



## OUR COURSES FOR 2011 AND BEYOND

The Faculty of Dentistry offers a dynamic suite of programs designed to produce the highest calibre dental professionals and researchers.

In 2011 the faculty offered two undergraduate courses: the Bachelor of Oral Health and Bachelor of Dentistry (BDent).

A review of the BDent has resulted in the introduction in 2012 of the Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD). This four-year postgraduate degree combines clinical, medical and dental sciences, underpinned by research-informed learning. It will be taught in a blended mode of guided self-directed learning, e-learning and face-to-face teaching. It offers earlier clinical experience, an emphasis on prevention and leadership skills and international exposure and research experience. Learn more at [sydney.edu.au/dentistry](http://sydney.edu.au/dentistry)

## OUR RESEARCH MILESTONES

Our staff and alumni are renowned for their research excellence across a wide range of dental disciplines. Here is a snapshot of our honour roll of achievements for 2011.

### **Young Investigator Award – 58th European Organisation for Caries Research (ORCA) conference in Kaunas, Lithuania**

Dr Nattida Charadram won for her paper 'Influence of Matrix Metalloproteinase 2 (MMP-2) on Caries-Odontoblast Reaction and Formation of Reactionary Dentine', from more than 60 worldwide participants. The judges were impressed by the depth and extent of her work, which deepens our understanding of how dental tissues resist the infection of caries and places us in a better position to modify this process.

### **Joan Chong Awards in Dental Materials, International Association for Dental Research (IADR), Melbourne**

PhD student Dr Tanapon Sornsuwan, was awarded this prize for his paper 'Influence of occlusal geometry on ceramic crown fracture; role of cusp angle and fissure radius'. His supervisor Professor Mike Swain says "this award is a fitting recognition for the ground-breaking research that Tanapon has undertaken and published to date".

Tanapon's research has implications for crown and bridge design in dentistry.



## OUR LEADERS

### NOEL D MARTIN AM

When we talk oral health there is one visionary leader and champion of change who we proudly recognise as our own.

Emeritus Professor Noel Martin AM was an illustrious alumni and Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry.

He was the principal architect of fluoridation in Australia, which started in Sydney in 1968. He toured the country espousing the need to improve the population's oral health with fluoridated drinking water and changed the tide of preventive dentistry around the globe.

Despite his modesty and soft-spoken manner he was an effective and indefatigable public advocate.

## RESEARCH MILESTONES CONTINUED

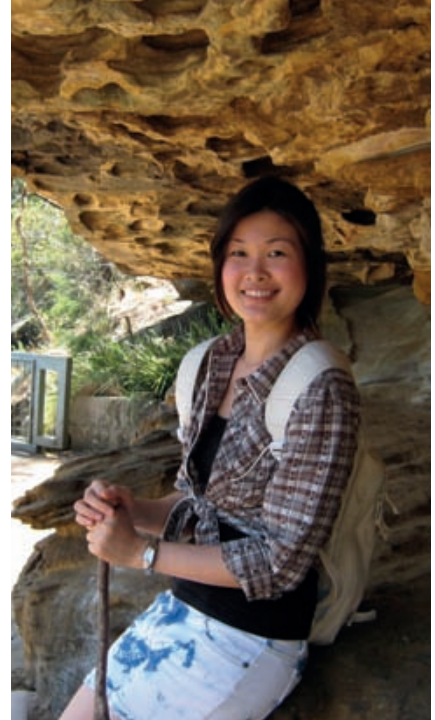
### National Institute of Health (NIH) Grant

Dr Manish Arora was awarded this highly coveted and prestigious grant for his 10-year research on the environment and oral health. In 2001, as a PhD student in our faculty, he embarked on a project exploring how environmental exposures in early life could influence health, and continued to develop this line of research during his fellowship training in the United States.

The NIH grant will allow him to lead a study into the role gene-environment interactions and foetal programming play in the development of oral disease. His project is nested in a large study established by Harvard University, with branches in Australia, the US, Italy and Mexico.

### Graduate Student Research Award-The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD)/NuSmile

Alumna Dr Susan Hsieh was honoured with this prestigious international award for her ground-breaking research into the oral health effects of childhood anti-neoplastic therapy. With seven other international finalists she was invited to present her research results in New York. A graduate of our Doctor of Clinical Dentistry (Paediatric Dentistry) program, this is her third international award. Her work on survivors of childhood cancers has shown that many of the therapies have adverse effects that persist for years. She has also identified periods of heightened susceptibility when exposure to radio- and/or chemotherapy can severely disrupt oral health.



Dr Nattida Charidam's research deepens our understanding of how dental tissues resist the infection of caries.

### Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeavour Award

This was presented to PhD student Alex Wirianski for his research into jaw function and orofacial pain. He was one of 20 successful Australian postgraduates honoured. The award allowed Alex to travel to Japan as a visiting scholar at the Tohoku University Graduate School of Dentistry in Sendai. Alex had to leave Sendai following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in March this year, but plans to return early in 2012 to complete his award program. It investigates treatment strategies for jaw muscle pain.



## OUR ALUMNI: CONNECTING WITH REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Shocked by the state of Indigenous oral health in the Northern Territory, recent Bachelor of Dentistry graduate **Nancy Saunders-Clay** welcomed the opportunity to help improve dental care in the region.

In an eight-surgery community health clinic in Alice Springs, Nancy Saunders-Clay and her allied health colleagues treat patients from many corners of central Australia – from the WA border to Lake Nash, near Mt Isa, and Elliot, 750km north up the Stuart Highway.

Due to the vast distances, sometimes a 400km dirt road to the nearest ‘town’, some patients may not see a dentist for a year. Each member of the clinic team, which includes a prosthetist and oral

therapist, contributes expertise and personal strength to provide optimum and efficient service.

Team members drive hundreds of kilometres in a mobile dental van (pictured above) between remote Indigenous communities, which ensures they can have personal involvement and interaction with these communities while performing the crucial oral health services that local people sorely need.

“The need for flexibility is the rule of thumb when you are likely to treat four generations of one family in the one day – from the grandchild to grandparent,” Nancy says. “We usually screen and treat children during school hours, and adults’ treatment follows after school.”

Although the remoteness can be taxing, the shortage of specialists presents unique challenges and opportunities for new graduates. While at times it would be useful to confer in person, team members can always email x-rays and photos to specialists willing to provide advice or a second opinion.

“I have dealt with trauma cases the likes of which I would have probably

only seen in textbooks or at a major teaching hospital,” Nancy says.

“The isolation of Alice Springs allows you to attempt things that would likely have been referred to a specialist in larger towns and, while remaining aware of one’s limitations, it’s an excellent opportunity to develop your knowledge base... and push professional boundaries.”

Of course, the hardest aspect is being away from friends and family, Nancy acknowledges. “Some days out bush can also be very long, but it remains well worth it for the rewards and job satisfaction.”

She particularly appreciates the “unique chance to work and travel to such remote regions and, above all, work with Aboriginal communities.

“I have eaten kangaroo tail in the outback. I have listened, enraptured, to stories told by old bush women, watched while they made dot paintings, and been proud to receive their expression of appreciation. Where else would I get these amazing opportunities?”

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# OUR ALUMNI: A VOLUNTEER DENTAL PROGRAM IN TIMOR LESTE

Alumni have united to make a positive difference to dental care in Timor Leste, as **David Sheen** explains.



Life has been difficult for the people of Timor Leste for centuries. It gained its independence in May 2002 after centuries of bloodshed and destruction. Before then it was governed by Indonesia for 25 years, occupied by Japan during the Second World War, and ruled by Portugal for 400 years before that.

During the Japanese occupation, thousands of Timorese were killed assisting Australian forces who resisted the Japanese during 1942. Australia owes the people of Timor Leste an enormous debt.

Beginning in 2003 with a single dental clinic within the Maubara Health Centre, 50km west of the capital Dili, a dental program set up by Sandra Meihubers (BDS 1977), fellow alumnus David Sheen and supported by many other University of Sydney alumni helps to bridge the gap between Timor Leste government funding and the need for adequate oral health services in that country.

Today, teams of dentists, dental assistants and willing helpers provide examinations and treatment for some of the 1.1 million schoolchildren, local townspeople and surrounding villages, mostly by setting up mobile clinics.

The success of this program has been due to the assistance and cooperation

we have received from Sister Filomena and other Carmelite sisters, teachers, our dedicated equipment technicians, and the support of Rotary, both in Timor Leste and Australia.

The few Indonesian and Fijian-trained dentists and around 20 dental therapists in Timor Leste are happy to have our support. We have always tried to work with and mentor our Timorese colleagues.

Volunteer teams from South Australia and Western Australia have also been providing support for our Timorese colleagues and treatment for local people.

Our volunteers enjoy the rich rewards of working with dedicated Timorese people, who have seen and endured suffering on a grand scale.

Seeing the evidence of emerging oral health awareness, providing relief of pain and successful treatment makes the effort worthwhile.

The real bonuses are the friendships made, the warm hospitality we receive, and the hope that one day the Timorese will be able to independently run their own oral health service.

We may have helped towards this end.

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Be the first to find out about alumni news and events on the University's recently-launched Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/sydneyalumni](http://www.facebook.com/sydneyalumni)

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FACULTY OF  
DENTISTRY



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Produced by the Faculty of Dentistry, The University of Sydney. November 2011.

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ABN 15 211 4646  
CRICOS 00026A