



# AIM HIGH

[www.newcastle.edu.au](http://www.newcastle.edu.au)

JUNE 2009 > ISSUE ONE

## FACULTY OF HEALTH RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first Faculty of Health Research Newsletter. This bi-monthly Newsletter will provide updates on our research achievements, valuable information that directly relates to your research and other interesting articles.

### Did you know?

#### New PRC in Health Behaviour

The new Priority Research Centre in Health Behaviour was officially launched at the beginning of this year. Headed by Laureate Professor Rob Sanson-Fisher the Centre aims to undertake high quality applied, intervention-focused health behaviour research to reduce preventable health risks, increase equitable and evidence-based health care delivery, and reduce the psychosocial impact of disease and disasters on individuals and the population.

#### Peer Review of ARC and NHMRC Applications

A Faculty peer review process is available for ARC and NHMRC grant applications. Full review now includes a methodological review conducted by the Faculty. For further information on peer reviews contact Shirley Savy at [Shirley.Savy@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Shirley.Savy@newcastle.edu.au)

#### Peer Review of Human Research Ethics Applications

All HREC and NEAF applications for research not resulting from a competitive grant must be submitted for Faculty peer review before submission to the University of Newcastle HREC. For further information please contact Shirley Savy at [Shirley.Savy@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Shirley.Savy@newcastle.edu.au)

#### Voluntary Register of Supervisors

The Voluntary Register of Supervisors is up and running. If you have not registered as yet details can be found at <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/students/research-h-higher-degree/supervision/voluntary-register.html>

## SMPH RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP INITIATIVES

The School of Medicine and Public Health Research Advisory Group has implemented a comprehensive workshop program targeting Early Career Researchers (ECR) and Research and Higher Degree (RHD) Students. Workshops are available for registration at no cost to the participant.

- Writing Workshop – concentrating on the structure of scientific articles and presenting findings.
- Presentation Skills Workshop – an interactive workshop providing participants with an opportunity to develop their oral presentation skills.
- MS Word Workshop – a workshop targeted specifically for RHD candidates on utilising MS Word for large documents.
- STATA Workshop – a short course on data manipulation and statistical analysis in Stata using 'do' files.
- Workshops are publicised via email notifications to ECRs, RHD Students and Supervisors.

For further information contact the SMPH Research Administration Office on [smph-research@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:smph-research@newcastle.edu.au).



## SCHOOL OF NURSING & MIDWIFERY

The School of Nursing and Midwifery has been engaged in several international collaboration activities this year that constitute important strategic initiatives for expanded internationalisation.

A series of research and teaching and learning initiatives are being developed with colleagues at Yamaguchi University in Japan including a project in genetic nursing education involving Korea, Japan and Australia. Joining the Asia Pacific Alliance of Health Leaders that involves universities in Japan, Korea and Thailand that convenes an international conference.

Professor Mike Hazelton has been appointed as honorary director of the Cheju Halla College Problem Based Learning Centre in Korea, a significant collaborative teaching and learning initiative.

Several researchers in the school are attending an International Clinical Skills conference to present results of current research and develop strategic networks to inform a major project on Examining the impact of simulated patients and information communication technology on nursing students' clinical reasoning.

Professor Mike Hazelton is visiting Hsin Sheng College of Medical Care and Management in Taiwan to explore possibilities for recruiting PhD students and arranging undergraduate student study tours.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery conducted a Research Week Program for Research Higher Degree candidates and staff in March 2009. The program included 14 research skills and information sessions, two sessions by visiting scholars on topics of interest to researchers in the school, eight RHD candidate presentations, five confirmation panels and several social events. These sessions attracted a lot of interest and very positive evaluation from staff and students. The program will be offered each year at a similar time for

the benefit of commencing students. A mock confirmation panel is being considered for inclusion in the next program.

Later this year a program conducted by the Joanna Briggs Institute will train several researchers in the school to join an evidence synthesis group in collaboration with the University of Western Sydney Centre for Evidence Based Health Care to undertake systematic reviews.

## BRAIN AND MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH INNOVATIONS FESTIVAL SEMINAR

The Centre for Brain and Mental Health Research, in conjunction with HMRI, hosted a seminar on the 21<sup>st</sup> May as a part of the 2009 Hunter Innovations Festival. This seminar was open to researchers, clinicians and the public, and showcased current clinical collaborations and research being performed by members of the Centre. The evening comprised presentations from our Stroke, Schizophrenia, Affective and Addictive Disorders, Pain and Sensory Dysfunction and Emerging programs. This was followed by an open forum for questions from the audience members.

The evening was well attended both from the scientific community and members of the public. Interviews with our senior researchers will be podcast on ABC local radio (link to be advised). Feedback from the evening was very positive, with the public showing great appreciation for this insight into current research in mental health. Based on this feedback, the Centre is looking to hold future specialised seminars, which will showcase the research of each program in more depth. Overall the seminar was very successful, and an excellent demonstration of our Centre's translational research strengths.

## MEDIA RELEASES

(Jan to May '09)

- Investigating New Treatments for Melanoma
- Improving the Fertility of Older Women
- UoN forensic dentist provides assistance in disaster victim identification
- 'No scientific evidence' that hi-tech running shoes prevent injuries
- New focal point for prostate cancer research in the Hunter
- Media health reporting: accuracy improving but still a way to go

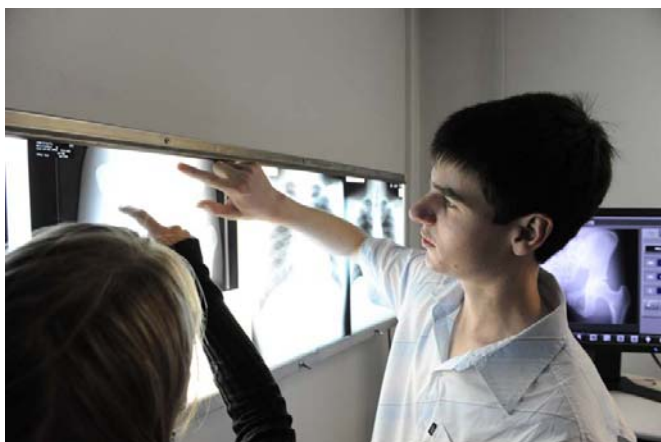
- Researchers find current drug can treat rare heart disorder
- Flutracking.net kicks off for 2009
- Do you want to learn more about your child's health?
- Quiz brain and mental health experts at free seminar
- \$35 million realises plans for HMRI building

To find out more about these media releases and others go to <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/news/index.html>

## SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

In December 2008 a publication mentoring workshop was held for School staff to assist attendees in developing practical strategies to write and submit research manuscripts. This will be built on in 2009 with further writing workshops at both Ourimbah and Callaghan. In addition, a School Research Day has been planned for July 24th to facilitate research collaborations across disciplines within the School and networking. The School Research Committee has promoted the REfocus@UoN researcher development program to early and mid-career researchers as it aligns with our strategic goal to support these researchers in the School.

School staff are participating in the newly established PANIC research network (Physical Activity and Nutrition in Inflammation related Chronic disease, <http://www.hmri.net.au/pages/research/networks/panic/index.php>) which has already led to successful collaborations and grant funding. Notably, a research team led by A/Prof Clare Collins was awarded \$240,000 in the latest round of ARC Linkage grants. Students in the School were also awarded 11 Summer Scholarships over the 2008/09 break, 6 funded by the School and 5 University Summer Scholarships.



## NON-PHARMACEUTICAL MANAGEMENT OF HYPERLIPIDEMIA

Hyperlipidemia remains one of the major risk factors for the development of cardiovascular disease. Monotherapy with cholesterol lowering medications such as statins, is inadequate to optimise blood lipid profile for maximum protection against the coronary heart disease. The research published by the Nutraceuticals Research Group headed by Professor Manohar Garg in the School of Biomedical Sciences has demonstrated that concurrent dietary supplementation with phytosterol-enriched spread (Logicol) and long chain omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) lowers blood lipids in a complementary and synergistic manner and provides greater risk reduction against cardiovascular disease than either of the supplements alone. This research has the potential for the development of novel functional foods (margarine, breakfast cereals, milk, yogurt etc) fortified with the two ingredients, phytosterols and omega-3 fatty acids, for safe and efficacious means of managing hyperlipidemia.

Nutraceuticals Research Group (NRG) specialises in the development and testing of novel functional foods for safety and efficacy by conducting human intervention trials and provide vital information required to substantiate health claims. Current research projects focus on lipid-lowering, anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-aggregatory effects of dietary supplements and functional foods for the management of hyperlipidemia, obesity (weight loss and maintenance) diabetes mellitus and mental disorders.

1. MA Micallef and ML Garg (2008) The lipid-lowering effects of phytosterols and (n-3) polyunsaturated fatty acids are synergistic and complementary in hyperlipidemic men and women. *Journal of Nutrition* 138, 1086-1090.
2. MA Micallef and ML Garg (2009) Anti-inflammatory and cardio-protective effects of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids and plant sterols in hyperlipidemic individuals. *Atherosclerosis* 204, 476-482.
3. MA Micallef and ML Garg (2009) Beyond blood lipids: phytosterols, statins and omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid therapy for hyperlipidemia. *Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry* (in press, accepted June 19, 2009).

**Professor Manohar Garg**  
**Director, Nutraceuticals Research Group**  
**School of Biomedical Science**

If you would like to contribute to this Newsletter contact Shirley Savy at [Shirley.Savy@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Shirley.Savy@newcastle.edu.au).

# HMRI BUILDING UPDATE

The HMRI Building has reached two exciting milestones in recent weeks.

As you are aware, HMRI received \$35M in the May Federal Budget which allows us to proceed with construction.

Additionally, following months of consultation with researcher representatives, a Functional Design Brief has been developed and approved by the HMRI Board.

The Brief outlines the scope of the research activity that the building will house, paving the way for the design of a world class research facility.

Thank you to all the researchers who contributed to this important design process through user group meetings, and to the researchers who sent ideas and suggestions to [building@hmri.net.au](mailto:building@hmri.net.au).

The new facility will house the HMRI Office and members of four of the HMRI Research Programs:

- VIVA
- Pregnancy and Reproduction (mainly MBRC)
- Information Based Medicine (except medical physics)
- Public Health (Gender, Health and Ageing, and Health Behaviour)

The Schematic Design phase has begun. The researchers are now engaged in detailed design of the offices and laboratories which will include resources to be shared with researchers who will not be accommodated in the facility.

In a few months time when the design has been finalised, HMRI will hold an information session for HMRI affiliated researchers to give you the first look at the building.

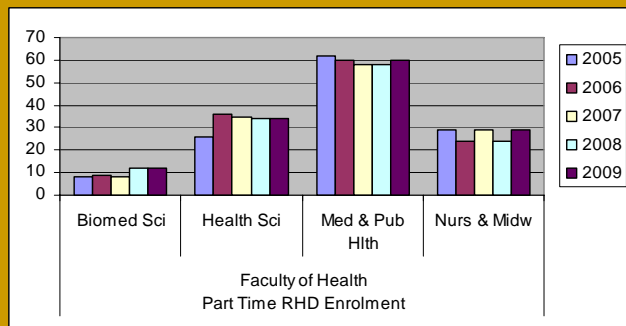
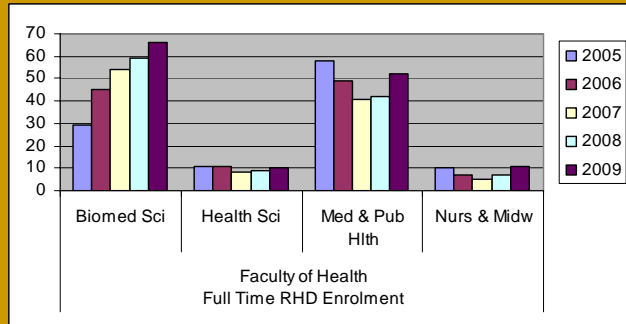
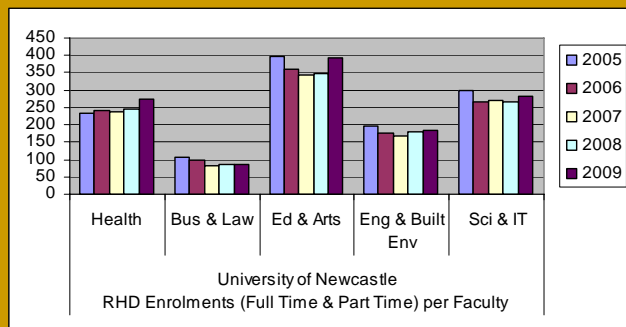
## FROM THE DESK OF THE DHoF RESEARCH

### Research Student Recruitment

Recruiting research higher degree (RHD) students is a major enabler of research. In return for training and mentorship research students provide enthusiasm, technical skill, creativity and hard work. But the best students also challenge and stimulate their supervisors providing new research insights.

The graphs below show that the Faculty of Health has achieved a steady increase in RHD enrolments over the last

5 years when the rest of the University has mainly been flat, as has the University sector nation wide. The differences in RHD enrolment patterns between Schools also highlight the differences in research practices and RHD student populations.



All data show is current as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009.

Our growth has been due to a range of initiatives at many levels including summer research scholarships for undergraduates, increased emphasis on recruitment to Honours programs, recruitment of international RHD students, international student fee waiver scholarships and jointly funded local RHD scholarships.

Not shown in these graphs are the RHD student exchanges, lasting from a few to many months, between Newcastle researchers and their collaborators at other institutions in Australia and overseas. Such exchanges open research opportunities that would otherwise remain only a possibility without an RHD student to provide the functional link. The exchanges also enrich the training experience for the RHD student.

A major aim of my recent trip to China was to identify possibilities for research collaboration with our partner Universities in Harbin and Wuhan from which RHD student exchanges or recruitment may be possible.

**Professor John Rostas**  
Deputy Head of Faculty Research