



Faculty of Pharmacy
The University of Sydney

The Journey of the Pharmacy Practice Foundation to Date

A History of the Foundation.....

In 1976 the Pharmaceutical Society of NSW celebrated its centenary. To mark this grand occasion a number of activities were undertaken. One such activity was to join with other State Pharmaceutical Societies to establish a national professional body for pharmacists – the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. A centrepiece of the Society's Centenary year was also to establish a Pharmacy Practice Foundation at The University of Sydney with the primary objective of endowing a unique Chair in Australia, the Chair of Pharmacy Practice. This Chair would support the Research, Innovation, Education, Learning and Teaching of the Practice of Pharmacy. It has been said that formation of the Pharmacy Practice Foundation was the most significant development in Pharmacy education during the past 50 years.

Being the principal advocate of the concept, **Ross Brown** was appointed to Chair the Steering Committee for this Foundation. As a former President of the Pharmaceutical Society of NSW he had been given right of co-optation of two others. Both were the immediate past presidents of two other major Pharmacy organisations, **Miss Rhondda Figgis**, Immediate Past President of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (NSW Branch) and **Mr Peter Harding**, Immediate Past President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (NSW Branch). The Steering Committee was tasked to prepare a draft Constitution, produce a Prospectus and launch the Pharmacy Practice Foundation.

Why were we so motivated? The background to development of the Pharmacy Practice Foundation was the changes taking place in the practice of pharmacy. Pharmacy was evolving from in-pharmacy compounding of extemporaneously prepared medicine, to the delivery of industry manufactured medicine which was often more potent and more capable of producing unwanted side effects, drug interactions and potential adverse reactions. This evolutionary phenomenon referred to as "the chemotherapeutic revolution" was gathering pace and pharmacists were right at the centre of it.

So the role of the pharmacist was changing rapidly and with change came opportunity. New medicine was typically not only more potent but more specific in action which occasioned potential adverse reactions with other substances such as drugs and foods. Greater care was needed in use of new medicines. The pharmacist occupied a pivotal point for patient care as the provider of the medication and with it the information a patient needed to optimise the benefit of their medicine. This role for the pharmacist was quite different to compounding extemporaneously prepared medicine. It also meant that the Pharmacist would become more focused on the patient and pharmacists became increasingly aware

not only of what the active ingredients of medicine consisted of, but also of how it worked and the problems associated with its use.

It was considered that any knowledge gap for pharmacists could best be addressed by the establishment of a new discipline with a Professor of Pharmacy Practice at The University of Sydney. This Professor would complement the activities of the two existing Professors of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Pharmaceutics. University curriculum changes at that time included such areas as pharmacology, disease states, therapeutics, adverse drug reactions and drug interactions. All areas in which a Professor of Pharmacy Practice could make a substantial contribution, not only to undergraduates but also to support continuing education programs for practicing pharmacists and importantly, to promote rigorous research into the practice of pharmacy including assessing health care benefits achieved by pharmacists.

To be successful there were two challenges. The first was to form the Pharmacy Practice Foundation within The University of Sydney. At that point although pharmacy education had been conducted at the University since 1899, no supporting Foundation had been established so we were breaking new ground. The second major challenge was to raise the capital sum necessary to fund the endowed Chair.

The Steering Committee considered that an important aspect of success would be the strong and dedicated support of all branches of our profession hence an active program to engage other pharmacy organisations was undertaken. All fully co-operated, this was of great assistance to the harmonious and beneficial outcome.

Our then University of Sydney Chancellor **Sir Hermann Black** chaired the public meeting attended by some 140 persons called to launch the Pharmacy Practice Foundation. The inaugural President was former NSW Health Minister **Harry Jago** who presided over the inaugural Council meeting of the Foundation on 14 June 1978. When Harry Jago stood down **Warwick Wilkinson** became President and served us so well for some 25 years.

It has been said that establishment and operation of the Pharmacy Practice Foundation has been the most significant development in pharmacy in the last 30 years.

Ross Brown, AM RFD ED
President, Pharmacy Alumni Association
The University of Sydney

Reflections of the Immediate Past President of the Pharmacy Practice Foundation, Mr Warwick J Wilkinson, AO RFD ED on his retirement in 2004.

An honourable historian Mark Twain once said that:

“All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, then success is sure.”

The impulse to establish the Foundation was ***‘tangible evidence that the profession is aware of expanding technologies and increased social pressures which are continuing to breed subtle changes.’***

It all came about through the vision and collaboration of a group of pharmacists who recognized that pharmacy practice had to keep pace with pharmaceutical developments and societal changes. Pharmacy training was no longer considered adequate preparation to meet the increasing needs of the community, as admitted by pharmacists themselves at the time:

‘Training is not related to retail pharmacy at present’

‘My degree course lacked practice content’

‘If more practical aspects were introduced to the course the training would be more balanced’.

The Foundation’s first objective was to establish a Chair of Pharmacy Practice to meet this growing need for a more patient-orientated pharmacy practitioner.

The cooperation between the University and the pharmacy organisations meant that mutual enthusiasm was developed and busy people gave freely of their time. **Professor Dick Thomas** was one of the earliest champions of the cause, supported by **Professor Basil Roufogalis**, **Professor Jack Thomas** and others. Various heads of school also contributed to the evolving success of the project, among them **Professor Tom Watson**, **Professor Ron Anderson**, **Professor Jim Robinson** and **Dr. Adrian Ryan**.

The role of Executive Officer was filled by **Dr Ross Holland** and his team saw a consolidation of the various elements of the Foundation. **Rhonda Figgis-Close** was a member of the original Steering Committee of 1974. She came from the hospital pharmacy area and her experience and knowledge have been of great value during her lengthy and uninterrupted service on Council. **Margarethe Trimble** also joined in the early days as a staff member. Her corporate knowledge, understanding and perseverance are of inestimable value and continuing support to the Foundation.

In those early days, our enthusiasm was not matched by sufficient tangible support to reach the target of \$300,000, which was the capital then needed to fund a Chair. The Foundation survived some very challenging times which required great dedication and commitment from those who continued to be involved. There was a time when we had reached the figure of \$70,000 however, the University felt the task was too great and the Council considered terminating the project and transferring the funds to the University’s consolidated revenue. However, we persevered and were able to increase membership and support within the profession and even began to receive some support from our friends in industry.

I remember well the voluntary efforts of **Robert McPherson**. He took it upon himself while working as a representative for Parke-Davis in the rural areas to seek support from the pharmacists in the bush. His successful approach led to \$22,000 of support coming in over a period. This example of Robert's ability was a marvellous morale-booster to everyone associated with the Foundation. Robert McPherson subsequently came into the role of acting Executive Officer as well as field officer from time to time. His loyalty and contribution are always an inspiration to all of us on the Council.

This was a difficult period and great perseverance was required of everyone. Inevitably some of the original group fell by the wayside. However, we started to build a retinue of committed and enthusiastic pharmacists who had shared the challenges and contributed to the growing momentum. Appropriate identification and acknowledgement will follow in the history of the Foundation which is being planned.

The need for the profession to have an effective alumni group also became apparent and the Foundation was pleased to establish, foster and support the group. One of the Council members, **Ken Bickle**, took up the task of President of the Pharmacy Alumni Association, and his energetic and enthusiastic input, together with the support of his wife Margaret, meant that the Alumni got off the ground. The subsequent President, **Greg Hodgson** and the current President **Ross Brown** have taken the initiatives to new heights and we now have a very well-regarded alumni program which is one of the best at the University and a leading one amongst all the schools of pharmacy in Australia.

This gaining momentum led to a number of significant fund-raising endeavours within the profession and the industry. I can recall clearly the **Hon. John Matthews** chairing one of these fund-raising dinners to start a campaign which led to commitments exceeding \$500,000 over a period. It was about this time that significant support from the industry started flowing in. I remember well the first significant commitment in 1990 from **Sterling Pharmaceuticals**, now **GlaxoSmithKline**, and we've appreciated the support ever since.

Merck Sharp & Dohme were also significant early – and ongoing supporters. Later, other firms started to respond as well, thanks to the efforts of those Council members who did the hard yards of visiting firms and requesting support. John Matthews and I teamed up in this demanding task and visited companies here and interstate. Some of the interstate visits were initially unproductive but in time a number of those firms saw the light and contributed financial support.

Australian Pharmaceutical Industries, who commenced their commitments in 1986 and have continued ever since, are the Foundation's major sponsor.

Little did we realise when we started on this quest to obtain support for the Chair of Pharmacy Practice that, it would evolve into the most significant support element in the establishment and operation of the first independent Faculty of Pharmacy in Australia.

In 1989 the State Government responded to our request with a cheque for \$1.3 million, no strings attached, to go towards the establishment of the Chair of Pharmacy Practice. This was a momentous occasion which may never occur again. We are indebted to the **Hon. Peter Collins**, the Minister for Health in the Liberal government of the day for honouring an election promise.

This, of course, enabled us to achieve our goal and to advertise for a Professor of Pharmacy Practice. The Foundation selected **Professor Charlie Benrimoj** for the role.

The University of Sydney's Faculty of Pharmacy and the Pharmacy Practice Foundation are well-known internationally and the Foundation's structure and activities have served as a blueprint for the setting up of some overseas institutions. It is fitting that Charlie Benrimoj, Professor of Pharmacy Practice, was appointed Dean of the Faculty.

From this point on, our confidence grew. We continued to improve in our ability to obtain funding and validated the proverb *'nothing succeeds like success.'*

From its earliest days the Foundation has been responsible for a number of support activities for the former Department of Pharmacy (now the Faculty of Pharmacy) – such as funding for the library, a range of subscriptions to professional and technical journals, and support for rural pharmacy experience, to name a few.

Another salient event in the history of the Foundation was the appointment in 1994 of **Norman Graeve**, a pharmacist with professional and marketing experience, to the position of Consultant Manager. The continuing success of the Foundation is testimony to his ability, dedication and tenacity. Among Norman Graeve's initiatives were the establishment of the industry lunches, which always prove to be a constructive forum for discussion, and the Governors' Dinner. The Council's decision to award the medals of excellence at the annual Governors' Dinner have given this function national status within the industry and the health bureaucracy.

A further initiative that has proved successful is the **Infrastructure Tour** program. Over the years these tours, which have become somewhat famous, have provided an opportunity for senior politicians and government members to gain awareness of the modus operandi of wholesalers, manufacturers and the Faculty. They have also provided the Foundation and Faculty with a unique status.

The growth of the Pharmacy Practice academic staff has been phenomenal and the influence it wields is substantial. **Prof. Carol Armour**, Professor of Pharmacy, **Prof. Joanne Brien**, Pharmacia Chair of Clinical Pharmacy at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, **Associate Professor Ines Krass** have a reputation second to none in Australia. In 2003 alone there were 18 PhD students, 11 Masters students doing research and 11 full-time academic staff including 3 professors.

Changes in the profession and the community have challenged us. Pharmacists today need to be Renaissance men and women; they need to be counsellors, culturally aware, computer-literate, able to cope with the demands of the community and to keep up with changes in the pharmacy profession, including rural practice, as well as the pharmaceutical industry and academia. The profession can survive and continue to provide optimal service to the community only if it embraces the challenge imposed by these changes.

The Foundation has been fortunate to have the support and involvement of a number of dedicated people in the profession, industry and academia. Their vision and unbounded enthusiasm have made the Foundation the icon it has become in university and professional circles and have enabled us to develop a strategic plan which will take us to 2005 and beyond. As Winston Churchill said in 1942;

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Having seen the beginning, I have every confidence that my colleagues will uphold the Foundation's reputation for excellence and continue, as always, to meet its ends.*

Warwick Wilkinson, AO RFD ED

Fast Forward to 2008.....

The Foundation continues to help promote teaching, research and debate in the area of pharmacy practice within the University and the pharmacy community. This is achieved by regular meetings and special projects which provides for an excellent forum for keeping abreast of the developments with the industry and contributes to its future.

*[Below is an extract from a speech delivered by **Prof. Charlie Benrimoj** at the Foundation's AGM 2008]*

The Faculty of Pharmacy and Foundation supports;

- A Pharmacy Practice Group of 17 full time academic staff including four Professors and an Associate Professor; Chair of Pharmacy Practice (**Prof Charlie Benrimoj**), Chair in Clinical Pharmacy (**Prof Jo-Anne Brien**) Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Professor of Pharmacy (**Prof Carol Armour**), Chair in Pharmacy Management (**Prof Lesley White**) and Chair in Aged Care (Pharmacy) (**Prof Andrew McLachlan**) and Associate **Prof Ines Krass** (Head of Discipline). This group is assisted by some 13 practitioner teachers whose primary aim is to provide undergraduate and postgraduate pharmacy practice education. The group supervises some 30 full time and part time research students. Compare this to 1978, I believe, we had no recognised pharmacy practice academics, and secondly compare to any other school of pharmacy in Australia and internationally.
- The group has a significant national and international reputation and is by far the leading pharmacy practice group in Australia and would be counted in the top five around the world.
- The group has produced the vast majority of pharmacy practice PhD's in Australia over the last 10 years.
- It has had a major influence on pharmaceutical services in Australia. Some highlights include;
 1. The development and implementation of Home Medication Reviews in community and hospital settings;
 2. the professional delivery of non prescription medication;
 3. the development and implementation of Disease State Management in Diabetes and Asthma with supportive research in cardiovascular disease and mental health;
 4. the initiation of the development of a industry wide change management program;
 5. the delivery of CMI and medicine information;
 6. the development of Clinical Intervention;
 7. the development of several innovative services for pharmacists which will clearly impinge on future practice such as health promotion and GP pharmacists;

8. the assurance of medication safety in the hospital setting through such studies as drug use reviews, clinical therapeutic drug monitoring, the role of drug committees and impact of clinical services in the hospital setting; and
9. the development of research into aged care medication usage and services through investigation into drug use in older people.

**Professor Charlie Benrimoj,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Planning)
Chair of Pharmacy Practice**

The Journey Continues.....

Our work can only continue with the wonderful support that we have received from our industry and individual sponsors and the dedication of people in the profession, industry and academia.

Warwick Plunkett
President,
Pharmacy Practice Foundation

