This year, 2015, has been a year of major change in the School’s academic leadership. Three of Sydney’s eight clinical schools appointed new heads: Professor Fiona Blyth at Concord, Professor Roger Garsia at Central, and Professor Louise Baur at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. Two new directors of Sydney’s Medical Program were appointed: Professors Jane Bleasel and Inam Haq. Dr Lilon Bandler was appointed as the faculty’s first Associate Dean (Indigenous).

In the mix have been several major Government appointments – the School of Public Health’s Professor Andrew Wilson as Chair of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, and Professor Bruce Robinson to lead the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce and as Chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

With challenges aplenty in higher education, medical and health education, health care, research and research funding, Sydney Medical School’s new appointments bring skills, experience and enthusiasm for the changes ahead.

T

A MEDICAL PROGRAM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY:
JANE BLEASEL AND INAM HAQ

JANE BLEASEL
ASSOCIATE DEAN AND CO-DIRECTOR OF SYDNEY MEDICAL PROGRAM
Clinical training: rheumatology
Previous: Head of Department of Rheumatology, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
Other interests: open water swimming, diving skiing and time with family (five children, including one doctor)

I was honoured to become co-director of the Sydney Medical Program in July 2015 with Inam. It is an unusual co-incidence that Inam and I are both trained as rheumatologists, with a strong passion for education. I was a medical student at Sydney University and trained to become a physician at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. I had the opportunity to do basic research into the genetics of osteoarthritis at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, USA. I was awarded a PhD for this work at Sydney University. On my return to Sydney in 1995, I was offered a position in the Rheumatology Unit at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. I became the Head of Department stepping down to take the current position in the Sydney Medical Program.

I have taught and mentored many students in the Sydney Medical Program and had the great pleasure of watching their transition to interns and registrars. I am also involved in post-graduate teaching for these doctors in the basic physician’s training program and as a member of the National Examining Panel of the Royal Australian College of Physicians. I have enjoyed teaching medical students from the University of Western Sydney and University of NSW, thereby obtaining a broad perspective of medical student education. In the last 3 years I have undertaken post-graduate studies in Health Professional Education at Monash University.

It is clear we need a competency-based curriculum, which prepares our students for future medical practice, with a strong foundation in basic and clinical science. I am committed to developing the medical program to ensure our students are compassionate, inquisitive, life-long learners, who can communicate effectively with their patients and peers and provide evidence-based treatment, safely and effectively. Inam and I are excited to work with the medical faculty, students, representatives of local health districts and others to create a 21st Century, innovative medical program.
Inam Haq
ASSOCIATE DEAN TEACHING AND
LEARNING AND CO-DIRECTOR OF
SYDNEY MEDICAL PROGRAM
Clinical training: rheumatology
Previous: Director of the undergraduate medical program at Brighton and Sussex Medical School in UK
Other interests: music (anything from country and folk to accadacca and techno!), keeping as healthy as I can at Camperdown Crossfit, bit of a sci-fi geek (as anyone who has been to my office is aware), and food – being in Sydney I am spoilt for choice

I joined the Sydney Medical Program on 1st September 2015 as Co-Director with Jane. My clinical training is in rheumatology and I was previously based at Brighton and Sussex Medical School in the UK where I was Director of the undergraduate medical programme from 2008-15. At the time of my departure, the Medical School had just been rated with the highest student satisfaction rate of UK Medical Schools, of which I am very proud, and reflected the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and the true partnership between staff and students.

Over the last 2-3 months, in my travels around the clinical schools talking to staff and students, I can see a passion for delivering a high-quality medical program that ensures our graduates are well prepared for clinical practice.

Our graduates of the future will be providing care for an ageing population with one or more long-term conditions, in partnership with other health professionals, in hospitals, primary care and community settings. They will need to be able to use technology effectively to obtain information for themselves and their patients, and be able to understand and interpret the rapidly changing world of molecular medicine and its impact on the patient and personalisation of healthcare.

I will be working with Jane and faculty to develop over the next 2 years a refreshed curriculum that has a sound educational underpinning and that values biomedical science, significant clinical experience and development of individual values and behaviours, reflecting societal expectations of doctors and the patient’s journey through the healthcare system.

The next months will be the start of this process, meeting Faculty, patients, current and past students, Local Health District leaders in addition to looking at curriculum models in Australia, Europe and North America.

An exciting period, and one in which we look forward to working with you.

Inam and I are excited to work with the medical faculty, students, representatives of local health districts and others to create a 21st century, innovative medical program.

Jane Bleasel
Dr Lilon Bandler has been appointed as Sydney Medical School’s first Associate Dean (Indigenous). She has been with the faculty for close to a decade, and among other roles, has been responsible for teaching medical students about Indigenous health in Australia, in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students in the course, and in working with the School to address its role in working to improve the health of Indigenous Australians.

“Lilon’s appointment as Associate Dean (Indigenous) is one of our most important this year,” said Professor Bruce Robinson. “It is in recognition of the importance of educating our students about the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the critical broader goal of contributing to improvements in the health of Indigenous people.

“Sydney has been able to make a contribution to Indigenous health in a number of different ways. Outside the medical program, the Poche Centre and excellent courses run in the School of Public Health are training people. But with this appointment, we are looking to build on our education, research and community work – and with Lilon in the role, we are well placed to really make some progress.”

Dr Bandler completed her medical degree at University of New South Wales, and has postgraduate degrees in health policy and education. She has worked in general practice for many years; most recently, she provides fly-in-fly-out services for the Royal Flying Doctor Rural Women’s GP Service, to rural New South Wales. “I’m glad to have skills that I can offer and I consider myself fortunate – to be involved with students, with patients and with health.”

From an early age, Dr Bandler was exposed to the realities of health for Indigenous people – and also the ignorance and misreporting of their situation. Her interest in Indigenous health was influenced by her mother, the late Faith Bandler, who was a political activist particularly involved in the “yes” campaign for the 1967 referendum.

She says there are many aspects which make the work inspiring: colleagues and students who are deeply committed to improving health; and the opportunities to develop and engage students in new programs which introduce them – for some for the first time – to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. “Our medical students visit art galleries and museums; they go on walks; they have the opportunity to talk with our presenters, and to write and think about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians – their culture, their history and their contributions to Australia. And they can start thinking about Indigenous health in Australia.”

Dr Bandler acknowledges that she could not achieve anything without the help of others, particularly her EA, Lyn Chick, who keeps it all ticking along.

From an early age, Dr Bandler was exposed to the realities of health for Indigenous people – and also the ignorance and misreporting of their situation.

Stories to Tell – 132 Years of Change

Since the first intake of students in 1883, there have been over 23,000 graduates from the Sydney Medical School; all have stories to tell. The curriculum has been constantly under review; teaching methods have been changed and society’s expectation of a trained doctor has altered. All of these factors means that the history of our Faculty from those first students (men only need apply) to the modern era of graduate medical programme is fascinating and should be remembered. When the Burkett-Ford Library closed several years ago, the empty shelving begged to be re-stocked. The shelves have been slowly filling with the memorabilia and story boards of our Faculty history. The grand opening will take place in February 2016 and the display will be open for viewing from that time in the Burkett-Ford Lounge in the Edward Ford Building (old Public Health and Tropical Medicine Building) on the Camperdown Campus.
NEW HEADS AT CLINICAL SCHOOLS

LOUISE BAUR
CHAIR OF PAEDIATRICS AND CHILD HEALTH; ASSOCIATE DEAN AND HEAD OF THE CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL AT WESTMEAD CLINICAL SCHOOL
Clinical training: paediatrics
Previous: Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health; Head of Weight Management Services, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead
Other interests: Director of World Vision Australia, and Director, Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network

While I have been a member of the School for many years, and have even been Acting Head on many occasions, it is quite different when you have the permanent role. The Children’s Hospital at Westmead Clinical School does tremendous work. We have many highly skilled researchers, including clinician researchers, several of whom are international leaders in their respective fields. We have about 100 students undertaking higher degree studies, mostly PhDs, to whom we are very grateful.

At the beginning of this year, our School clarified our one-year and longer-term strategic plan, and have since re-organised some of our governance structures and teams to support our strategy. In addition, we have become further involved in the planning for the Westmead Precinct redevelopment while continuing to cement our many strong links across the Westmead Research Hub, at The Children’s Hospital/ Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network and across the Sydney Medical School and elsewhere. We need to continue to provide excellent medical education and research supervision and grow our research productivity, while developing new initiatives – and all in a tight budgetary environment!

You can sense the opportunities that we have at this time, and the issues we need to tackle. It’s a tremendous time to be Chair of Paediatrics & Child Health at the University of Sydney and leading The Children’s Hospital at Westmead Clinical School.

FIONA BLYTH
ASSOCIATE DEAN AND HEAD OF CONCORD CLINICAL SCHOOL
Clinical training: public health physician
Previous: Concord Clinical School
Other interests: music, bushwalking, reading, gardening, art (particularly the Arts and Crafts movement) and Labradors

My involvement in Concord Clinical School started in 2012, and my association with Concord Repatriation General Hospital dates back to 2005, Contributing to teaching within the Sydney Medical Program has been part of my professional life since the introduction of the graduate degree program.

As a public health physician whose research focuses on the public health burden of pain conditions, my background is unusual. I have been involved with initiatives including the Australian National Pain Strategy and the Global Burden of Disease Study that have brought into focus the enormous burden of pain-related disability. One of my particular interests is pain in older people, and is part of the broader research on healthy ageing conducted at the University’s Centre for Education and Research on Ageing at Concord Hospital.

Concord Hospital has a unique identity and vibrant internal culture. At Concord Clinical School I feel privileged to work with so many inspiring people – School academic and clinical staff members, dedicated clinical teachers and hospital staff, talented researchers, and extremely supportive hospital and District administrations.

There is a great deal of collegiality across the clinical schools and between the schools and the campus-based academic and professional community. The process of course reaccreditation by the Australian Medical Council during the year really brought home to me the strength and importance of the many internal and external partnerships that support medical education. Working with students and seeing them develop as they progress through the course is extremely rewarding for me.

ROGER GARSIA
ASSOCIATE DEAN AND HEAD OF CENTRAL CLINICAL SCHOOL
Clinical training: immunology and immunopathology
Previous: Senior Staff Specialist, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
Other interests: the great Australian outdoors, snowshoe tracking, tennis spectating, jazz, cherished travel adventures with his wife and various of his four daughters

I graduated from the University of Sydney (MBBS 1978) and PhD (1990 in basic and applied immunology) and have been a research active clinical immunologist and immunopathologist at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital since returning from the National Institutes of Health, USA, in 1990 to be responsible for the oversight of the comprehensive multidisciplinary teams that have been the hallmark of the RPAH based HIV service. I have been involved in many pivotal multicentre HIV therapy clinical trials including with innovative new biologicals such as gene therapy altered blood stem cells. My practice has been broad -ranging from allergy to autoimmune neurological disorders.

It was in my in my role as Clinical Superintendent at RPA close to three decades ago when my interest in medical education was really sparked. In that capacity, I had responsibility for the post graduate training program for junior doctors and physician trainees – and have been engaged in different capacities ever since.

I am very excited by the new role in Central Clinical School and the opportunities ahead. It brings together my interest in medical education, research and multidisciplinary clinical care with the existing expertise and tradition of educational innovation which characterised the School during the tenure of its former leader, Professor Craig Mellis.