinal RESIDE study being showcased. Jacinta Francis, PhD candidate, highlighted some of the findings from her research which looks at the question of ‘Does quality public open space enhance mental health?’ Finally, Karen Villaneuva, another PhD candidate in the Centre, presented findings from two studies she has been working on - TRavel, Environment and Kids (TREK) Project and the TREK’s Children’s Independent Mobility Study. Data collected to date is being analysed to identify those factors that influence active transport and independent mobility behaviour for children.

Networking and a chance to engage in conversations with potential new partners and people followed the formal part of the seminar whilst overlooking the tranquil and beautiful Swan River.
Travels

The Way of the Sufi

During my visit to Istanbul to present a paper at the 12th World Congress of Public Health in April 2009, I took an evening off to witness a Sufi Music Concert. The Sufis are usually described as a variant of Islam, but it is probably more accurate to describe Sufism as one of Islam’s earliest stages, whose origins date back to the 7th century in Persia. A major difference between Sufis and mainstream Islam is that Sufis are opposed to Jihad in Allah’s name. The renowned Darqawi Sufi teacher Ahmad ibn Ajiba defined Sufism as “a science through which one can know how to travel into the presence of the Divine, purify one’s inner self from filth, and beautify it with a variety of praiseworthy traits”. In Istanbul, a Sufi seeker is described as a Dervish Sufism was considerably influenced by the Hindu discipline of Yoga in such areas as physical postures (asanas) and breath control (pranayama). Istanbul’s Whirling Dervishes’ traditions extend over 800 years. Although it is currently quite commercialised (e.g. most major hotels in Istanbul help to advertise each night’s show to tourists) the actual ceremony presents as a sacred religious ritual performed by Muslim priests in a prayer trance to Allah.

The ritual I witnessed commenced with the playing of Sufi music, which is characterised by repetition of mantras such as “there is no God but Allah” (I agree with only the first four words of this mantra), and such repetition was meant to immerse Sufi dancers in the real meaning of the phrases sung. The dancers then enter the stage in a sober procession, and proceed to dance in well choreographed stages. When the crescendo is reached, the dancers indeed whirl, but still manage to maintain unique posture, with the left hand pointing downwards, the right hand pointing upwards, eyes (almost) closed and the head tilted slightly to the left. How five dancers managed to maintain this unique, ecstatic, choreographed dance posture for 30 minutes amazed me. I left the performance with a feeling that I have heard “the tunes of the Gates of Paradise”.

By Niyi Awofeso
Visions of Papua New Guinea

Following are just some of them, especially our daily activities in delivering of primary health care in the highlands of PNG.

Children lining up to be vaccinated when I was conducting a bush patrol during an measles outbreak in that part (June 2008).

Small planes like this are normal used in rural highlands areas of PNG to delivery health services, with complement from Christian Denominations known as (MAF) Missionary Aviation Fellowship. All major churches come together for funding and flying are based on volunteers pilots from Australia, especially ex-serviceman and women.

Mothers bringing their sick children and themselves walking over a traditional bridge to get health services. They have to walk 20-30 kilometres to get health service and than walk back. Health Service is not that easy as for those of us in the rural communities in PNG.

Rugby League legend Mal Meninga was in a remote community of Highlands of PNG doing awareness on HIV/AIDS. He is a house hero there and his present was great to some followers and die hard fans.
The Health Workforce in PNG are the Nurses which occupy 60% of the total Health workforce both in rural and urban areas. PNG National Nurses Symposium are held annually to discuss technical papers and other Research papers. 2007 Symposium was one of them as shown at Wewak ESP PNG. The nurses are from the highlands of PNG.

TB is re-emerging again globally because of so many contributing factors like HIV/AIDS and etc. This old lady is diagnosed as having TB of the spine (POTT'S Disease) and currently on TB treatment known as FDC at rural Highlands of PNG.

Health is a big issue for the community in PNG. This pictures taken before I was to start a training on Man's involvement in Family Planning at the highlands of PNG (2008).

Certificates were also issued to the local communities who had a one week training on Community Action and Participation, through a WHO concept known as Healthy Island. The participants and facilitators standing near the newly opened Health Centre.

I think above will add little bit of flavour as well.

by John Masili
Health Ball

The masquerade themed 2nd Annual Health Ball was a roaring success. The 270 people in attendance, 120 of which were made up of Staff/Postgrads/Alumni and friends, had a fantastic time and were spoilt with a delicious three course meal and live entertainment.

Congratulations to the Health Science Society for leading the Ball with the help of the Population Health Postgraduate Student Society, Health Science Alumni and SPH. A special thank you to D’Arcy Holman for his generosity in providing a major start-up grant making the Ball a possibility.

Three special awards were presented. Congratulations to Fatima Haggar for winning the Postgraduate Academic and Community Achievement Award and Alex Bremner for winning the Staff Excellence in Teaching/Student Support Award. Esther Dawkins won the Health Science Alumni Community Achievement Award. Well done also to the recipients of the Highly Commended certificates and all nominees. Many thanks to all of the judges who took the time to judge the awards. Thank you to SPH for funding the Award Honour Boards.

The Health Ball will be back next year and is sure to be a very impressive event! So we look forward to seeing you there.
Pop Goss - Social Club news

Cup Cake Day for the RSPCA

Cup Cake Day for the RSPCA was a delicious success! A huge array of colourful, beautifully decorated and very unhealthy cupcakes filled the tearoom, and the people soon followed! Thanks to all those who attended and made a donation. Over $160 was raised for the RSPCA. Special thanks to those who made the cupcakes for us all to enjoy: Margaret Mathews, Fiona Maley, Fiona Wood, Gina Wood, Paula Hooper, Alex Bremner, Terri Pikora, Vicky Gray and anyone else we may have forgotten!

The Dogs Refuge Home in Shenton Park were very pleased to receive the big hamper of dog food and toys, so many thanks to those who contributed to that. Never fear cat lovers we will be having a cat food collection for the cat shelter later in the year!

By Vicky Gray
Walking Group Diaries

Wednesday 29th July 2009

We have been having many fun adventures in the Walking Group over the last couple of months! Our biggest turnout was 19 people; unfortunately that was also the day Vicky was leading and got us all lost in the wilds of Kings Park. Anne got tangled up in vine leaves, Terri got attacked by a magpie, Elina went riding on a kangaroo, and David burst into tears as soon it went dark! And as if that wasn’t enough Margaret got pneumonia when it reached 4 degrees and Fiona threw a tantrum when her hair got wet! Luckily, Anna and Denise had some sense and navigated our way back to SPH some five hours later. Unfortunately, Jannette (or was it Annette?) and Jane didn’t make it back- we did try searching for them but got bored after half an hour so just went home. It’s been two weeks now so if anyone has seen them please let us know as their families are starting to worry!

For some reason we’ve never had such a large turn-out of walkers again- No idea why!? Especially because on our last walk along the Swan River, we saw dolphins and even a whale!
Hopefully, we’ll get a few more members wanting to join. We’ve come up with some great new membership benefits which entitles newbies to:

- **a whistle** (for use only in extreme serious lost situations)
- **first aide pack** which may be required for off-track walking e.g. scratches; breakages, mozzie bites and animal attacks
- **sleeping bag** in case we really cannot get back to find you and you have to camp overnight

**DISCLAIMER:** Please note, other than the fact we are a walking group, the entire contents of the above excerpt are fictional. We really are a lot of fun though and hope more of you will join us for a chat and a walk from 4.30pm to 5.30pm on a Wednesday afternoon for our non-dangerous walks. We are happy to amend the walking day if there is enough interest. Please contact

Vicky      victoria.gray@uwa.edu.au
or Marg    mmathews@meddent.uwa.edu.au

to join our e-mailing list and stay tuned for our next diary excerpt!
Farewell for Max Bulsara

What can we say - a series of great speeches highlighted the strong involvement of Max in the School over so many years. The event was held in the Cullity Gallery, which added a touch of class, as did the elegant afternoon tea. We miss his great smile... but we know we haven’t completely lost him. After all, we’ve made him an adjunct... and kept his wife Caroline, which should come in handy for ransom and blackmail purposes:-)

Events coming soon and helpful reminders

Multicultural lunch

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UWA Staff Fun Sports Day

Coming soon - Georgie Dolphin is coordinating the whole Faculty this year, so when she says jump we’ll ask “how high?”

Well you would, wouldn’t you?

Melbourne Cup

No idea what we’ll be doing with this yet - other than that the costume theme is likely to be the same as last year, that is, half formal/half casual AT THE SAME TIME.

SPH Christmas Lunch

Due to the popularity of last year’s Christmas festivities, this year we will be holding the SPH Christmas Lunch at the UniClub again.

Put it in your diaries now: Thursday 17th December.

It’s been a while, so in case you’ve forgotten, SPH Christmas Lunch looks a little like this:
Joke du jour

The Allergists voted to scratch it,
Dermatologists advised not to make any rash moves.
Gastroenterologists had sort of a gut feeling about it,
Neurologists thought the Administration had a lot of nerve,
and the Obstetricians felt they were all laboring under a misconception.
The Ophthalmologists considered the idea shortsighted.
The Pathologists yelled, ‘Over my dead body!’ while the Pediatricians said, ‘Oh, Grow up!’
The Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness,
Radiologists could see right through it, and
Surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing.
The Internists thought it was a bitter pill to swallow, and the Plastic Surgeons said, ‘This puts a whole new face on the matter.’
The Podiatrists thought it was a step forward, but the Urologists felt the scheme wouldn’t hold water.
The Anesthesiologists thought the whole idea was a gas, and the Cardiologists didn’t have the heart to say no.

LolCat du jour

Website du jour
http://www.thinkgeek.com/geektoys/plush/a55e/

Youtube du jour