$10 Million Donation Paves the way for Indigenous Health Initiatives
(Article courtesy of Uni News 29 February 2008)

The University (of Sydney) has been given an unprecedented opportunity to tackle the health problems of Indigenous Australians after receiving its biggest ever donation from a living person. The $10 million gift - from an anonymous businessman - will be used to establish a Sydney-based Centre for Indigenous Health and four new outreach clinics in remote communities in NSW.

The clinics will be in Dubbo, Bourke, Brewarrina and Broken Hill. The communities will decide what medical expertise is lacking, and the University will send teams on a regular basis to fill the gaps.

The exact detail and structure of the clinics will be decided by the new director, and the search has begun for a “multi-talented and passionate” person to take charge. Bruce Robinson, USyd Dean of Medicine, said the initiative was “very exciting” and staff were itching to get involved. As well as the clinics, the centre will also extend the indigenous health education experience of USyd students, research indigenous health issues and evaluate previous health programs. Professor Robinson is keen to involve the faculties of Education and Social Work and Economics and Business in the project. “Education is a critical part of good health. And economics and business could be incorporated as part of a University-wide approach to solving some of the Indigenous problems that are not just health problems.”.

Professor David Lyle, Head of the BH UDRH (pictured), added: “Clean water, food supply, employment, economic health - all those things benefit health, and the more remote the community, the less people can access the things others take for granted.” Maria Tattersall, an Aboriginal Health Education officer also from the BH UDRH said there was some cynicism in local communities about previous “band-aid solutions”. She said local people were wary of initiatives involving people coming and going and not returning. “You hope it’s not a one-off. You hope and pray that a health service does continue and doesn’t fall beside the way-side. “How do you get well without education and literacy and numeracy? Health is not just a one thing, effort has to go into education and housing as well.

Professor Robinson said the search for a director would be wide-ranging. “They could come from the health sector, from politics, from government. What we need is a person who is passionate about improving indigenous people health and is a good advocate -someone who is able to interact with government, who feels at home interacting with indigenous people, and who can work closely with our donor, who also wants to be involved,” Professor Robinson said.

New Equipment for Skills Laboratory

Just a brief update on the new equipment recently purchased for the BH UDRH Clinical Skills Laboratory - the Lab now has a **hand-held pulse oximeter, a portable examination couch and additional plaster application equipment**. Most of this equipment can be borrowed. And a reminder that the rooms in the Skills Lab can also be utilised for small gatherings. For more information on loaning equipment or booking the Lab please contact Lindy Hunt on 08 8080 1206 before 10am Monday to Friday.
‘Hitting the Ground Running” - Podiatry Placements in Broken Hill

Last year the BHUDRH ran a pilot program for podiatry students. Following the success of the initial trial, this year two podiatry students will spend eight weeks on placements in the far west region of NSW.

This collaboration with faculty from the Charles Sturt University campus at Albury reinforces the opportunities for students to gain experience in allied health placements during their training. Workforce shortages in disciplines such as podiatry necessitate efforts to improve exposure to rural practice.

Local placement supervision will be provided by one of the region’s podiatrists Susanne Olsen who has been visiting Broken Hill on a regular basis for a number of years. Susanne is an experienced practitioner, well able to guide the student under her care. Natalie Walker commenced here on 14th April for an 8 week placement.

An interesting dimension to the placement is the opportunity for Natalie to learn about the work of a wide range of health professionals through multi-disciplinary contacts. This will enable the student to develop insight about the challenges such as faced by health staff including paramedics dealing with patients with mobility problems - physiotherapists training patients in the Falls Prevention program and occupational therapists involved in working with stroke rehabilitation of patients’ gross motor skills.

In addition to working with clients at the Diabetes Centre in Broken Hill, Natalie will have the opportunity to travel around the region with Susanne Olsen as she provides podiatry services to clients in the far west region of NSW.

A second student, Matthew Kimball will undertake a placement in June -July 2008.

We hope that placements for final-year podiatry students will lead to increasing numbers of podiatrists working in rural areas of Australia.

Jocelyn Morris,
Rural Attachment Programs Coordinator - March 08.

For more information please contact the BH UDRH Student Program Office on 08 8080 1240.

FAR WEST HEALTH LIBRARY NEWS

By Don Keast

A reminder the combined libraries of GWAHS maintain a Weblog at: www.gwaahslibrariesblog.blogspot.com

Blog readers are asked to complete a short survey online (see link top right of Blog). Please do so, as this provides important information about our readership.

Amongst the other resources profiled on the Blog for March 2008 are the following:

♦ Rural & Remote Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Chronic Disease Conference, Broken Hill, 15-16 May, 2008
♦ Social Justice Report (on Indigenous remote communities)
♦ Enhancing patients with advanced cancer in rural areas of Australia
♦ Rural and remote public health (a special issue of the Australian Journal of Rural Health, edited from the BH UDRH)
♦ Rural and remote health: indicators of health status and determinants of health (AIHW report)
♦ Australian Nursing Federation: Continuing Education Online
♦ Hospital waiting lists explained
♦ RFDS soars again: your favourite TV series
♦ Australian Health Workforce Institute (new website)
♦ The Good Indicators Guide
♦ Work, life and time
♦ Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing (latest issue, latest research)
♦ NHMRC Grants
♦ Mental health DVDs available free through your local video store
♦ Strengthening aboriginal family functioning: what works and why?

WHAT'S NEW IN THE FAR WEST HEALTH LIBRARY?
The Library Reference Room now has 2-networked workstations: One is to be used for the Library Catalogue, PLUS an additional workstation, which may be used for private study etc.

For more information please contact the Library direct on 08 8080 1210.