



Hygeia

Newsletter of the Faculty of Pharmacy

January 2009



Dean's Update

As we start a new year I would like to congratulate those who celebrated their degree successes at the end of 2008. One PhD, one Master of Pharmacy, four Master of Herbal Medicines and one Bachelor of Pharmacy degrees were awarded in December. Another success story is that of PhD student, Elle Feletto, who was awarded first prize for the best oral pharmacy practice presentation at the recent APSA conference.

The Faculty has started the new year very successfully, securing funding for cancer research. I am very pleased to announce that two of our researchers have been awarded funding of over \$633,000 for projects investigating the role of drug resistance and personalised medicine in the treatment of cancer by the Cancer Council of New South Wales.

A number of new and current postgraduate research students have also received their share of funding, obtaining scholarships in the latest rounds of the Australian Postgraduate Awards, University of Sydney Awards, and the National Health and Medical Research Council Biomedical Scholarships.

Professor Iqbal Ramzan
Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy



New asthma management model

Professor Carol Armour leads a team determined to help 2 million asthma sufferers achieve better health

A team of researchers has designed a new management program for asthma sufferers. Research by the Sydney team in the Faculty of Pharmacy over the last 8 years has resulted in a new management model for people with asthma, which is effective in producing positive outcomes and health benefits for asthma sufferers.

Professor Carol Armour is the Lead Investigator on this research project and heads the team* of researchers that has designed the new asthma-management program. The team has also developed a 2-day training program for pharmacists who will be helping in the management of people with asthma. Professor Armour says "it is vitally important to improve the treatment and support of asthma sufferers in Australia. Currently about 10% of the population are diagnosed with this disease so ensuring the treatment they receive is effective and relevant is vital".

Research published by the asthma team showed that a randomised controlled trial of a pharmacy-based intervention resulted in better health outcomes for asthma sufferers. This new model includes a test of lung

function, medication checks, asthma inhaler technique and trigger factors. In addition people with asthma are asked to assess how well they use their medication and to set goals to achieve before their next review with the pharmacist.

The new program also helps to put asthma sufferers back in touch with their doctor. Professor Armour says "we find that in most cases asthma sufferers do not seek out their GP to review their asthma symptoms or medication. Now pharmacists are able to provide a link between the two when people with asthma visit the pharmacy for their medicine. Pharmacists are able to talk to an asthma sufferer about their medication and can refer "at risk" people, whose medication is not working effectively for them, back to their GPs for a full review".

*The team includes Drs Bandana Saini, Sinthia Bosnic-Anticevich and Lorraine Smith, Associate Professor Ines Krass, Chehani Alles and Kate LeMay. The team is working with collaborators at the University of Queensland, Monash and Charles Sturt Universities.

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Researchers awarded \$633,000 by Cancer Council New South Wales

Personalised medicine and drug resistance research boosted by recent Cancer Council NSW announcement

Professor of Pharmacogenomics, Michael Murray, has secured \$288,650 funding for his research on personalised medicine for cancer treatment for a project entitled 'Development of personalised dosage protocols for tyrosine kinase inhibitors in oncology patients'.

Dr Mary Bebawy, Lecturer in Pharmaceutics, has received a total grant of \$345,125 for her research into the role of drug transporters, drug distribution and

drug resistance in cancer. Mary's project is entitled 'Microparticle-mediated transfer of P-glycoprotein in conferring multidrug resistance in cancer'.

Mary also represented the Faculty at the Australasian Society for Immunology 38th Annual Scientific Meeting in Canberra in December with an oral presentation entitled 'Membrane Microparticles Mediate transfer of P-glycoprotein to Drug Sensitive Cancer Cells'.

First prize for organisational flexibility at APSA conference

Elle Feletto rewarded for best oral Pharmacy Practice presentation

PhD student, Elle Feletto, was awarded first prize for the best oral Pharmacy Practice presentation at the recent Australasian Pharmaceutical Science Association (APSA) conference in Canberra. Elle's talk, entitled 'A qualitative investigation of organisational flexibility in Australian community pharmacies', discussed how Australian community pharmacies optimised their business viability in a changing external environment.

Elle, who is supervised by Professor Charlie Benrimoj, is specifically looking at the provision of professional pharmacy services and community pharmacy's ability to adapt their businesses to integrate services into their daily practice through organisation flexibility. The research thus far has involved 30 interviews with pharmacists across Australia

and has shown that there is a predisposition to making structural and operational changes but not cohesion with the overall direction of their business model. The key to enhancing strategic flexibility in pharmacies was evident where product and service provision was well integrated.

Elle says "I found the APSA 2008 conference an excellent opportunity to learn about research being conducted around Australia and to discuss my work with inter-state colleagues. The positive response to my research was almost overwhelming. I am constantly encouraged by the support that I receive from other pharmacy researchers and pharmacy practitioners, especially at a conference like APSA".

Graduations congratulations

Congratulations to the following students on the occasion of their graduation from the Faculty of Pharmacy.

Doctor of Philosophy: Lawrence Kwong Ynyr Lee

Master of Pharmacy: Biljana Cvetkovski

Master of Herbal Medicines (Honours): Hae Lee; Bei-Lun Lin; Eshaifol Azam Omar; Aik Wei Teoh

Master of Herbal Medicines: Anyang Ma

Bachelor of Pharmacy: Min Jeong Kim



PhD scholarship applications open



Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, Associate Professor Alaina Ammit, has announced that applications for the Faculty of Pharmacy PhD Scholarships (FPPS) are now open. FPPS are available on a highly competitive basis for local students commencing a full-time PhD at the Faculty of Pharmacy in Semester 1, 2009. Applicants must be Australian or New Zealand citizens or an Australian permanent resident by the scholarship closing date (20 February 2009). Applicants must have completed a Bachelor Degree with First Class Honours (or H1 equivalent results) or have completed a four-year degree with an outstanding record of professional and/or research achievements since graduation.

In the future, the Faculty of Pharmacy will offer these scholarships automatically upon application through the University of Sydney Research Office for the annual VCRS/APA/UPA scholarship round. The next round closes in October 2009. Please visit the Faculty website and click on the Pharmacy PhD Scholarships button for more information.

www.pharm.usyd.edu.au

Awarded scholarships

The following postgraduate research students were successful in obtaining scholarships in the latest rounds of the Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA), University of Sydney Postgraduate Awards (UPA), and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Biomedical Scholarships.

APA: Steven Oliver Devenish; Natasa Gisev; Joyce Huai Xin Gong; Irene Pak-Yee Ng; Mariam Toumas

UPA: Hye-Lim Kim; Sayeed Nasser; Aaron Chia Ken Tan

NHMRC : Santoso Adi

A super year for SUPA

Sydney University Pharmacy Association President, Sarah Sinclair, reflects on the activities of a successful 2008

2008 was a huge year for SUPA and its members. For the first time since the reformation of NAPSA in 2001, SUPA hosted the annual NAPSA congress in January 2008 and it was a roaring success. 270 pharmacy students from around Australia converged on Sydney University for a week of professional development, educational sessions and socialising! Highlights included a speech from Mr Kos Sclavos, the inaugural Battle of the Branch's night and a Gala Ball to be remembered at Dockside.

SUPA held a successful O-Week campaign which included a welcome BBQ to attract and welcome first year members. Semester one also saw some social events including a pub crawl, trivia night, and a cruise. On an educational note, SUPA hosted a careers night, with many industry representatives as guest speakers.

Semester two saw a change in committee and a change in direction for SUPA. This has

led to a much more organised association, and the increased ability to provide successful services and benefits to our members. SUPA saw the largest turnout in recent years for the trivia night, harbour cruise and pub crawl and we are currently looking at new ways of engaging people in the social side of pharmacy.

Through NAPSA, SUPA hosted a first aid course run by Stitches which was a huge success and we hope to run at least one in 2009. Furthermore, SUPA has run two successful book orders, a major incentive for membership for students.

The year culminated with the 2008 Gala Ball, held at the Australian Jockey Club in Randwick. We were fortunate to have staff represented on the night, and it served as a perfect farewell for our graduating students. Overall, 2008 was a successful year for SUPA in terms of student participation and industry involvement.

Welcome to new Alumni Officer

Jennifer Paquet joins the Faculty of Pharmacy as the new Alumni and Development Officer

In November 2008, the Faculty took an important step to strengthen the bond with its alumni community by creating a new Alumni and Development Officer joint position with the University's Alumni Relations Office. The Faculty's prestigious alumni community is the driving force behind its position at the cutting edge of academic progress and innovation and with Jennifer on board the Faculty is ready to take its alumni programs to unprecedented heights.

"I am looking forward to developing new programs which will engage alumni"

Jennifer will be organising a wide range of alumni programs and activities in 2009 including reunions, networking events, conferences, alumni news and much more. In addition, Jennifer will be reaching out to our alumni to support the Faculty's many programs and ensure that we retain our premier position within Australia. Jennifer is excited about her new role, saying "I am looking forward to developing new programs which will engage alumni and encourage philanthropic support for the Faculty".

Jennifer has recently moved to Sydney from Montreal, Canada where she was working for the Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill University. Jennifer has a Commerce degree from McGill University and has spent her career to date working in the non-profit sector. She was actively involved in the advancement of philanthropy in Montreal as a Board Member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Jennifer adds "2009 is shaping up to be a great year for the Faculty and its alumni community and I can't wait to see you all at our next event!".

We want to hear from you!

If you are a Pharmacy alumnus and have a story you'd like to share, or would like to participate in some of the exciting activities planned for 2009, please contact Jennifer by email at alumni@pharm.usyd.edu.au or by phone at **+61 2 9114 0781**.

Women for Pharmacy Annual Dinner

The Women for Pharmacy Committee of the Pharmacy Alumni Association are holding their Annual Dinner at 7pm for 7.30pm on Monday 16 March at Parliament House.

Guest Speaker, Edith Weisberg, is Director of Research at the Sydney Centre for Reproductive

Health Research. Edith is an expert in reproductive and sexual health and has been working in this field for over 30 years. To RSVP for this event please email rsvp@usyd.edu.au

Staff News

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

Dr Vishy Mulay has recently been appointed to the position of Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Dr Mulay will be working with Dr Thomas Grewal's group within the Discipline of Pharmaceutical Chemistry.

Postdoctoral scientist, **Keryn Lucas**, joins the Pharmceutics Discipline as part of Professor Michael Murray's group. Keryn will participate in studies of the transcriptional regulation of the human CYP2J2 gene and the regulatory effects of CYP2J2-derived fatty acid metabolites in cells. Keryn will be based at the Medical Foundation Building.

Another addition to Professor Michael Murray's group is Research Assistant **Tristan Rawling**. Tristan's primary research focus will be to synthesise the novel fatty acids for testing in cell-based systems and also participate in the development of analytical assays of fatty acid and drug biotransformation.

Susan Manners joins the Faculty as Scientific Research Laboratory Support Officer for the disciplines of Pharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Chemistry. This is a new role that will provide direct scientific support for researchers and postgraduate students within a laboratory setting.



The University of Sydney

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