



# School of Physiotherapy



Newsletter

May 2008 Issue

## First Physiotherapy Graduates in Bendigo

A significant boost to physiotherapy services in country Victoria occurred with the graduation of the first graduates of the La Trobe University Physiotherapy Bendigo program. The graduates, who completed their course in 2007, were awarded their Bachelor of Physiotherapy degrees at the ceremony on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May.

The physiotherapy program at La Trobe University is the oldest, largest and most popular physiotherapy program in Victoria. In 2004 a physiotherapy program was established at Bendigo with financial assistance from the Department of Human Services and support from the Bendigo Health Care Group. Teaching spaces and practical laboratories for physiotherapy students were established at the Anne Caudle Centre.

The co-ordinator of the Bendigo physiotherapy program Associate Professor Helen McBurney said that all but one of the 12 new graduates had applied for a position in the country, and 75% were now working in a rural setting.

Dr Megan Davidson, the Head of School of Physiotherapy added *"this is a vindication of our belief that the best way to improve the availability of health professionals in regional communities is to train them in the region."* Dr Amanda Kenny the Director of the Faculty of Health Sciences at La Trobe University in Bendigo said that the University had plans to expand the number of students studying to become health professionals at the Bendigo campus. *"Courses are already available in nursing, midwifery, social work, physiotherapy, public health, pharmacy, oral health and dentistry."*

*We would like eventually to offer other allied health courses at Bendigo, including occupational therapy, podiatry and speech therapy."*

At the same ceremony two post-graduate students - Rosemary Corrigan and Debra Schultz - were awarded the Doctor of Physiotherapy degree. Dr Corrigan's doctoral studies examined the factors that affect the ability of rural patients to achieve functional walking in their community following a stroke or head injury. Dr Corrigan is a lecturer at the School of Physiotherapy at Charles Sturt University. Dr Schultz, Director of Allied Health at Barwon Health in her thesis examined health outcomes for elderly patients in an acute care unit.

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Bendigo Graduates and Staff

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## Megan's Memo...

It is shaping up to be another action-packed year for physiotherapy education. We have had the final intake into the Bachelor of Physiotherapy program this year with an unusually high uptake of offers resulting in a rather large first year cohort. Planning for the new entry-level double degree Bachelor of Health Sciences and Master of Physiotherapy Practice is progressing. The Faculty has employed two educational designers to assist with unit development and design of the units in the common first year are well advanced. Lester Jones is leading the curriculum development project for Physiotherapy. There will be



**Dr Megan Davidson**  
Head of School  
School of Physiotherapy

many challenges in introducing a new program using an enquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. However, it is an exciting opportunity to completely reshape the curriculum to better prepare our

future physiotherapists for practice.

The graduation of the first cohort of students from the Bendigo Physiotherapy program (front cover story) was a milestone for the School. The number of students enrolled in the Bendigo Physiotherapy program is growing and with the new School of Dentistry the numbers of health science students in Bendigo is burgeoning.

At the Bundoora graduation ceremony in April the prestigious D.M. Myers University Medal was awarded to Sarah Warby who completed an outstanding honours thesis. Sarah Warby was also awarded the Bernard Rechter Graduate

Research Prize for Honours for 2007. In total there were 110 graduates who completed their physiotherapy degree at the end of 2007 and about the same number will complete this year.

Two very long standing members of staff, Diana Spurrirt and Marilyn Mackenzie, will retire in the middle of the year. Diana and Marilyn have made an enormous and sustained contribution of physiotherapy education in Victoria and many of you who graduated from old Lincoln or more recently from La Trobe will remember being taught by them. A farewell function will be held on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Mary Tomlinson on 9479 5793 if you would like to attend.

## Rich reward for Rod

(reproduced with kind permission from CGMC Staff Newsletter - Summer Edition 2008)

Caulfield General Medical Centre physiotherapist Rod Sturt has been awarded this year's Felice Rosemary Lloyd Trust scholarship. The prestigious award, worth \$10,000, will allow Rod to travel to a number of international centres to look at best practice management of non-traumatic spinal cord injury patients.

The scholarship specifically provides funds for Victorian physiotherapists to travel overseas for post graduate study or to further their professional development.

Rod, who has been a physiotherapist for 16 years, eight of those at CGMC, says he was thrilled to hear the news of the scholarship.

"I was VERY excited – I couldn't believe it as I thought that if I'd been successful I would have heard long ago; so to receive this news was fantastic."

"I will be able to attend (and hopefully present CGMC research) at the International Spinal Cord Injury conference

in Durban, South Africa in August 2008. This will also mean some international exposure for CGMC and Bayside Health, which is great."

"The fellowship will then allow me to also visit rehabilitation centres in Switzerland, the UK and USA."

Dr Anne Holland, La Trobe University's Associate Professor of Physiotherapy at Bayside Health, congratulated Rod on the scholarship.

"This is fantastic news and well deserved," Anne said.

"It's a great recognition of Rod's achievements as both clinician and researcher."

Rod has been undertaking a project called: "Timed Up and Go, 10-metre walk and the 6-minute walk tests: walking ability at discharge in a non-traumatic spinal cord-injured population". His research has looked at this under-recognized group of patients and their progress in rehabilitation with respect to

their mobility in particular aspects of walking such as speed and endurance.

"There is very little literature on this group of patients and I aim to get my work published and draw more attention to this significantly impaired group of spinal cord injured patients," Rod added.

Rod's success will also mean great benefits for CGMC patients.

"Following my trip information and knowledge will be shared amongst local physiotherapists, and other physiotherapists in Victoria. Our patients at CGMC will have access to staff with knowledge of the world's best practice in management of spinal cord injury and access to a new wheelchair and seating service – the development of which is one of the outcomes of the project," Rod explained.

"Patients will also benefit from assessment and treatment strategies that I will observe during my visits to the interna-

tional centres."

ANZ Trustees run the Felice Rosemary Lloyd Trust, a perpetual charitable trust that was established by Brian Lloyd in 1985 in memory of Felice, his late wife. Since then scholarships have been distributed annually in Felice Rosemary Lloyd's name, with the same intention as she had pursued in her physiotherapy career – to seek overseas experience in the field of physiotherapy. In the past 11 years 18 scholarships have been awarded totalling an excess of \$100,000.

## Congratulations Rod!



## Dr Nora Shields acknowledged for Down Syndrome Research

Dr Nora Shields was the runner-up in the Victorian Government's Applied Research in Sport and Recreation Science Award for her work on community based exercise programs for adults with Down syndrome. Each year, the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development present their Sport and Recreation Awards to individuals and organisations for their positive and inspirational contributions to sport and recreation in communities across Victoria.

Nora's research interest is in the area of physical activity and exercise for people with disabilities and has shown that most adults with Down syndrome do not undertake the recommended levels of exercise to maintain good health.

Along with her colleagues Prof Nick Taylor and Prof Karen Dodd, she completed a randomised controlled trial last year to determine if progressive resistance training was beneficial for people with Down syndrome. This study, which will be published shortly in the leading international journal *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, found that strength training is a safe and feasible option for people with Down syndrome and is effective in improving upper limb muscle endurance. A follow-up study to develop a model for promoting and supporting people with Down syndrome to participate in exercise opportunities available within their local community was completed by recent graduate Jess Mahy as part of her honours thesis. This study

found that in order to be successful, exercise needed to be fun, low cost, have a social component to it and, if possible, a system of rewards and encouragement by carers.

Nora was presented with a certificate and prize money of \$500 by the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, JAMES MERLINO at a ceremony in November 2007 at the MCG.



## Clinical Issues in Pain—March '08

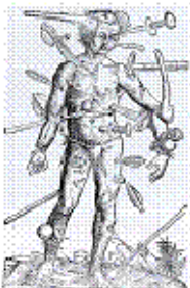
Lester Jones and John Hammond (St. George's, University of London) teamed up again to deliver a two day course that they had previously delivered in London. 'Clinical Issues in Pain' is a two day reflective learning experience which covers current concepts of pain, pain mechanisms, the role of patient and clinician beliefs and expectations, and effective communication. It encourages participants to clinically reason using a bio-psycho-social framework and

reflect on their understanding of pain as a multidimensional experience. Peer-assisted learning is encouraged so participants have the opportunity to discuss and consider the relevance of material presented across the two days, to the setting in which they work. The course leaders hope to facilitate change in participants rather than promote an expert-learner model. Recognising that successful and permanent change is unlikely to hap-

pen in 2 days, continued peer support is promoted through ongoing email contact and a follow-up session, 4-6 months after the course. About 20 participants attended the two days, held at the Bundoora campus. Participants' feedback indicated they had developed a better understanding of the multi-dimensions of pain and how they might integrate that knowledge into assessment and treatment. The follow-up day will be held in June.



**Lester Jones**  
Lecturer  
2nd Year Co-ordinator



## May Munchies

Each year the School of Physiotherapy participates in "Australia's Biggest Morning Tea". This year is no different with food contributions donated by staff members and all money collected will be donated to Cancer Research after May.



## 20th Reunion of 1988 Graduating Class...

Tracey Gregson (Jukes) and Kirsty Larkworthy (Murray) are organising the reunion for the graduating class of 1988. If you are one of these please contact Mary Tomlinson at the School of Physiotherapy on 9479 5793 - details being planned at present for a November 2008 gathering.



**For further information :**

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