



Hygeia

Newsletter of the Faculty of Pharmacy

April 2009

Pharmacy Professor named as Chair of Government Committee



Professor of Pharmacy (Aged Care), Andrew McLachlan, has been appointed Chair of the National Medicines Policy Committee. The Committee

is part of the Federal Government's new advisory structure to support National Medicines Policy, which since 1999 has provided a framework for medication access, safety and quality in Australia. The National Medicines Policy Committee will provide advice on emerging medicines policy issues. It will also undertake, oversee or consider projects and research. It will feed into the National Medicines Policy Executive which will advise the Government on implementing the National Medicines Policy within the Health portfolio. Professor McLachlan will provide expertise in the area of pharmacy and be joined on the committee by experts in the fields of clinical practice, nursing, medicines manufacture and marketing, complementary medicines and prescribing.



Dean's Update

Pharmacy continues to be recognised as a prestigious profession for graduates to enter and the Faculty has seen a record number of undergraduate enrolments this year, with approximately 280 students enrolling for the Bachelor of Pharmacy. We may continue to see increased interest in the Faculty's pharmacy courses as the economic climate remains unstable, creating uncertainty in the labour market. A number of the Faculty's academic staff are sought after to provide strategic advice on pharmaceutical matters on boards and committees of various government and

state bodies. In these roles the Faculty is contributing to the pharmacy profession and national health care at the highest levels. Professor of Pharmacy (Aged Care), Andrew McLachlan, has been named Chair of the Federal Government National Medicines Policy Committee, which will see him providing guidance and expertise on the role of and access to medicines in Australia's healthcare system. This new appointment is testament to Andrew's strong research profile in the areas of Aged Care and Quality Use of Medicines. Another important area of outreach for the Faculty is the relationship with the alumni community. I would like to congratulate Ross Brown, AM, RFD, ED, President of the Faculty's Pharmacy Alumni Association, who was conferred as a University Fellow at our recent graduation ceremony. Ross has been a tireless ambassador for the Faculty and the University for over 50 years and provides a strong role model for students and graduates on the role philanthropy can play in a successful career. This prestigious title is a fitting tribute to Ross's work.

Professor Iqbal Ramzan
Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy

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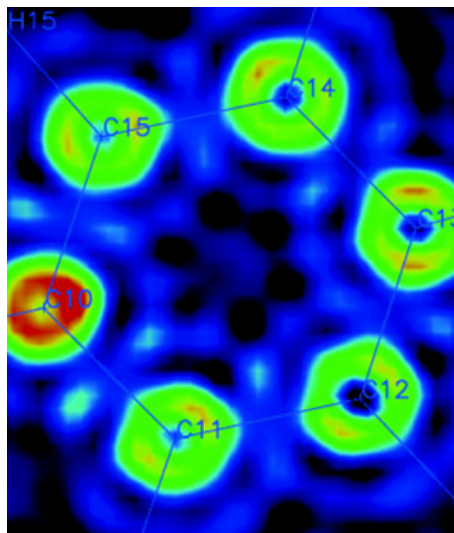


Faculty secures over \$50,000 from NHMRC and Teaching Improvement Equipment Schemes

Associate Professor Dai Hibbs has secured over \$50,000 as Chief Investigator from the National Health and Medical Research Council Equipment Scheme. Dai and a team of research collaborators working on drug design and discovery will purchase a Bruker APEX II CCD Detector Fourth Generation APEX II ultra-low noise CCD X-ray detector.

The new detector will use highly sensitive single crystal x-ray diffraction to derive the three dimensional structure of drug molecules. Dai says "the increased sensitivity of the new detector will enable us to use much smaller crystal sample sizes which is important as crystals are very difficult to grow".

Several Faculty researchers have also been successful in securing small project grants from the University's Teaching Improvement and Equipment Scheme:



X-ray crystal diffraction pattern
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Dr Kylie Williams and Mr Jim Woulfe were awarded \$4,500 for 'Problem-Based Learning modules to enhance learning and teaching in Pharmacy Practice'.

The Pharmacy Education Units' Associate Professor Greg Ryan and Mr Jim Woulfe received \$4500 for their project on 'Improving feedback to students: development and trial of automated, personalised feedback system for pharmacy students'.

Dr Vicky Kritikos project on 'Optimising student outcomes using peer assessment in Problem-Based Learning tutorials' was awarded \$3,700.

The Mental Health First Aid for Pharmacy Students project undertaken by Dr Tim Chen received \$3,600.

Asthma Foundation supports research

Researchers from the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Sydney are celebrating after receiving funding from the NSW Asthma Foundation, announced at the Foundation's Awards Night recently. Dr Maria Sukkar was awarded a \$50,000 Sustainability Research Grant to investigate the processes that lead to abnormal airway muscle function in asthmatics, focussing on a particular protein which may lead to inflammation and thickening of the airway muscle.

Dr Margaret Hughes and Professor Carol Armour from the Faculty, and colleague Dr Brian Oliver from the Discipline of Pharmacology have received a Research Support Grant of \$25,000 for their project on corticosteroids, mast cells, airway smooth muscle and remodelling in asthma. The grant has the potential to lead to the development of agents to treat and prevent changes to the airways of people with asthma and thus limit the major

damage occurring in their lungs. Dr Hughes comments, "Having this money enables us to test new innovative ideas in asthma therapies".



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Faculty academic joins Australian Drug Evaluation Committee

Associate Professor Mary Collins from the Faculty's Pharmaceutical Chemistry Discipline has joined the Pharmaceutical Subcommittee of the Australian Drug Evaluation Committee (ADEC). ADEC reports directly to the Therapeutic Goods Administration. This prestigious appointment will see Mary advising on matters of policy and providing comment on evaluations of pharmaceuticals, including bioavailability aspects of applications to register new products, or changes to existing products. Mary's area of expertise will be in the field of medicinal chemistry. A number of other Faculty academics are also serving members of this Federal Government committee including Dean of Faculty, Professor Iqbal Ramzan, and Professor of Pharmacy (Aged Care) Andrew McLachlan.

Introducing...

The Faculty extends a warm welcome to the following new staff:

Ms. Fiona Morris has been appointed to the position of Executive Officer within the Faculty. Fiona comes to the Faculty with an expansive wealth of experience and knowledge. Fiona has many years experience in senior public policy, consulting and marketing positions in government, education and corporate sectors, including a diplomatic posting overseas.

Ms Angelina Che has been appointed as a Research Assistant working with Associate Professor Alaina Ammit's group. Angelina's focus will be conducting experiments involving airway cell isolation and culture, cell and molecular biology, mRNA quantification and cytokine ELISA assays.

Dr Nathan Absalom joins Associate Professor Mary Collins' research team as an Australian Research Council Research Associate. Nathan

is working on a project entitled '*Elucidating the mode of action of nicotinic receptor ligands*'.

Professor Paul Groundwater has been appointed to the Discipline of Pharmaceutical Chemistry as Professor of Medicinal Chemistry. Paul is an international research leader within his field.

Award-winning students and staff honoured at Faculty Awards Ceremony

Over 50 students and staff from the Faculty were presented with awards at the Faculty's Annual Awards ceremony held on 31st March in the University's Great Hall. Students were recognised for their outstanding academic achievements including prizes sponsored by Australia's top pharmaceutical companies and professional pharmacy organisations. The Faculty gratefully acknowledges the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, Blackmores, the Guild Group, and Amgen Australia. Staff were also congratulated on their excellence in teaching, with nominations by students. Dean of Faculty, Professor Iqbal Ramzan, says "our students and staff strive for excellence in their learning and teaching, I am very proud to honour them in this way".



Image by Adrian Dreyer © Faculty of Pharmacy | University of Sydney

Pharmacy Alumni President named Honorary Fellow

The Faculty congratulates Mr Esmond Ross Brown AM RFD ED Hon MPharm (Syd) FPS FAICD, who received the title of Honorary Fellow of the University on Friday 20th March. Mr Brown has been a tireless ambassador in the promotion of the University, especially the Faculty of Pharmacy for over 50 years since he qualified as a pharmacist in 1952.

Mr Brown is currently the President of the Pharmacy Alumni Association, a Director of the Herbal Medicine Research and Education Centre (since 1998) and

a Governor of the Pharmacy Practice Foundation (since 1978). Most recently he helped the Faculty raise over \$1 million as Deputy Chair of the Faculty of Pharmacy's Building Expansion Campaign (2006-2008). Not only does Mr Brown give selflessly of his time but he has also been a generous benefactor to the university through his philanthropy. His donations have allowed the Faculty to expand and improve its facilities and provide scholarship support to its students.

The list of Mr Brown's appointments,

roles, and responsibilities in the Pharmacy profession is extensive. He has a long and active history with the Faculty of Pharmacy and the pharmacy industry at large. In March 1997, his achievements and service to the University of Sydney were recognised when he was conferred with the Degree of Master of Pharmacy (honoris causa). The Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Professor Iqbal Ramzan says "I am delighted for Ross. This is a very prestigious honour and I thank Ross for all his support to the Faculty over the years."

Edith Wesiberg speaks on the role of the pharmacist in women's health

The Women For Pharmacy Annual Dinner was held at Parliament House on March 16th. Guest speaker Edith Wesiberg spoke candidly about the important role of the pharmacist in women's health from her perspective as a specialist in reproductive and sexual medicine. The event was well attended with close to 90 guests including women from the various Women For Pharmacy networks, University of Sydney alumni and media. Special thanks to sponsors Guild Group and Corporate Leasing for making this event possible.

Women For Pharmacy: providing vital networking and mentoring opportunities for women. Let Women for Pharmacy be part of your network. For further information, please contact sinthia@pharm.usyd.edu.au



A special luncheon was also held recently for the Executive Committee of the Pharmacy Alumni Association was hosted by the Faculty in the Pharmacy Common Room to thank them for their support and commitment to helping the Faculty. Ross Brown, Association President, presented a plaque to the Committee which recognises the pivotal role played by the Pharmacy Alumni Association in the 2006-2008 Building Campaign.

Dean of Faculty, Professor Iqbal Ramzan, and Alumni and Development Officer Jennifer Paquet, both addressed the group to thank them and also to talk about plans for the future. The plans include getting new people involved in the Association, organising interesting events that reach out to more of the Faculty's alumni and improving communications with alumni to promote engagement with the Faculty.

Tribute to Denis Morgan



The Faculty pays tribute to Denis Morgan, a former PhD student of the Faculty, who passed away in January 2009.

Denis began his undergraduate training in pharmacy in the late 1960's in Hobart, and

completed his pre-registration training in a community pharmacy in Hobart. Professor Roger Nation, Head of Department of Pharmacy Practice at Monash University, met Denis as they both started their professional careers in Tasmania. Roger says, "Denis was an excellent pharmacy practitioner - extremely knowledgeable, skilful and with all of the attributes required of a pharmacist. Above all he was compassionate and loved the interaction with people and the assistance he was able to give them. It was these very same qualities that made Denis such a superb academic teacher and researcher later in his life".

In 1972 Denis pursued his studies and started his training as a researcher, first completing a Master of Science and then a PhD in the University of Sydney's Department of Pharmacy as it was then. Denis' PhD project was in the area of transplacental distribution of drugs and was supervised by Dr Jack Thomas. Research had found that during pregnancy the level of a drug prescribed to mothers was approximately 20% lower in the baby's blood than the mother's across a range of drugs. Jack says "Denis' specialised

analytical techniques were able to prove the hypothesis that the difference was due to the binding of drugs onto the foetal and maternal plasma proteins by analysing the concentrations of drug in foetal and maternal plasma".

Denis was successful in being awarded his first NHMRC grant in 1979, just one year after he had completed his PhD and had started his academic career at the Victorian College of Pharmacy as Lecturer. During his academic career Denis and his many research collaborators, including 30 postgraduate students, published approximately 170 research papers in journals across a range of health disciplines. Denis was promoted to the senior academic position of Reader in 1992 and awarded a Doctor of Science degree by Monash University in 1999 in recognition of his substantial contribution to research.

Denis will be truly missed in pharmacy circles. His contribution to pharmacy has been invaluable and the Faculty of Pharmacy extends its deepest sympathies to the Morgan family.

Upcoming events from the Faculty's Seminar Series

2nd April

Professor Andrew McLachlan, Faculty of Pharmacy, *Drugs in Sport*

dyes - how synthetic chemistry can make an impact in a range of biological applications

9th April

Dr Jiming Ye, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, *Approaches and rationale for the discovery of new antidiabetic therapeutics from traditional medicines*

14th May

Clarissa Ng, Faculty of Pharmacy, *Investigation of conformationally restricted GABA analogues*

23rd April

Iyad Ahmed, Faculty of Pharmacy, *Potential inhibitor of cancer stem cells from botanical origins*

21st May

Lihua Zeng, Faculty of Pharmacy, *Clinical pharmacokinetics of mycophenolic acid and acyclovir in children*

30th April

Associate Professor Micheline Piquette-Miller University of Toronto, Canada, *Molecular regulation of drug transport proteins*

28th May

Matteo Mezzena, University of Ferrara, *Biodegradable microparticles for inhalation*

7th May

Professor Paul Groundwater, Faculty of Pharmacy, *From cotton seed to resorufamine*

4th June

Rania Salama, Faculty of Pharmacy, *Controlled release microparticles for pulmonary inhalation*

All seminars are held at 1-2pm, Pharmacy Lecture Theatre, Pharmacy Building.

Faculty hosts International Pharmaceutical Federation dinner

The Faculty hosted a dinner for the Executive Committee, Community Practice Section of the International Pharmaceutical Federation in February. The Committee was in Sydney for their mid-year meeting from 19th -23rd February. Dean of Faculty, Professor Iqbal Ramzan, chaired the event which was held in the Heritage Corridor in the Pharmacy Building.

The dinner was the perfect opportunity to showcase the Faculty and offer international visitors the opportunity to mingle with Australian leaders in our field. The event was organised by Patti Payne OAM, pharmacy alumna and dedicated volunteer.

For more information

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Produced by the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Sydney, March 2009. The University reserves the right to make alterations to any information contained within this publication without notice.

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