



Joyful graduation for six indigenous students

Six Aboriginal women – including three sisters – graduated with postgraduate qualifications in public health from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine last year.

Sisters Dea Delaney-Thiele and Sheila Hure both graduated with Masters of Public Health, while their older sibling Joanne Delaney and colleagues Aunty Elaine Lomas, Jennifer King and Sethy Willie received Graduate Certificates in Public Health.

The women continued to work full-time at the Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney (AMSWS) based in Mount Druitt, while they earned their qualifications. The area is home to Australia's largest Aboriginal population.

Most are the first in their families to gain a university degree. One of them, Dea Delaney-Thiele, has already started her Doctorate in

Public Health at UNSW, among the inaugural intake into the highly competitive Future Health Leaders program. Her research will focus on culturally appropriate research protocols, using a grassroots perspective.

The Muru Marri centre at SPHCM provided extra support through mentoring and tutoring for the AMSWS cohort. Aboriginal academic and UNSW Professor of Public Health, Lisa Jackson Pulver says: "Training Aboriginal people to take the lead in Indigenous health care is essential to capacity building and empowerment."

"Usually the policy makers in Aboriginal affairs are non-Indigenous, but UNSW is quietly growing qualified Indigenous leaders in collaboration with employers and health services," says Professor Jackson Pulver, who is a Director of Muru Marri.

"This has been a completely awesome experience, especially to be up there on stage with my two sisters. It was fantastic," says Dea Delaney-Thiele.

Three years ago, Ms Delaney-Thiele returned to her community of Mount Druitt, after working in Canberra for the peak body the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation for 10 years, with eight of them as CEO.

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“There is a lot of focus on the health of Indigenous people in rural and regional areas, but even in the city there are major problems of access,” says Ms Delaney-Thiele. “Often people don’t want to go to hospital or seek other health services because of worries about racism. That was the case with my mother – and plenty of others that I know of.”

Sheila Hure says: “Thank you all so much for your wishes and encouragement, we sincerely appreciate it. We had the wonderful support of the board and management and Frank Vincent of AMSWS, the staff at UNSW Muru Marri - Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver and Sarah Gaskin, both becoming our precious gems. As well we received unwavering support from Head of School, Professor Raina MacIntyre, and Associate Professor Glenda Lawrence.”



Dea Delaney-Thiele wins Muru Marri Prize

UNSW Biostatistics Unit



Associate Professor Andrew Hayden

The School of Public Health and Community Medicine has established a biostatistical unit to provide consulting services to UNSW Medicine. The unit can provide a broad range of advice and consulting services. These include:

- Sample size and power calculations;
- Development of statistical analysis plans;
- Study design advice;
- Biostatistical analysis, including assistance with statistical computing packages;
- Advice on preparation or revision of journal publications.

The unit was established following a major research and infrastructure initiative grant that was awarded to



Dr Robin Turner

Andrew Hayden and colleagues in UNSW Medicine.

“We established the unit because of strong demand for high-level biostatistical consulting at the University and the Faculty. We also aim to improve the success rate for NHMRC grant applications at UNSW by guiding researchers in the development of their grant applications”, says Andrew.

The unit’s first new appointment is Dr Robin Turner, who commenced at SPHCM in March 2014. Robin joins the unit with a strong background in clinical and public health research, and methodological research.

For more details, see: sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/centres-units/unsw-biostatistics-unit

SPHCM Social Media

SPHCM has gone social with the launch of our Facebook page, Twitter feed and LinkedIn group. These sites are great places to find out the latest on what’s happening at SPHCM, to share resources and opinions, and make connections with other students, alumni and associates. You can find links on the SPHCM website and in Moodle Semester 1 courses. Please join us and share your thoughts on all things related to the study, research and practice of public health and community medicine.





Protecting Australia – closing the gap in immunisation for migrants and refugees

The proceedings of Australia's first national stakeholder workshop on immunisation issues for migrants and refugees were launched on 14 March, 2014.

The workshop was held at UNSW in August 2013 and was convened by the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in "Immunisation in under-studied and special risk populations".

Stakeholders from government and non-government sectors, primary care and public health with an interest in refugee and migrant health came together to review the evidence, identify gaps and propose potential solutions to the gap in immunisation coverage in recently arrived migrants and refugees.

Due to disruption to health infrastructure and poor immunisation coverage, migrants and refugees arrive in Australia susceptible to many of the vaccine-preventable diseases included on Australia's National Immunisation Program. The lack of a systematic mechanism for catch-up

immunisation for migrants and refugees leaves Australia vulnerable to ongoing outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases despite our excellent National Immunisation Program.

Key recommendations arising from the workshop include:

- That the implementation of the new National Immunisation Strategy for Australia comprehensively addresses the immunisation needs of migrants and refugees;
- That immunisation of recently arrived migrants and refugees who have missed out on immunisations be universally funded;
- That Australia needs a whole-of-life immunisation register; and
- That improved identification of high-risk migrant and refugee groups in the health system is needed.

The report, titled "Protecting Australia – closing the gap in immunisation for migrants and refugees" is available at: www.creimmunisation.com.au/news/report-launch-protecting-australia-%E2%80%93-closing-gap-immunisation-migrants-and-refugees

"The immunisation gap in migrants and refugees is everyone's business, and we cannot afford to pass the buck. The recent outbreaks of measles in Sydney occurred despite high rates of measles vaccination as measured by our immunisation register. We cannot control infectious diseases in Australia without closing this gap. It is in our national interest to find a way forward to address this gap in communicable disease control."

Professor Raina MacIntyre
Director of the NHMRC Centre
or Research Excellence

"I am pleased that the NHMRC CRE in Immunisation has been able to convene all stakeholders from around the country for the first time to discuss the issue of control of vaccine-preventable diseases in migrants and refugees. It is important for groups such as this, who are independent of vested interests, to take on an advocacy role for identified gaps in public health. The recommendations from this workshop are concrete, actionable ideas which is a valuable contribution to national disease control efforts. I look forward to seeing some or all of these recommendations considered and implemented nationally."

Professor Peter Smith, Dean
UNSW Medicine



Interns share their experiences in India



Rachel Wilkins and Anna Bethmont

During the 2013 summer school, Rachel Wilkins and Anna Bethmont undertook an internship placement at the Department of Community Medicine at SRM University in Tamil Nadu, in India. The aim of the placement was to observe first-hand the key issues associated with delivering healthcare in resource poor settings. Following the completion of their placement, we asked them to reflect on their experiences.

Why did you decide to enroll in the internship program?

We decided to enroll in the internship program to acquire professional experience, knowledge and skills to enhance our studies and future careers in public health. We both appreciate the value of experience gained outside the classroom and believed that the internship presented an ideal opportunity to gain this experience. We are also both considering careers in global health and therefore we are interested in the option of working in a developing country.

What has been the most rewarding thing about your internship so far?

We found two aspects of the internship particularly rewarding:

1. The opportunity to interact with local communities was valuable on personal and professional levels. We visited a number of urban and rural villages as part of the Department's regular medical outreach and research activities and spoke with local people about their health related behaviours and beliefs. We were also able to visit a number of unique communities including a gypsy

settlement, a leprosy colony and a remote Scheduled Tribe village.

2. During our internship, the Department went to great lengths to ensure that we were exposed to most aspects of the Indian healthcare system. This included visiting primary health centres under the National Rural Health Mission, secondary level centres including a rural mission hospital, a government district hospital and, lastly, tertiary level centres including SRM Hospital and Christian Medical College Hospital in Vellore. We also had the opportunity to visit the National Siddha Institute in Chennai, where a traditional form of Tamil medicine is practiced. During each of these visits we were able to speak with staff about the day-to-day functioning of the facilities and strengths and weaknesses of the services.

Would you recommend the internship program to other students and why?

Yes, the internship is a valuable opportunity to gain exposure to multiple aspects of public health in a developing context, including health issues, healthcare system, health



education and public health research. It is also a unique opportunity to gain this experience with the support and advice of the UNSW School of Public Health and Community Medicine.

How do you think the internship will assist you in your future career?

The internship will assist us in our future careers by providing us with key transferable skills and insights.

In terms of transferable skills, we developed:

1. Cultural competence, in both the workplace and the field. We learnt about different social norms and expectations and the importance of being tolerant and adaptable.

2. Key research skills including defining relevant research questions, identifying research populations, developing questionnaire, and data management and analysis.
3. Self directed learning including negotiating goals and deadlines with workplace supervisors.
4. Team work skills including the ability to work with a variety of colleagues including SRM faculty, SRM postgraduate students, SRM undergraduate medical students and medical staff in the various health facilities we visited. In such diverse groups, we learnt that clear and assertive communication, active listening and politeness are essential.

In terms of insights, we gained an understanding of:

- Key health issues in India and the key challenges currently facing India and Tamil Nadu in particular.
- The healthcare system in India and its strengths and weaknesses.
- The social and cultural practices that form the context of health and healthcare and the social determinants of health.
- Medical and public health education in India and how this influences the functioning of the healthcare system.



SRM University is a leading private university in India with an intake of more than 30,000 students per year. The internship program is organised in collaboration with the Department of Community Medicine. Students have an opportunity to work in the community outreach centres (rural and urban health centres) exploring health issues including communicable, non-communicable and access to health services.

For more information about internship placements, contact Vanessa Green: v.green@unsw.edu.au



Dr Abrar Chughtai, Megan Williams, Christine Rousselis and Louise Maher

Staff recognised for outstanding achievements

Four members of the School received Dean's Awards in 2013. Congratulations to **Louise Maher** who was a recipient of a Dean's Award for outstanding research in November 2013, the same month in which she was awarded her DrPH. Louise is a very worthy recipient of this award; she was an outstanding candidate, capable of high level and independent thought. During her candidature, Louise completed the NSW Public Health Officer Training Program. She made an impressive contribution at each of her four placements throughout this training program. Louise's DrPH thesis, *Applied professional practice in public health: promoting equitable health services delivery through evaluation and research*, has been widely disseminated and received glowing reviews from examiners. The SPHCM congratulates Louise and wishes her all the best for her future.

Megan Williams also received a Dean's award to acknowledge the achievements of postdoctoral staff and early career researchers in their respective fields of activity.

Dr Abrar Chughtai is an overseas trained medical graduate who received a Dean's award to acknowledge the achievements of young researchers with the potential to become career scientists. He completed a Master in Public Health in Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Control from UNSW in 2009. Abrar started his PhD in 2012. The aim of his PhD is to examine the role of facemasks for the protection of hospital HCWs against respiratory infections, and to develop recommendations around the use and re-use of masks for low and middle income countries. His PhD is made up by a series of studies which are aimed at examining different issues around the use of facemasks at different system levels.

Christine Rousselis was also recognised for her outstanding contribution to the School's publications, lecture notes and website. Indeed, without Christine's efforts this newsletter would not be possible.

Our student **Dr Minh Cuong Duong** is the proud recipient the Australian Society for Infectious Diseases Council prestigious scholarship to attend the Australasian Society for infectious Diseases Annual Scientific Meeting where he will present his award winning poster.

Congratulations to **Dr Joel Rhee** and **Dr Jo Travaglia**, who have both been awarded Faculty Learning and Teaching Awards for Award for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning 2013. Well done and well deserved!

Congratulations to **Dr Holly Seale** and **Dr Anita Heywood** who were accepted in the *Vaccine* and Edward Jenner Vaccine Society Young Investigator Program (YIP). As members of the inaugural class of 2014, they will be part of an elite group of 10 scientists from around the world during this first year of the program. Their membership to this highly selective program lasts three years, and will lead to exciting opportunities and networks for them.



Our links with the WHO

Professor MacIntyre with the Dean, Professor Peter Smith and Dr Padmanesan Narasimhan, meeting with Dr Roderico Ofrin, Coordinator, Emergency and Humanitarian Action Unit, South-East Asian Regional Office of the World Health Organization

SPHCM has one of the largest Master of Public Health (MPH) programs in Australia, and within that there is a MPH specialisation in Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Control. Through our strength in infectious diseases epidemiology, we have several links with the World Health Organization. In 2013, we pioneered workplace internships for our MPH, Master of International Public Health (MIPH) and the Master of Health Management (MHM) students, and one of our most sought-after internships is at the WHO South East Asian Regional Office in New Delhi, where our students gain field experience in disaster response.

We also have a summer course which we run jointly with the WHO on Managing Communicable Diseases During Humanitarian Emergencies. A/Prof Michelle Gayer, who is Coordinator of Emergency Response Management at WHO, has been working with us at SPHCM since 2009 in establishing and running this course, and is a conjoint academic with us. This course is run in WHO Geneva, New York, London and Sydney, thereby being accessible to stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region.

Since 2014, SPHCM has a member of the WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), with Professor Raina MacIntyre as the primary link person. Through this and a related national network, ARM, we tap into the expertise of our own staff and student body to assist with surge capacity in times of need. For students interested in a career in infectious diseases control, this is an opportunity to gain valuable public health experience.

Many of our academics do consulting for WHO, or are on expert groups for WHO, which gives opportunities for translation of evidence into policy and practice. Finally, we also have WHO staff doing postgraduate research degrees with us. These links make SPHCM a great place to work and learn.



Professor Peter Smith (Dean) and Professor Raina MacIntyre with SPHCM interns Dr Abela Mahimbo (MPH/MHM) and Ms Alison Kerr (MIPH/MPH) at WHO SEARO

ARM Network Launch



SPHCM UNSW is now a member of WHO's Global Outbreak Alert Response Network and a founding partner of ARM, a new network to enable Australia's capacity to respond to cross-border and regional infectious diseases outbreaks. The launch of ARM will be on June 16th 2014. See flyer for details: sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/sphcm/News/ARM_Network_Launch.pdf

Dreaming up the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Health



From Top Left: Prof Raina MacIntyre, Prof Lisa Jackson Pulver, Ms Sally Fitzpatrick, Ms Pat Anderson; From Bottom Left: A/Prof Melissa Haswell, Aunty Ali Golding, and A/Prof Michelle Chino

The fifth Annual Research Symposium on "Dreaming up the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Health" took place on 11 October 2013.

The conference showcased the most exciting elements in Indigenous research from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine and its affiliated Research Centres: The Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity; The Kirby Institute; and The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, which together contribute to setting the population health and health services research agenda in Australia.

The keynote speakers this year included Professor Michelle Chino, Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver, Director of Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit SPHCM.

The program included Indigenous health related poster presentations and talks by academics and postgraduate research students from the School and affiliated Centres, and concluded with a panel discussion on Indigenous Health.

For further information on this symposium see: sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/research/annual-research-symposium

Launch of Muru Marri's 'The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Indigenous Youth' Report

Following the keynote addresses, the plenary session concluded with the launch of the report, *The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Indigenous Youth: Reviewing and Extending the Evidence and Examining the Implications for Policy and Practice*, by Ms. Pat Anderson. During the launch, representatives of the participating programs who had travelled from Darwin, Adelaide, Cairns and La Perouse, were presented with the main report, as well as their own individual program-specific reports.

Let's hear from you

We would like to keep in touch with former staff and students of the School. Please send your contributions to the editor Kevin Forde: k.forde@unsw.edu.au or Assistant Editor Ravit Danieli-Vlandis r.danieli-vlandis@unsw.edu.au

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