Our China Partnerships

2009
From 12-14th August 2009 experts from the University of Sydney faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Sciences, Science, Nursing and Midwifery met with counterpart researchers from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Among the topics of discussion were the potential of molecular imaging, the efficiency and effectiveness of anti-cancer drugs and the evolution of clinical trials both in Australia and China.

“The University of Sydney has been honored to host the 2nd Sino-Australian symposium with our close colleagues at Shanghai Jiao Tong University,” said Dean of Medicine, Professor Bruce Robinson.

“The past three years witnessed a profound collaboration between Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the University of Sydney Schools of Medicine in the aspects of student exchange, faculty training, scientific collaboration and curriculum reform,” said Professor Zhu Zhenggang, Dean of Medicine and Vice-President of Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

“This year, our selected researchers not only presented their exciting research results but also make a contribution in the collaboration between our two universities.”

“Planning for a 3rd Sino-Australian Symposium is already underway and will be held in Shanghai in the second-half of 2010 and the theme will be ‘Translational Medicine’.

Michelle Wood

Honorary Professorship for Professor Chen Guoqiang

As part of the 2nd Sino-Australian Symposium, Sydney Medical School awarded Professor Chen Guoqiang an Honorary Professorship. Professor Chen is the Vice-Dean of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, School of Medicine and one of China’s authorities in pathophysiology.

Professor Chen Guoqiang, Professor Bruce Robinson and Professor Nicholas King with the Honorary Professorship

At the symposium opening, Professor Chen Guoqiang, Vice-Dean of the Shanghai Jiao Tong School of Medicine was awarded an honorary professorship.

“The annual joint Sino-Australian symposium is just one example of the active collaborations we have with this prestigious Chinese University,” says Ms Louise Freckelton, Manager of International Relations with China for the Faculty of Medicine’s Office for Global Health.

“Our sturdy relationship ranges over students and staff exchange, the co-training of PhD students, and the exchange of information and expertise on medical curriculum.”

Following the 1st Sino-Australian Symposium in 2008 two active research collaborations were founded. The 2nd Symposium looks to have generated a further eight research collaborations.

“We hope that these forthcoming collaborations will further bind our two universities together through research that works towards improving the health and wellbeing of the people both in Australia and China,” said Professor David Day, Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Sydney.

Michelle Wood
Sharing the training of future research leaders

Sydney Medical School and Shanghai’s Jiao Tong School of Medicine are jointly training the some of China's future research scientists.

Funded by the Chinese Scholarship Council and a special Shanghai Jiao Tong University fund, PhD candidates from Shanghai Jiao Tong University undertake up to one year of their PhD studies based in Sydney with a Sydney supervisor.

“This scheme provides an excellent opportunity for research students to have an international experience as part of their PhD and to further develop their English language skills as well as their lab techniques. This experience also undoubtedly builds stronger research relationships between our two universitites, our research scientists and our postgraduate students”, says Louise Freckelton, Manager of International Relations with China for the Office for Global Health.

September is change-over time for our shared PhD candidates. In September 2009 we farewell our first batch of Chinese Scholarship Council students back to Shanghai Jiao Tong University where they will complete their PhD studies. They were:

- Ms Li Na was supervised by Professor Bruce Robinson, Dean of the Sydney Medical School and Dr Dindy Benn and was based at the Kolling Institute for Medical Research. Her project was on the genetics of phaeochromocytoma.
- Ms Zhang Hanwen who is based at the Kolling Institute with Professor David Handelsman and Dr Kirsty Walters.
- Ms Zhang Harwen who is supervised by Professor Pu Xia at the Centenary Institute and focussed on the identification of a new therapeutic target for ovarian cancer.
- Mr Zheng Zhong undertook his project with Professor Dong Qihan of the Bosch Institute and the Central Clinical School and researched on interaction of insulin, cPLA2 and PI3K/Akt pathways - a mechanism for colon cancer formation.
- Mr Shao Xinyu was supervised by Dr Zhou Hong at the ANZAC Research Institute. His research concentrated on the role of glucocorticoids on the Wnt/β-catenin signaling in mesenchymal progenitor cell lineage commitment.

When asked about her experience, Zhang Ning who undertook her placement at the Centenary Institute was fulsome in her praise for the opportunities the CSC scheme provided her with. “Without doubt the one-year exchange has benefited me in a comprehensive way including the development of scientific ideas, learning new experimental techniques, English language improvement as well as the colorful taste of international life. The sophisticated equipment, well-regulated management, the efficient resource-sharing between various labs and the regular seminars hosted by distinguished experts definitely created a fantastic scientific atmosphere and has provided me with an enjoyable opportunity to immerse myself in the journey of scientific pursuit. This will also contribute the productive and continuous collaboration between the two institutes as well as two Universities.”

As well as farewell students, September also saw the arrival of our new shared PhD candidates too. They are:

- Ms Cheng Xiaobing who is undertaking research into the role of androgen action in neuroendocrine regulation of ovulation at the ANZAC Research Institute with Professor David Handelsman and Dr Kirsty Walters.
- Ms Zhang Hanwen who is based at the Kolling Institute for Medical Research with Professor Robert Baxter and Dr Debbie Marsh. Ms Zhang is researching the regulation of ovarian cancer cell function by GPCR-mediated transactivation of the EGF receptor.
- Ms Gu Liying who is based at the Westmead Milleium Institute with Dr Anna De Fazio and Associate Professor Paul Harnett and is researching the role of ANKRD1 in cellular response to platin.
- Mr Xiang Xiaogang who is supervised by Associate Professor Bob Bao and is researching the role of Treg and its relation to chemokine in chronic hepatitis B patients.

“It has been a great privilege to host such bright young minds here for one year”, said Dr Lyndal Trevena, Associate Dean (International) and Director of the Office for Global Health. “Their Sydney supervisors have all reported on the quality of the student’s endeavour and their dedication to the task. We wish the returning PhD candidates and those who have only recently arrived all the best in both their current research project and their further studies in Shanghai, we hope that they take a fond affection for Australia and a familiarity for working in partnership with Australrians in the development of knowledge back home with them.”

Sydney Cancer Researcher appointed to the Chinese Academy of Science

Professor Des Richardson, Professor of Cancer Cell Biology and NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow, Sydney Medical School, has been made an Adjunct Professor of the Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing. The Chinese Academy is considered to be one of the most highly-regarded research institutions in China. The award was made late last year in Beijing by the Director of the Nanosciences Centre and Professor Nie Guangjun.

“It is a very great honour to be made an Adjunct Professor of such a prestigious academy” says Professor Richardson. “Further, it will greatly strengthen collaborative ties in terms of the development of some of our new anti-tumour agents and their delivery to tumours in cutting-edge nanoparticle delivery systems. The Chinese Academy has been involved in some exciting research on nanoparticles that could lead to further specificity of our novel anti-cancer drugs.”

“Together with Professor Nie we have teamed up to apply for an International Science Linkage Grant for innovative research between our two countries”. The International Science Linkage Grant is jointly sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology.

“We already have some exciting preliminary results and very much hope that our research will lead to improvements in the way we treat cancer. These investigations aim to result in nanoparticle delivery of novel iron-binding compounds right to the heart of the tumor”, said Professor Richardson.
Stephen Clarke, a Professor of Medicine at the University of Sydney and a specialist in oncology, is working with doctors from Shanghai Jiao Tong University’s Medical School and Renji Hospital on a study that compares chemotherapy toxicity between Asian and Caucasian lung and breast cancer patients.

This project is part of Professor Clarke’s studies into the impact of ethnicity on cancer outcomes. Funded by the NHMRC, it examines the relationship between genetics, nutritional status and drug clearance rates in Asian and Caucasian cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Professor Clarke has enlisted the help of the University’s Viet Phan, a clinical fellow, and Cindy Tan, a research dietician, as well as Cathy Xu a research nurse from Shanghai.

“There is some suggestion that nutrition can really impact on your outcomes if you are a cancer patient but we want to examine the extent of this relationship especially between Asians living in Australia and Asians living in China,” said Professor Clarke.

“To do this effectively we needed to have a wide spread of Asian patients, but we could only recruit a limited number here in Australia and this became a genuine barrier.”

At the same time as the project was being developed, the Sydney Medical School was establishing a relationship with Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

“Partnership aids cancer research

“In essence, this project grew out of the annual Sino-Australian Symposium between Shanghai Jiao Tong and the University of Sydney. In 2008 the focus was Cancer Research in the 21st Century. We went along to this symposium and met our eventual collaborators.”

“We needed to get to know each other before we could work together and it was very helpful to have Cathy, who is originally from Shanghai, with us. It enabled us to communicate that this was a collaboration that was going to be mutually beneficial.”

To further enhance the relationship, Ms Tan and Dr Phan traveled to Shanghai this year to spend three weeks with their partners and train local doctors at Renji Hospital in the study protocols.

Patients have recently been recruited to the study which now spreads across Renji hospital, Qingdao and Jilin hospital. The first joint research paper will also be published in 2010.

For Cathy, the project is particularly meaningful.

“My family is really proud of the work I am doing. Australia is my home now but I am happy I can do something with my original city of Shanghai”

This project is just one of a large number of initiatives being undertaken with Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Louise Frecelon, manager of international relations at the Sydney Medical School’s Office of Global Health, added: “Our relationship with quality Chinese Universities doesn’t stop with Shanghai Jiao Tong. We are also building strong relationships in medical education, scientific research and student exchange with other partners such as Fudan University, Peking University and Xi’an Jiao Tong University.

“These relationships aim at mutual exchange; we have much to learn from each other.”

Michelle Wood
The Schools of Public Health of Fudan University and the University of Sydney are collaborating on a research project aimed at improving child and maternal health.

The project is funded by the University of Sydney’s International Project Development Fund. “The project involves studying the physical activity and dietary intake of pregnant women and then examining the birth outcomes for the child. We also follow that child’s growth and development over their first 12 months,” said Dr Mu Li, Senior Lecturer in International Public Health and Sydney Medical School.

To undertake this project, Dr Li worked with Fudan PhD candidate Ms Jiang Hong to analyse the data and prepare publications.

As part of the data analysis Ms Jiang spent an intensive 2 weeks in Sydney exposed to academic staff in the Sydney School of Public Health with expertise in this area.

“Visits

2009 was a busy year for visits to and from our Chinese partners.

Peking University Health Science Centre visit – 12–13 February 2009
A delegation led by Professor Wang Xian, Vice-President for Education and Professor Fang Weigang, Vice-President for Research and International Cooperation visited the University of Sydney. Six senior researchers from fields such as ophthalmology, neurology, immunology, vascular biology, renal medicine and cancer presented their latest research. Discussions also included exploring medical education collaborations and medical school accreditation systems.

Shanghai Jiao Tong University, School of Medicine – 2–4 March 2009
Professor Chen Guoqiang led a delegation of six members to discuss the 2nd Sino-Australian Symposium and Nursing collaborations and to visit the four China Scholarship Council students placed at University of Sydney labs.

“This visit gave me an excellent opportunity to contact top-class experts and colleagues at Sydney,” says Jiang Hong of her time in Sydney. “We discussed the difficulties I encountered in the research with the expertise of epidemiology, biostatistics and health prevention we analyzed the raw data again and again and found the final best approach for the analysis. We explored how to interpret the data from the interviews conducted with pregnant women in China and whether the statistical approach was applied correctly”.

“We now plan to extend this work and look into the risk factors for childhood obesity”, said Dr Li.

In May, three months after the visit in the University of Sydney, Ms Jiang Hong passed her oral defense of PhD thesis “The influence of physical activity during pregnancy on pregnant outcomes and infant growth”. Ms Jiang Hong is now Dr Jiang and has recently become a member of the academic staff at Fudan University.

Jiang Hong with Dr Li Mu

Peking University Health Science Centre visit, April 2009

Peking University Health Science Centre – 21–22 April 2009
Professor Wang Xian, Vice-President for Education led a 12-member delegation of medical education experts from Peking University Health Science Centre and its affiliated hospitals to the University of Sydney to discuss collaborations in medical education and medical school accreditation.

Fudan University, School of Medicine – 29 April 2009
Professor Zou Hejian, Vice-Dean and Director of Research, Shanghai Medical College and Vice-Director of Huashan Hospital visited the Sydney Medical School. Discussions covered student exchange, research collaborations, the training of Chinese General Practitioners and the hosting of China Scholarship Council students.

Peking Union Medical College – 18 June 2009
A delegation of five members, led by Professor Li Liming, Executive Vice-President of PUMC visited the University of Sydney to discuss potential collaborations in nursing and medical school accreditation.

Shanghai Jiao Tong University – 31 July 2009
Representatives of the Sydney Medical School and the Faculty of Science met with a senior delegation from Shanghai Jiao Tong University led by Professor Su Ming, Executive Vice-President. The delegation was briefed on our relationship with Shanghai Jiao Tong School of Medicine and the 2nd Sino-Australian Symposium.

Shanghai Jiao Tong University, School of Medicine – 12–14 August 2009
A delegation consisting of 26 researchers and research students visited the University of Sydney to take part in the 2nd Sino-Australian Symposium.

Shanghai visit and ‘Sydney World’ events – 12–14 November 2009
In November ’09, the Sydney Medical School will take part in the University of Sydney World Events in Beijing. These include partnership dinners, partner visits, a graduation ceremony and alumni activities. This year, Sydney Medical School have been invited to provide the lead symposium for the visit. This is ‘Australia-China Partnerships in Health’.

Shanghai visit and GP Association meetings - 13–17 November 2009
Sydney Medical School have been invited to participate in the Shanghai Medical Association’s Annual Conference for General Practitioners. We will follow this activity with visits to our partners in Shanghai – Fudan University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

HKU research activity – 3–4 December 2009
On the 3rd December 5 researchers from Sydney Medical School will visit Hong Kong University to take part in the Frontiers of Biomedical research symposium.
Your office in Beijing

- In Beijing for a conference or a meeting?
- Need some office space in Beijing?
- Want to meet our colleagues at the George Institute, China?

The George Institute for International Health has an office in Beijing where it’s China-related projects are based. Due to the institute’s relationship with the University of Sydney an arrangement has been made to provide office space for Sydney Medical School staff while they are in Beijing. The office is located in the University district of the city, close to some of China’s top universities and is close to public transport.

For more information on your office in Beijing, contact Louise Freckelton:
l freeway@med.usyd.edu.au

Grant Success!

The University of Sydney, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) each year invites applications for the International Project Development Fund. These funds provide support to innovative and sustainable projects with top quality international partners. The following projects with China were successful and will be funded from 2010.

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<tr>
<th>PROJECT TITLE</th>
<th>PARTNER</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY APPLICANTS</th>
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<td>Perinatal health in rural Shaanxi: a background survey for a large-scale community trial on the impact of micronutrient supplements in pregnancy and neonatal mortality</td>
<td>Xi’an Jiao Tong University Associate Professor Michael Dibley Dr Mu Li Professor Heather Jeffery Ms Louise Freckelton</td>
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<td>Primary health care and the general practitioner in China and Australia</td>
<td>Fudan University Shanghai Medical Association Ms Louise Freckelton Dr Lyndal Trevena</td>
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<td>Breakthrough collaborative research project to reduce mortality from cardiovascular disease</td>
<td>Chinese University of Hong Kong Peking University Nanjing University Professor Stephen Leeder</td>
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<td>Capacity building for international nursing and midwifery research collaborations</td>
<td>Shanghai Jiao Tong University Professor Jill White Associate Professor Donna Waters Ms Louise Freckelton</td>
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Office for Global Health

The Office for Global Health is part of Sydney Medical School and aims to internationalise the research we undertake, the experience of our students and staff, and our approaches to learning and teaching. We also aim to contribute to the health and wellbeing of our region by engaging in health projects with some of our nearest neighbors.

Find out more about the activities of our office by visiting our website:
www.usyd.edu.au/global-health

Office for Global Health China contact

Louise Freckelton is the Manager – International Relations with responsibility for China. Louise has had a long association with China, her first visit being in 1987. After falling in love with the country she returned as an international student in Beijing in the early 1990s and has also had two short stints working in Wuhan in 1994 and in Beijing in 2008. Louise (whose Chinese name is Lu Yingzi 陆盈紫) continues to develop her Mandarin skills and coincidently shares a Chinese surname with Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd (Lu Kewen 陆克文) - no, they are not related!

Louise provides advice to the Sydney Medical School in relations with China including information on our current partners and potential ones, funding and research opportunities. lfreckelton@med.usyd.edu.au

Join our China Interest Group