Holiday Greetings

As we finish 2014, I’d like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous new year from all of us in Occupational Therapy. We’ve had an eventful year and I hope you enjoyed keeping up with us through these newsletters. Thanks to Lynette Mackenzie and Chris Chapparo who took responsibility for sharing our news. I hope that Chris will continue in that role in 2015.

Most importantly, I extend huge thanks to Lynette Mackenzie for her contributions as Head of Discipline over the past couple of years. Lynette added that role to an already full plate—both personally and professionally—and we are very grateful. In assuming the HoD role now, I am aware that I have big shoes to fill.
Our undergraduate Honours students have now completed their last clinical placements, after submitting their theses at the end of October. Project topics were diverse including falls prevention for people with dementia, experiences of international students studying occupational therapy, maintaining employment while living with mental illness, case management for clients with brain injury and occupational therapy in palliative care. We're still awaiting results for some students, but we're very proud that all students for whom we have marks to date have received First Class or Second Class Division One Honours. Completing students were Sarah Badger, Alycia Cantrill, Victoria Jarman, Jung Wook (Justin) Lim, Samantha Mostert, Lauren Nugent, Miia Rahja, Yu Lei Tan and Mei Xue Wong.

Admission to the Honours Program in Occupational Therapy at the University of Sydney is on the basis of academic merit. Students complete a research project, under the supervision of an academic staff member, throughout the last three semesters of their degree. Some projects are offered by academic staff in conjunction with clinically based partners, who share supervision of the student. Partnering between academic and clinical supervisors can be a great way of doing pilot research and provides opportunities for students to collect clinically focused data. Students also undertake special research related units of study to support them with their projects. Student theses include a manuscript that is ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. After incorporating feedback from their examiners, many students submit these manuscripts and have them published. Students are also encouraged to disseminate their research at conferences, and a number of our completing students have already submitted abstracts for the 2015 Occupational Therapy Australia 26th National Conference in Melbourne in 2015. So keep an eye out for them!

Our 2014 cohort will be the last full cohort of students to do our previous, 36 credit point Honours Program. From 2015 onward, students will participate in a new, 18 credit point program. This change has been made to bring into alignment the previously diverse embedded honours programs throughout the Faculty of Health Sciences. In the new program, students have the opportunity to study alongside Speech Pathology, Physiotherapy, Medical Radiation and Exercise/ Sports Sciences honours students, as well as participating in some discipline specific classes. The new program will mean that research projects undertaking by them and their supervisors will need to be somewhat smaller and very contained, as students will be completing more academic coursework units alongside their research projects.

Dr. Anne Honey, Undergraduate Honours Course Director
USYD GOES RURAL

Students and supervisors met with His Excellency, General, The Honourable David Hurley, Governor of NSW and Mrs. Hurley at the University Department of Rural Health in Broken Hill to discuss the benefits of the Allied Health Outback Schools program for 4th year occupational therapy students and the community of Broken Hill. Students reported that they found the placement to be an excellent opportunity to develop foundational skills that can be transferred to the workforce, and Broken Hill to be “a very accepting community”. The placement offered students experience in intervention for children progressing through school in Broken Hill and in outreach communities of Wilcannia and Menindee.

Photo from L to R: Mrs Linda Hurley, Rachel Wise, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC, Governor of NSW, Karlene Matwisyk, Jona Tseng, Nissa Peters, Professor David Lyle – Head of Department UDRH, Deirdre Hill Occupational Therapy Student Supervisor, Claire Brunero - Speech Pathology Student Supervisor

Lightning Ridge Central School high school assembly hosted Emma Boehme and Kim Bulkeley as part of Occupational Therapy week activities on Tuesday the 21st October. Emma who works in Lightning Ridge and surrounding areas as an occupational therapist with the Far West Medicare Local and Kim (a POCHE fellow and University of Sydney academic) went into year 10 classes highlighting the importance of local students considering occupational therapy as a career due to the shortages of allied health practitioners in rural and remote communities.

Two third year OT students, Theresa Do and James Khoury, were featured in the Dubbo local newspaper this semester. The article described their work to improve motor skills required for handwriting and other school activities with young Infants School children during their placement at Dubbo West Public School. The children were referred by their class teachers. Both students reported that “the experience of working in a rural area has opened their eyes to opportunities which lie outside the metropolitan area”.

Congratulations to Natalie Clarke, occupational therapist at the Wollemi CAMHS Inpatient Unit at Orange Health Service who secured a NSW Health Scholarship. Funds from the scholarship will assist Natalie as she pursues a research degree at USYD related to her clinical work. Her research focuses on outcomes of sensory intervention strategies used with adolescents in her clinical unit. She is supervised by Chris Chapparo and Anne Honey.
STAFF ACTIVITIES

2nd BIENNIAL AUSTRALIAN IMPLEMENTATION CONFERENCE


LAUNCH OF THE LiFE PROGRAM

The Lifestyle-Integrated Functional Exercise (LiFE) program was launched by the University of Sydney in September. Informed by a world-first study spearheaded by Professor Lindy Clemson and her research colleagues (pictured above), this innovative and non-traditional approach to exercise has been shown to reduce falls by over 30 per cent by incorporating balance and strength training into everyday activities and daily routines. Both participant and trainer LiFE manuals are available from the Sydney University Press.

OT WEEK AT USYD

The Discipline of Occupational Therapy hosted a 3-hour event in October 2014 for occupational therapy week at the Camperdown Campus. Academic staff from across the University, clinicians and community collaborators described how they translated research into practice in local settings, or generated new research together. Around 80 occupational therapists, students and alumni, fieldwork supervisors, and managers attended along with the Minister for Health, NSW.

Focus of Presentations

- Implementing a 2-week modified constraint induced movement therapy program to improve the arm and hand use of stroke survivors: Feasibility and outcomes from three Australian public health service providers
- Sydney Playground Project: Leveling the playing field
- Using practical food groups in the treatment of people with eating disorders

The Discipline of Occupational Therapy at USYD looks forward to furthering research and clinical collaborations with all aspects of the profession in 2015 and to offer continuing updates on staff and student activities through quarterly newsletters.

If you have contributions, please contact Chris Chapparo at chris.chapparo@sydney.edu.au