



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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FACULTY OF HEALTH RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Did you know?

Apology to VCs Research Award Winner – Dr Helen Stain (CRRMH)

Last edition we listed the Faculty winners of the VCs Research Excellence Awards. Unfortunately we omitted Dr Helen Stain from the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health who also received a well deserving Research Excellence Award. Congratulations Dr Stain.

Welcome to Jodi Smallmon

Jodi Smallmon has joined the Faculty of Health in the role of Management Accountant. Any financial enquiries (excluding Research cost collectors) should be directed to Jodi at

Jodi.Smallmon@newcastle.edu.au.

2010 Block Funding Expenditure

All 2010 Block Funding Expenditure needs to be **committed** in Technology One by 30th November 2010 and spent by 31st March 2011.

What are JRE and SRE?

Have you familiarised yourself with the conditions of the new block funds available from JRE (Joint Research Engagement) and SRE (Sustainable Research Excellence). Outlines can be found at [http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Research/Pages/JointResearchEngagement\(JRE\).aspx](http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Research/Pages/JointResearchEngagement(JRE).aspx) and [http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Research/Pages/SustainableResearchExcellence\(SRE\).aspx](http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Research/Pages/SustainableResearchExcellence(SRE).aspx)

IGS?

The new JRE funding has replaced IGS (Institutional Grants Scheme). All IGS cost collectors have been closed off and replaced with new JRE cost collectors. If you are unaware of your new cost collector number please contact Jodi Smallmon at Jodi.Smallmon@newcastle.edu.au.

2010 Conference/Travel Grants

The Faculty has again provided funding to the amount of \$220,000 for Travel/Conference Grants in 2010. The Conditions and application details can be found at

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/grants-and-contracts/internal-grants/conference-travel-grants.html>.

If you would like to contribute to this Newsletter please contact Shirley.Savv@newcastle.edu.au

SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES & PHARMACY RHD UPDATE

The recognition gained by several of our RHD students bears testimony to the high standard of the research being carried out in our university. Four students have received prestigious awards for their research in 2009-2010.

Ms Natalie Beveridge just recently won a poster prize at the Winter Conference on Brain Research in Breckenridge, Colorado held from January 22-30, 2010. The poster was entitled "A Reduction of miR-17 Family Expression in Cultured Neuroblasts as a Hallmark of Their Transition Through Differentiation" (supervised by Drs Murray Cairns and Paul Tooney).

Ms Divya Mehra has won two poster prizes for elucidating the mode of action of an effective anti-arrhythmic drug entitled "Flecainide Blocks Ca²⁺ Release Channels Associated with CPVT-Induced Cardiac Arrhythmias". This poster received prizes at the Australian Society for Biophysics and the Australian Neuroscience Society (Supervised by A/Profs Derek Laver and Dirk van Helden).

Ms Melinda Phang received the 2009 Nestlé Nutrition Institute Emerging Researcher Award. This was in recognition of her recent publication of a high quality, original research paper with outstanding implications and potential contributions to health, nutrition and prevention of thrombosis and related diseases (supervised by Prof Manohar Garg and Dr Lisa Lincz).

Mr Daniel Johnstone received the 2009 Research Award from the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) (supervised by Dr Liz Milward and Prof. Rodney Scott).

A/Prof Derek Laver
RHD Co-ordinator, School of Biomedical
Sciences & Pharmacy

SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

The School will be holding two workshops for researchers through its Australian Centre for Evidence Based Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEBaND) over March and April. The first is on 'Critical Appraisal of Scientific Literature' and the second on 'Conducting a Systematic Review', both presented by Associate Professor Clare Collins. Research Higher Degree students and early career researchers will particularly benefit from these events.

Associate Professor Clare Collins has also commenced a 4 year Career Development Award (Level 2, Research Fellowship) with the NHMRC. Her research plan is entitled 'Optimising dietary intake and nutrition and weight related health outcomes across the life stages'.

The School further plans to run workshops for Honours supervisors and examiners in 2010. The number of Honours students in the School has grown exponentially since 2007, with approximately 40 students undertaking Honours research projects this year at Callaghan and Ourimbah. These workshops are designed to be supportive but are also to facilitate consistency in experiences and expectations. Honours Convenors Dr Suzanne Snodgrass and Dr Imelda Burgman will be running these events.

Congratulations to former Honours student Philip Pickering who, along with his supervisor and Physiotherapy Lecturer Peter Osmotherly, has published his work in a prestigious A ranked (on the ERA list) journal:

Pickering PM, Osmotherly PG, Attia JR, McElduff P. An examination of outcome measures for pain and dysfunction in the cervical spine. A factor analysis. *Spine*. (in press).

Occupational Health and Safety Lecturer Maya Guest has also achieved a publication in an A* (top tier in ERA) journal and Occupational Therapy Lecturer Dr Imelda Burgman in an A ranked journal:

Duke J, Guest M, Boggess MM. Age related safety in professional heavy vehicle drivers: a literature review. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*. 2009; 42: 364-71.

Bourke S, Burgman I. Coping with bullying in Australian schools: How children with disabilities experience support from friends, parents and teachers. *Disability and Society*. (in press).



SCHOOL OF NURSING & MIDWIFERY

Annual Research Week Program

The school will conduct the annual research week program in March. This program provides an opportunity for research higher degree candidates to meet and access information and support to assist them with their research.

The program includes presentations from a visiting scholar, four confirmations of candidature, a mock confirmation panel session, 14 information sessions and research skills workshops and 9 student presentations.

Workshops will address topics such as: Endnote skills, ethics applications, learning support, focus groups, interviews, the supervisor- student relationship, data skills and preparing research presentations.

This program is well attended and is especially appreciated by the large number of part-time RHD students in the school.

The Joanna Briggs Institute Evidence Synthesis Group: University of Newcastle Evidence Based Health Care Group, Australia.

This Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG) is an Affiliated Collaborating Centre with The NSW Centre for Evidence Based Health Care, University of Western Sydney and was established at the end of 2009.

The Group Convenor is Dr Ashley Kable. Members of the Newcastle ESG currently include academics from the School of Nursing and Midwifery and School of Medicine and Public Health. There are currently 20 members who have completed the Joanna Briggs Institute Comprehensive Systematic Review Training Program.

Members are commencing work on several systematic reviews on the following topics: Simulation and clinical reasoning skills in health care, aggression and violence in health care, adolescent pregnancy and substance abuse, health professional attitudes to older people, management of skin tears in older people, older people and advanced care planning, health care needs of sex workers and complementary and alternative medicine in management of depression.

One systematic review has already been completed. The review protocol has published on the JBI website: <http://www.joannabriggs.edu.au/protocols/Protocol287.pdf>

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCHER PROFILE



Kypros Kypri PhD

Dr Kypros Kypri is a National Health & Medical Research Council Research Fellow.

He is a behavioural scientist interested in the evaluation of interventions to reduce unhealthy alcohol use and other risk behaviours.

Dr Kypri has expertise in several areas:

- The design, conduct and analysis of clinical trials of behaviour change interventions;
- Quasi-experimental evaluations of policy interventions;
- Web-based survey methods.

1. What got you interested in research?

I went to university to become a clinical psychologist and I knew little about research or what a PhD was. I spent my honours year at the University of California, San Diego, in the lab of an accomplished psychologist studying psychoactive substance use among youth. That experience opened my eyes to the possibilities of research and I realised that it probably suited me better than clinical work.

2. Who and/or what inspires you?

The possibility of making a difference. Public health science offers a great balance between the intellectual challenges of scientific enquiry and the application of findings to policy and practice. The latter necessarily involves interacting with power structures and sometimes challenging orthodoxies or vested interests. My heroes are those who conduct great research, give honest advice even when it might cost them, and who try to stay humble despite their success. I have been fortunate to have been exposed to several such people in my training and career so far.

3. What are you working on now?

I run five streams of empirical research, examples of which include the following.

Aetiological studies

A major question facing parents and policy makers is how to socialise children and adolescents in a way that minimises their risk of developing unhealthy alcohol use. In 2009, I was part of a team that received an ARC Discovery Project grant to recruit 600 10-year-olds and their parents, and follow them up over a minimum of five years. The aims are to determine whether parental supply of alcohol is associated with adolescent drinking over time, and to identify contextual factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between parental supply and progression in adolescent drinking.

Methodological research

For a century social scientists have been aware of reactivity to study conditions among participants in studies of human behaviour (the 'Hawthorne effect'). I've been working with an international team to develop a conceptual framework and a

program of research on the potential of such reactivity to interfere with the investigation of hypotheses and compromise the validity of inferences drawn. In 2009 we received an ARC Discovery Project grant to test hypotheses in large experiments which require thousands of participants. These experiments will be hard to implement but we think the findings will have considerable value for behavioural science.

Intervention trials

I am working with several early career academics at Newcastle and elsewhere on the adaptation of web-based screening and brief intervention (e-SBI) for unhealthy alcohol use and other risk behaviours. Having developed a research program in the last 10 years mainly in the area of university student hazardous drinking, the goal now is to conduct large, rigorous clinical trials of e-SBI in different settings, e.g., high schools, hospitals, and workplaces, and for other health behaviours.

Policy evaluations

In 2008, the NSW government restricted the closing times of pubs in the central business district of Newcastle to 3.30am to reduce violence and other anti-social behaviour. This was unusual given the tendency over the last 30 years in Australia and many other countries toward permitting longer trading hours. It provided a rare opportunity for quantifying the effects of such a policy. Colleagues and I in the SMPH are comparing night-time assault rates in the central business district with those in Hamilton (a control site) before and after the restriction.

Vested interests in research

The tobacco industry used its relationship with universities and scientists to obfuscate the science concerning the health effects of smoking and to build its social credibility. Most Australian universities now have policies banning tobacco industry funding. The alcohol industry is actively involved in the funding of health research and uses similar strategies to the tobacco industry. In a recent survey of Australian university vice chancellors we discovered that only one university had a policy concerning the receipt of alcohol industry funding, and in general the issue had not been considered by governing bodies. In addition, there was no routine process of advising staff of the risks to reputation of accepting alcohol industry funding. Future research in this area will investigate such policies in other countries and methods for encouraging universities to formally consider the issue.

4. What are your goals?

Aside from keeping the above program running, I would like to continue to grow my research group, including more academic staff, support staff and postgraduate students, and to develop a world leading web-survey laboratory specialising in clinical trials of behavioural interventions.

5. What's the last book you read for fun?

I started about five books in 2009 and didn't finish one. Before that I read *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood and *Saturday* by Ian McEwan, both of which I thoroughly enjoyed.

6. What do you do when not working on your research?

Mainly look after my children but I also play soccer, backyard cricket, and whatever else the kids are into, like dancing, wrestling, and dress-ups.

7. What's your favourite Newcastle beach?

My office is in the David Maddison Building, a stone's throw from Newcastle Beach, where I play touch football some lunchtimes. Having a beautiful, uncrowded beach so close to the medical school and city is pretty special and I'll be sad when we're moved to John Hunter Hospital in 2012.

8. Where's your favourite place for coffee?

The tea room on the 3rd floor of the David Maddison Building: close, cheap, and I can chat to workmates en route.

AUSTRALIAN NEUROSCIENCE SOCIETY HONOUR

Professor John Rostas was awarded an Honorary Membership of the Australian Neuroscience Society (ANS) "for his contributions to neuroscience, including his six terms as ANS Editor and his continued activity in regional and national forums setting neuroscience research policy". In February, at the ANS Annual Conference, he was presented with the ANS Medallion designed by the renowned Australian medallionist and sculptor Michael Meszaros. This is a sweet reprise for John because, when the ANS commissioned the medallion in 1991, John was the ANS Editor and had the enjoyable task of liaison with the sculptor on the design.



CHERP

We are pleased to announce that the CHERP Year in Review 2008-2009 is now available. It provides a summary of our key activities and achievements during 2008-2009 and is available at <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/cherp/professional-resources/annual-reports.html>.

FROM THE DESK OF THE DHoF RESEARCH

Welcome to a New Research Year

This time of year is one of the busiest for research grant applications. The excitement and intellectual challenges of formulating new research plans is inevitably dampened by the drudgery of justifications, progress reports, clunky on-line forms and the realistic likelihood of success. But researchers power on anyway driven by curiosity and passion. If we weren't optimists we wouldn't be in research. Good luck to all of you who have already submitted, are still battling with, or are yet to begin research grant applications in 2010.

Your Time Counts Survey

I hope that all of you are already half way through documenting your activities during the two week period

beginning February 22. The results of this survey are most important to our future research infrastructure funding and helping us to secure our proper share of the new SRE funding stream. Please ensure that you complete this survey and the second 2 week survey that will be conducted in the May-June period. Further information is available at www.newcastle.edu.au/yourtimecounts

ERA Submission

One of the most important research related tasks facing Faculty researchers this year is the preparation of the University's submission for the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment. The ERA will provide a numerical, bibliometrics based assessment of the quality of the research output of every University in Australia by field of research, relative to average world standard and average Australian standard. The output of conjoint staff will be counted. I will be recruiting members of Faculty very soon to form working parties (called Cluster Advisory Groups) to help prepare the submission in the two research clusters that relate to our Faculty: Cluster 7 – Biomedical and Clinical Health Sciences and Cluster 8 – Public and Allied Health Sciences. It is anticipated that these working parties will meet regularly from March to May to help prepare the University's submission.

To ensure that we correctly reflect your research output please log in to Research Portfolio Manager (<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/division/research/rpm.html>) to check whether all your publications between 2003 and 2008 are listed correctly. Please also assign the appropriate Field of Research Code (FOR) to each of your publications.

Scholarships Awarded for 2010

A total of 29 new RHD scholarships were awarded for 2010 to RHD students enrolled in the Faculty of Health including 21 APAs (Australian Postgraduate Awards) which was double the number awarded in 2009. The largest growth was in the School of Medicine & Public Health. The distribution of scholarships between the Schools was: Biomedical Sciences & Pharmacy – 13; Medicine & Public Health – 12; Health Sciences – 2; Nursing & Midwifery – 2. Every Priority Research Centre in which Faculty researchers are represented received at least 1 RHD scholarship.

The conditions of the perpetual Emlyn & Jennie Thomas Postgraduate Medical Research Scholarship in Cardiovascular Health Research were revised last year by the donor, Mrs Jennie Thomas. It is now a top up scholarship worth \$10,000 pa (full time) post confirmation that can be awarded each year to a PhD or research Masters student working in any field of research related to cardiovascular health. The quality of the applicants in this first round of applications was so high that the committee awarded two scholarships to commence in 2010.

Congratulations to;

Heidi Janssen "The use of an enriched environment to improve recovery after stroke" supervised by Dr Neil Spratt and A/Prof Louise Ada.

Divya Mehra "Effective anti-arrhythmic drugs: How do they work?" supervised by A/Profs Derek Laver and Dirk Van Helden.

The Isobel Hancock Bequest Scholarship in the area of 'Improving the Health of Children' was awarded to Brooke Sinderberry "Do parenting attributes and parenting styles affect the development trajectory of infants with genetic disorders" supervised by Dr Linda Campbell and A/Prof Michael Hunter.

Professor John Rostas
Deputy Head of Faculty Research