



Hygeia

Newsletter of the Faculty of Pharmacy

June 2009



Dean's Update

Pharmacists provide a crucial role in patient healthcare: dispensing medicines; ensuring patients understand the benefits of correct medication; and providing general support and advice. The pharmacist is usually the last health care professional a patient will contact before they begin a course of medicine, making the pharmacist a vital link in the patient-healthcare cycle. Equipping pharmacists with up-to-date, accurate information on medicines is of paramount importance if patients are to understand their medications and gain the best results from their treatment regimens. The advantages and disadvantages of producing and distributing Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) to patients alongside their medications is an important topic of discussion amongst health professionals. Research within this Faculty is contributing to the heart of this debate, with Dr Parisa Aslani, a Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, currently investigating many aspects of the use and application of CMI amongst patients, pharmacists, doctors and other stakeholder groups. Dr Aslani, who discusses her research more fully on page 2, will produce a series of recommendations to advance this tool for information dissemination to the next phase of its development. We congratulate Dr Aslani and her team on their achievements to date and look forward to reading the recommendations their research will soon produce.

Professor Iqbal Ramzan
Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy



Support for the next generation of rural pharmacists

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has presented three students from the Faculty of Pharmacy with rural awards and scholarships. Hayley Bell and Judy Wong have received Remote and Rural Pharmacy Scholarships, and Rebecca Curtis has received the Rural Pharmacy Student Award to attend the 10th National Rural Health Alliance Conference in May. Although 30% of Australians live in rural communities, the majority of pharmacy graduates choose to work in suburban pharmacies, creating a serious shortage of pharmacists working in rural areas.

Dr Lisa Pont, Lecturer (Rural and Aboriginal Health) confirmed, however, that the Faculty of Pharmacy has a strong commitment to rural pharmacy: "Under our new curriculum all students will gain knowledge and skills in rural and aboriginal health issues, including an

opportunity to experience a clinical placement in a rural or remote region. It is essential to keep pharmacists in rural communities and we are very excited to have had such a strong response from students, with 168 Year 4 students expressing an interest in undertaking a rural placement in 2009".

The Rural and Remote Pharmacy Scholarship Scheme is an initiative of the Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program, established in recognition of the key role pharmacists play in maintaining the health of all Australians. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, and managed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the scheme encourages rural pharmacy students to pursue a pharmacy career in rural or remote Australia after graduation, and helps to cover costs associated with studying away from home.



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Consumer Medicine Information: Dr Parisa Aslani is in search of the perfect document



Consumer Medicine Information (CMI), and the role of pharmacists in providing this information to patients, has become a hot topic in recent months. Researchers at the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Sydney are currently reviewing and evaluating existing CMI leaflets from other countries, as well as alternative leaflet designs and content. Dr Parisa Aslani's team is collecting qualitative

and quantitative data from consumers, pharmacists, GPs, CMI writers and other key stakeholders, with the ultimate aim of developing alternative CMI formats.

“Do people want this information in the first place or do they just ignore it?”

Dr Aslani says “currently there is limited compelling evidence to show that well designed CMIs result in greater use by health care professionals; or a more positive impact on patient medicine knowledge; or quality use of medicines in authentic settings especially long-term use. Even if the current CMI is a “perfect document” why are people not using it? Where is the evidence that says CMI is one of the most important documents to give to patients?”

Dr Aslani would like the health profession to tackle the problem from multiple angles. “Little research has been done on evaluating the impact of CMI leaflets on patients’ long term medication taking

behaviour in Australia, although it is known that consumers tend to focus on negative aspects of information such as adverse side effects”.

Dr Aslani suggests the questions we should be asking are: should every patient be receiving a full CMI every time; should we consider different types of information as an adjunct to CMI; should CMI be a one off provision or something a pharmacist uses over several visits collaboratively with GPs; do CMIs satisfy the information needs of every person

“Even if the current CMI is a ‘perfect document’ why are people not using it?”

Dr Aslani hopes her current research project will provide the answers. It is clearly a topic, which she is very passionate about, stating “CMI is an important tool which should be used effectively by health professionals to ensure quality use of medicines by consumers – but we need quality CMI”.

Inter-professional collaboration on the agenda for asthma self-management

Individual professions within the healthcare sector will be united for the first time to improve asthma care for patients as part of a new research initiative led by the Faculty of Pharmacy. The Department of Health and Ageing have granted \$350,000 to Dr Sinthia Bosnic-Anticevich, Chief Investigator, to fund an 18 month Inter-professional Learning Demonstration Project which will develop a mechanism for inter-professional collaboration around asthma self-management.

The project is being run in partnership with the South East Sydney Division of General Practice and will target those professional groups already involved in asthma management, such as pharmacists, General Practitioners and asthma educators. However the project will also focus on engaging with those health professionals who have had little or no involvement in the past but who have been highlighted as a necessary part of a holistic asthma self- management model, such as practice nurses and psychologists.

With the support of the Division the new model will be implemented within the Division’s area of responsibility and

evaluated for impact, patient outcomes and professional relationships. Dr Bosnic-Anticevich, Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, speaks enthusiastically about the scope of the project, “In practice, getting different professions to work together at the ground level is really challenging. It comes down to the complexities associated with relationships. This project will help to understand the basic building blocks of those relationships and strategies to overcome them”. Dr Bosnic-Anticevich is joined on the project by collaborators from the Division, and Professor Carol Armour, Associate Professor Ines Krass, Dr Bandana Saini and Dr Lorraine Smith from the Faculty.

Dr Bosnic-Anticevich has also received \$470,000 in Australian Research Council funding for improving professional relationships around inhaler device use in collaboration with the National Prescribing Service and Professor Carol Armour from the Faculty. Inhaler technique is vitally important to the success of asthma treatment, with up to 90% of patients failing to use their inhaler devices correctly, with implications on asthma control.



Dr Sinthia Bosnic-Anticevich explaining asthma inhaler device use.

Finding a new method to detect MRSA

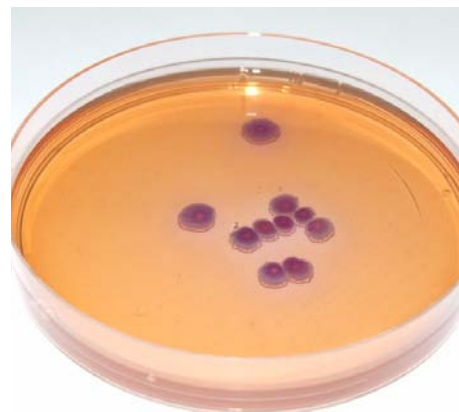
Professor Paul Groundwater has been recently appointed as Professor of Medicinal Chemistry in the Faculty of Pharmacy. His research interests include the design and synthesis of novel agents for the treatment of cancer and psoriasis, the identification of the active principle of medicinal plants, and new methods for the detection of bacteria.

Professor Groundwater has recently been part of a multi-disciplinary team whose work has led to a method for the detection of the bacterium *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, which can lead to dangerous secondary infections in intensive care patients. A simple test using a specific enzyme that turns a substrate from yellow to purple can confirm the presence of *P. aeruginosa* in patients within 24 hours. Paul and his

collaborators now hope to extend this work to the detection of MRSA.

Another aspect to Professor Groundwater's work is the discovery of new drugs for the treatment of psoriasis and cancer by inhibiting some common growth mechanisms. Using computer modelling, new targets for the treatment of these diseases have been identified and then developed and tested in the laboratory.

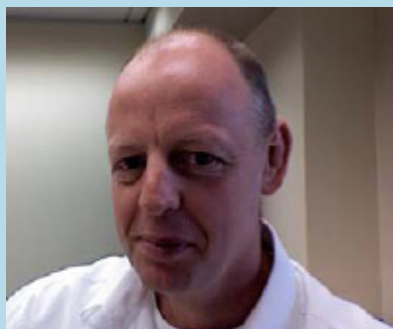
Professor Groundwater is very passionate about medicinal chemistry saying, "I love making and characterising new molecules for a particular application. In pharmacy there is every research speciality from microbiology and chemistry to patient care, giving me fantastic opportunities for collaboration".



Innovative chromogenic medium for the direct identification of Pseudomonas aeruginosa

RESEARCHER PROFILE:

Professor Paul Groundwater



Professor Groundwater has a Bachelor of Science and Doctorate in Chemistry from the University of Edinburgh. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the Australian National University, Canberra with Professor Ron Warrener then returned to the UK to join Professor Malcolm Stevens at the Cancer Research Campaign Experimental Chemotherapy Research Group, Aston University. In 1989 Paul was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Chemistry, Cardiff University. In 1996 he was appointed to a Readership in Organic Chemistry in the Institute of Pharmacy and

Chemistry at the University of Sunderland and was promoted to Professor, in the Sunderland Pharmacy School, in 2001. Paul was the Centre Director of ChemiSPEC, a business providing spectroscopic services to industry, and was the Team Leader of the Drug Design and Analysis group in the Sunderland University Pharmacy School in the UK. He has published more than 60 papers, two books and 3 patents. He is a Guest Professor in the School of Pharmaceutical Science and Technology, Tianjin University, Tianjin, P.R. China.

People management specialist Wendy Poyser lends her expertise to the Blooms Business Skills Program

As part of the Faculty's initiative to equip its students with business knowledge Wendy Poyser joined the Faculty as an Associate Lecturer in Pharmacy Management. In recent years teaching pharmacy students about the commercial side of pharmacy has become increasingly important including developing their skills in people management, negotiation and leadership. Reports from industry and government have highlighted a shortfall in the knowledge of pharmacy graduates about the business aspect of running a pharmacy, despite the majority of pharmacy graduates choosing to work in or own a pharmacy. The Faculty introduced the Blooms Business Skills Program in 2008 to address the business skills

shortage with major support from Blooms The Chemist. Wendy has written the teaching modules in leadership and negotiation as part of this voluntary course for Faculty students in years 2-4. Wendy comes to the Faculty with a wealth of experience as a corporate consultant, coaching clients in people management skills, change management, human resources and mediation. Wendy says "Pharmacy students are able to learn business skills in a practical and applied way, gaining real value from the experience of the business owners who teach the modules. It is so important to ensure these students are equipped with commercial knowledge so they are able to cope with running a pharmacy

as a business. So much of it is dealing with people, such as patients or managing staff or negotiating with suppliers and landlords".



Sydney University Pharmacy Student of the Year

Anjana Rao, Bachelor of Pharmacy 4th Year, has been named as the University of Sydney's representative in the state-wide Pharmacy Student of the Year competition run by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. The University of Sydney competition was coordinated in the Faculty of Pharmacy by Dr Rebekah Moles, PhD student Claire O'Reilly, and Kevin Sam from the Sydney University Pharmacy Association. The competitors had to perform in several pharmacy case scenario role plays with actors taking the parts of patients. The 11 competitors were judged on their communication skills and their pharmacy knowledge. Lecturers in Pharmacy Practice, Dr Moles and Dr Betty Chaar, were two of the four competition judges. Dr Chaar noted "It was a very difficult choice as all candidates performed very well. Anjana was chosen for her presentation skills and accuracy in the information she delivered in a professional

manner". Dr Moles praised Anjana's consistency saying "Anjana demonstrated the most consistent delivery and displayed good communication skills. This is really important for the state and national finals where you can get any type of scenario given to you".

Anjana will now go on to compete against other university finalists from New South Wales at the state-level competition which will be held at the forthcoming Pharmacy Expo in Sydney's Darling Harbour. Anjana will face competitors from the University of Newcastle and Charles Sturt University. The winner will be named as the Pharmacy Student of the Year for NSW and will go on to compete for the national title against all the other state finalists later in the year. Dr Chaar and Dr Moles are helping Anjana prepare for the state competition by practising new case scenarios with her and giving presentation advice. Dr Chaar knows that good preparation can pay

dividends and helped coach last year's winner, she adds "We hope Anjana follows in the footsteps of her predecessor, Natalie Tasker, who went on to win the National Competition last year".

Dr Chaar and Dr Moles practising new pharmacy case scenarios with Anjana Rao



Encouraging more female academics to aim for the top



Dr Sinthia Bosnic-Anticevich, Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice in the Faculty of Pharmacy has been awarded one of the University of Sydney's inaugural Thompson Fellowships. This year, under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor Jill Trehwella, the University has established and offered two new Fellowships designed to promote equity and diversity at the University of Sydney. One of these is the Thompson Fellowship, addressing the under-

representation of women in senior academic positions. The Thompson Fellowship is designed to provide opportunities for female academic staff to develop and strengthen their research, preparing them to apply for, and assume, senior academic roles in the near future. Professor Trehwella said the fellowships marked an important step towards making the University a female-friendly workplace.

Pharmacy and the Australian healthcare sector: a key player or a silent partner?

On 12th May the Faculty of Pharmacy hosted its inaugural alumni Public Symposium entitled *Pharmacy and the Australian Healthcare Sector: A Key Player or a Silent Partner?* Consultant Clinical Pharmacist Debbie Rigby was joined by the Faculty's Pro-Dean, Professor Jo-anne Brien, and Alphapharm CEO, John Montgomery, to speak candidly about issues including the prescribing rights of pharmacists, Garling Report recommendations and generic substitution rates. The discussion was moderated by Professor of Pharmacy,

Aged Care, Andrew McLachlan. The panelists' presentations stimulated strong discussion and debate which is a testament to how passionate today's pharmacists feel about becoming important players in this changing healthcare sector. Key areas of concern put forth by participants included the need for specialised post-graduate training, the importance of increased public visibility for pharmacists and increased collaboration with medical and other health care professionals. Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Professor

Iqbal Ramzan, says "It was this kind of open dialogue that we hoped to initiate with our alumni and we are eager to host more forums like this in the future. Our alumni contribute greatly to the University of Sydney's intellectual community."

The evening also marked the election of a new Executive Committee of the Pharmacy Alumni Association which will be launching an exciting new program of activities to include networking events, intellectually stimulating forums, newsletters, reunions and more.



The University of Sydney

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