

CLUSTER

Newsletter of the
University of Melbourne's
Clinical Departments at
Royal Melbourne and
Western Hospitals



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

CHRONICLE

BENCH TO BEDSIDE RESEARCH



ISSUE 1
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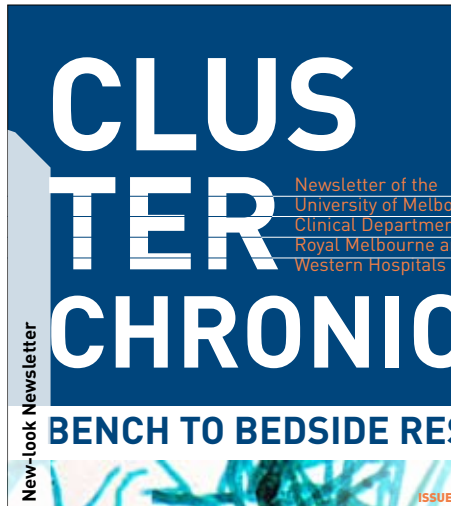
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Welcome to the first edition of Cluster Chronicle



Congratulations to Charlotte Morgans, Unit Manager (Dept Medicine, Western Hospital) for her suggestion in a naming competition for the new publication. The competition was open to all cluster staff, fellows and students and entries came in from far and wide. Charlotte wins a nice bottle of white for her efforts.

A special mention goes to Dr Kate Drummond (Dept Surgery) for her suggestion "Crunchy Clusters", a name she thought of from a recipe in her Women's Weekly cookbook!

Cluster Chronicle is a broadened incarnation of Medicine Matters that once served the Department of Medicine before the formation of the cluster. Published on a tri-annual basis, Cluster Chronicle will feature research stories, staff and student achievements and department activities from the Departments of Medicine, Surgery, Radiology and Psychiatry. Submissions are always warmly welcomed by contacting the

cluster communications manager, Kate Hannah. Email: khannah@unimelb.edu.au / Ph: 8344 3277

Malaria Expert Makes Professor



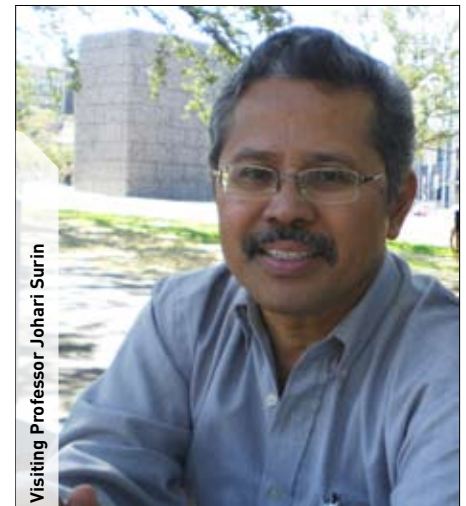
Stephen Rogerson, head of the Malaria Group in the Department of Medicine RMH/WH has been promoted to Professor.

Stephen has been a member of the Department of Medicine since 2001. He trained as an Infectious Disease physician, and after completing a PhD at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research he moved to Malawi as a Wellcome Trust fellow for 4 years. In Malawi, Stephen established a programme of work on malaria in pregnancy. He has continued this work in Melbourne, initially funded through a Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellowship. He is currently a member of the Executive Committee of the Malaria in Pregnancy Consortium, an initiative supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and leads programmes covering use of intermittent preventive treatment for malaria in Papua New Guinea,

and examining how understanding the pathogenesis and immunity of malaria in pregnancy can help improve targeting of malaria prevention strategies.

His laboratory in Melbourne focuses on understanding the immunology and pathogenesis of malaria in pregnancy, and how malaria alters placental function and compromises fetal health.

Meet Visiting Professor, Johari Surin



Johari is a parasitology lecturer, researcher and consultant at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, and joins the Department of Medicine (RMH/WH) as a visiting honorary professor for nine months.

Johari has contributed more than 150 publications in trematodes, sparganosis, lymphatic filariasis, trichinellosis, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis and forensic entomology in journals in Malaysia and overseas.

Johari is working on a project

to evaluate factors that might influence the outcome of treatment against Plasmodium falciparum. These include acquired immunity, haemoglobinopathies and drug resistant genotypic markers.

Grants Galore

Congratulations to the following recipients of recent NH&MRC grants

Department of Medicine

Prof Stephen Jane
Dr Christopher Slape
Dr David Curtis
Dr Matthew McCormack
Prof Stephen Rogerson
Dr Kim Powell
A/Pr Beverley-Ann Biggs
Dr Glen Scholz
Prof John Hamilton
A/Pr Louis Irving
Prof Gary Anderson
Prof Peter Ebeling
Prof Terence O'Brien
Prof Jonathon Kalman
A/Pr Tim Hewitson

Fellowships

In addition Dr. Nigel Jones was awarded a Career Development Grant: "The causal relationships between epilepsy and psychiatric disease." \$377,000.00

Stephen Jane was also awarded a Senior Principal Research Fellowship with the NHMRC.

Department of Psychiatry (excluding ORYGEN)

Prof Chris Pantelis
Dr Ben Harrison

Department of Radiology

Dr Bradford Moffat

Department of Surgery

Dr. HongJian Zhu
Prof Andrew Kaye
Dr. Andrew Morokoff

Prestigious Windermere Fellowship Snapped up by Biggs' Refugee Services Collaborator

Congratulations to Georgia Paxton, a paediatrician at the Royal Children's Hospital who collaborates closely with Associate Professor Bev Biggs on her successful application for a Windermere Fellowship. Georgia received the fellowship for her work to improve refugee health services for children in Victoria.

The fellowship will assist Georgia to set up a prototype multisite refugee health database across the four specialist clinics at RMH, RCH, Dandenong and Geelong Hospitals.

Five Minutes with Principal Fellow, Tim Hewitson

The Department of Medicine welcomes its most recently promoted fellow, Dr Tim Hewitson from the Renal Unit at Royal Melbourne Hospital. He kindly agreed to an interview.

Can you briefly explain what your work involves?

Full-time scientist and part-



time petrol head (some fear it's the other way round). Seriously though, I'm fortunate to be part of a multidisciplinary team that undertakes basic and applied research, quality control projects and implementation projects in the renal unit at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

What is a normal work day like for you?

A lot of days start with a blank piece of paper. It makes it hard to manage, but in science, much of what you do today depends on what happened yesterday.

What do you most enjoy about your work?

Working in a public hospital. It can be a humbling experience. Many years ago the head office of Coles used to be above their store in Bourke Street. Each day the managers had to walk through the shop floor to get to their office. I think there is a lesson in that for us scientists.

How long have you been in the job?

Long enough to remember using graph paper.... any more specific would be telling.

What does your relationship with the University of Melbourne mean to you?

I once saw Michael Parkinson interview Woody Allen. He asked him if there was anything in his life that he regretted. After a pause, he said there was only one thing. His regret was that he was a self taught man, he hadn't been to university. For him the problem with being self taught was that you never had the big picture, there were always gaps. That encapsulates what being part of the university means to me. It gives me the big picture, even if I'm surprised that Woody Allen doesn't have more regrets!

PhD student wins America-Australia Fellowship



PhD Student, Slave Petrovski

PhD Student, Slave Petrovski has won the prestigious Sir Keith Murdoch Fellowship for his pharmacology work designing learner models that predict disease/therapy outcomes in epilepsy patients.

The American Australian Association awards individual Fellowships for

advanced study in the United States of up to US\$25,000 each year. The fellowship will take Slave to Duke University's Center for Human Genome Variation in North Carolina.

Slave is keen to travel to the US to validate his research with international cohorts.

"Long-term professional relationships and important collaborations with international experts will be invaluable for my budding academic career and will benefit the greater Australian medical community," he said.

Malaria Student Wins New Investigator Award at International Conference



Alex Umbers at the Awards Ceremony

PhD student, Alex Umbers won the ELSEVIER New Investigator Award at the International Federation of Placental Associations conference held in Adelaide in October.

Alex competed against other PhD students and post doctorate researchers from esteemed

institutions like Stanford University, and University of Cambridge.

She received 1000 Euros and a free ScienceDirect Ambassador account for one year for her abstract 'The Effect of Malaria Infection on Term Placental 11 beta HSD2 Expression'

Her work details functional changes to placenta during malaria infection that cause placental insufficiency. This discovery may be one mechanism that underlies the adverse health outcomes in newborns delivered to mothers with malaria, including low birth weight.

Alex and fellow students Liz Aitken, Caroline Chua received 'The Y.W. Loke New Investigator Travel Awards' to attend conference.

The conference organisers distributed the 500 USD awards to offset travel expenses for 40 new investigators.

Social News: Cup Day

It's the race that stops a nation, and the Department of Medicine is no exception.

Staff and students joined for lunch on Cup Day to watch the race and



Hats on Display: Bernadette Crankshaw

take part in the annual sweepstakes. Amanda Turner won \$24, Chris French won \$60.

2009 Honours Cohort do their final presentations

Another cohort of Honours students have fulfilled their requirements after final presentations were held in mid-November.

Sylvia Mahara worked on a project entitled 'Understanding a Novel Gene Involved in Blood Production' with the Bone Marrow Research Laboratories. With only a limited timeframe to carry out the work, Sylvia didn't find the gene but her initial findings suggested that there was a potential for a novel gene or allele that has not been reported to be involved in blood production before. Although Sylvia has completed her project, she continues to work on it voluntarily. She has particularly liked learning different molecular techniques that were not taught during her undergrad year. Sylvia has applied for a scholarship to do a PhD and is looking forward to continuing a project with the Bone Marrow Research Laboratories.

Anita Feigin was enrolled through the Department of Medicine and worked on her honours project at the Burnet Institute. Anita did a preliminary investigation of khat use and its impacts on East African communities in Melbourne. Khat is an African flowering shrub which when chewed is said to cause excitement, loss of appetite and euphoria. Anita made some preliminary findings around the social and economic effects of the drug use in the community and recommended that it not be prohibited.

Anita enjoyed working on her project, in particular her research outside the lab. She is now working as a research assistant in the Centre of Population Health at the Burnet Institute.

Dusseldorf Conference a Highlight for Department Fellow

RMH Colon Cancer expert and Department of Medicine (RMH/WH) Fellow, Professor Finlay Macrae attended the 3rd International Society for Gastrointestinal Hereditary Tumours (InSiGHT) meeting held in Dusseldorf in June. The meeting

brought together surgeons, gastroenterologists, medical oncologists, epidemiologists, clinical geneticists, genetic counselors, molecular biologists, psycho-social scientists and registry personnel to share expertise in the understanding of genetics and cancer.

Macrae reported that the 2009 meeting was outstanding and urges others to attend the April 2011 meeting in San Antonio, Texas and the 2013 meeting in Melbourne.

Osteoporosis Prevention Project Researcher Wins at Brisbane Conference

Associate Professor Robin Daly from Western Health's Department of Medicine has won the Best Conference Paper in the Performance Enhancement and Basic Science section at the 2009 Australian Conference of Science and Medicine in Sport in Brisbane. Associate Prof. Daly presented the results from his 18 month 'GENTS' Osteoporosis Prevention Project which showed that a multi-component bone loading





Mindful Centre Launch

(exercise) program was effective for improving the density and structure of bone in middle aged and older men. There were also significant improvements in muscle strength, size and functional performance. Importantly, the findings from this study indicate that a community based program was safe, feasible and highly effective for improving musculoskeletal health and function in older men, said Associate Professor Daly. The co-authors of the paper were Dr Sonja Kukuljan and Prof. Caryl Nowson from Deakin University and A/Prof Kerrie Sanders from The University of Melbourne.

Minister Opens Mindful Centre for Training and Research

The Hon Lisa Neville, Minister for Mental Health, Senior Victorians and Community Services recently opened the new premises at Flemington for the Mindful Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health. Mindful is a partnership between the University of Melbourne and Monash University and is funded by the Department of Health. The centre

provides professional development courses through a Friday Forum series for workers in child and youth mental health including school teachers. This year Mindful has focused two of its 10 forums on the impact of disaster following the bushfires and managing and understanding autism and depression in children. Mindful offers six postgraduate courses in child and adolescent mental health and child psychotherapy and has a successful research program including Tuning in to Kids, a parenting program aimed at preventing behaviour problems and teaching children emotional competence.

Upon opening the centre the Minister acknowledged the work of Mindful and its key role in teaching and training mental health professionals to improve the mental health outcomes for children, youth and their families.

Representatives from the University of Melbourne, Monash University, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and Take Two [Berry Street] spoke about the importance of evidence based training for professionals to assist children and young people in our communities.

Mindful looks forward to successful teaching, research and sharing of knowledge in the Flemington, Moonee Valley area. For more information about mindful please visit www.mindful.org.au

Damian Myers wins best Oral presentation at the Melbourne Trauma 09 conference

Damian Myers presented an oral presentation entitled High-definition mapping of trace metal elements in the hippocampus in a model of closed-head traumatic brain injury. He used the X-ray Fluorescence Microscopy (XFM) Beamline at the Australian Synchrotron, which enables the mapping of trace metals in biological samples. In this project, Myers collaborated with several groups including scientists from the CSIRO and from Brookhaven Laboratories in the USA, as well as scientists at the Synchrotron. The scientists from the CSIRO and Brookhaven have developed high definition detectors to acquire images from the high energy beamline. The group successfully mapped the distribution of, and quantified, iron (Fe), copper (Cu) and zinc (Zn) in brain samples from a Department of Medicine (RMH/WH) project funded under the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative. The mapping of trace metals in brain slices may help with understanding how head trauma, that causes changes to neuronal network function in the brain, leads to neurological problems such as behavioural changes and cognition and learning deficits.