Sydney Nursing School was thrilled to join the ranks of more than 100 University of Sydney research projects recognised in the latest round of National Health and Medical Research Council grants, announced by federal Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek at the University of Sydney on 19 October 2012.

Kate White, Professor of Cancer Nursing at the Cancer Nursing Research Unit, will be leading a research project awarded $623,887 to evaluate a shared care pathway intervention to reduce chemotherapy outpatients’ unplanned presentations to hospital. Earlier research findings highlight an urgent need for improved continuity of care and better integration of primary and tertiary health care services for these patients. Kate’s research team includes Associate Professor Heather McKenzie, Dr Lillian Hayes, Professor Judy Simpson, Associate Professor Lisa Horvath, Professor Simon Willcock, Keith Cox and Judith Fethney.

Sally Tracy, Professor of Midwifery at the Midwifery and Women’s Health Nursing Research Unit, will be leading a research project awarded $657,430 to study amniotic fluid to improve diagnoses of dystocia. Labour dystocia is a serious problem experienced during childbirth and is one of the main indications for emergency caesarean section, the use of forceps or vacuum delivery. The research will be critical in determining if lactate can be used as a surrogate marker to improve the diagnosis and treatment of dystocia. Sally’s team includes Professor William Rawlinson, Associate Professor Andrew Bisits, Dr Mark Tracy, Dr Antonia Shand, Professor William Ledger and Professor Alec Welsh.

Both research projects involve a broad cross-disciplinary team of health professionals, reflecting the importance of undertaking research that brings together a diversity of knowledge and skills to inform health policy and practice development and improve patient care.
It’s great to reflect on the last few months and celebrate another terrific year at Sydney Nursing School. Straight after opening our doors to prospective nursing students on Open Day in August, a graduation in Singapore and our inaugural Dean’s Gala Dinner and Debate in September and Postgraduate Information Evening in October, the recent announcement of two NHMRC grants and an ARC Discovery Grant is a wonderful bookend to a truly successful year.

I congratulate Professors Sally Tracy and Kate White and their respective teams in midwifery and cancer for their NHMRC success, along with the many other research projects awarded to our colleagues at the University of Sydney. I’m absolutely delighted that these midwifery and cancer nursing research projects will be located in our Midwifery and Women’s Health Nursing Research Unit and Cancer Nursing Research Unit. Not only are the researchers and their areas of investigation deserving in themselves but I also think these two grants confirm our strategy of collaboration and placing nursing and midwifery researchers within highly reputable hospitals (Royal Hospital for Women and Sydney Cancer Centre at RPA) to undertake research that will translate into better care for cancer patients and their families, and women and babies.

I also extend my congratulations to Associate Professor Yun-Hee Jeon who is part of a team, led by Professor David Hunter, for an ARC Discovery Grant for program evaluation of the osteoarthritis awareness hub. These grants are extremely competitive and Yun-Hee continues her excellent record of attracting research funding.

In September faculty staff enjoyed another wonderful graduation ceremony in Singapore for our students graduating from the Bachelor of Nursing (Post-registration) program in Singapore. At this ceremony we also had the pleasure of conferring honorary appointments to two of our valued nursing colleagues in Singapore, Associate Professor Premarani Kannusamy, now CEO of Assisi Hospice, as Adjunct Associate Professor and Ms Wong Luan Wah, Director School of Health Sciences (Nursing) Nanyang Polytechnic, as Adjunct Senior Lecturer. Associate Professor Premarani Kannusamy gave an inspiring speech for this year’s graduation address. At the Singapore graduation we also paid tribute to Associate Professor Maureen Boughton who retired after 25 years of service to Sydney Nursing School and our predecessor institutions. Most recently she was Director, International Programs, specifically managing our program in Singapore for a number of years. Maureen is much loved and very well respected by students in Singapore, our Singapore Institute of Management colleagues and our professional partners in nursing. She is also very respected both within academia and nursing in Australia. Though we will miss her Maureen will stay on as an Honorary Associate Professor. Stuart Newman is the new Director, International Programs continuing with our excellent nursing program in Singapore (Maureen and Stuart pictured above).

What a fantastic evening we hosted in the Great Hall for the Dean’s Gala Dinner and Debate! I can’t tell you how happy I felt to stand in the Great Hall with so many nurses and midwives, alumni and friends. The debate was brilliantly entertaining and contentious and I thank our many friends in the health system who organised for their colleagues to join us. I can’t wait until next year’s event!

I am sure you will join me in wishing all our nursing students all the very best for their efforts this year. Most of our final year students were successful in getting their first preference for their new graduate transition programs. Interestingly this showed a strong correlation between their first preference and their clinical placement “home”. This tells us that our innovative clinical homes model is proving successful and that our students are demonstrating the knowledge, skills and qualities that employers are looking for in the next generation of registered nurses.

Finally, the feedback from our first cohort of Bachelor of Nursing (Advanced Studies) students about their first year of study has been extremely positive. As one of our students told us, “In first semester I had my first clinical placement at RPA Hospital. The nurses were friendly to me and my facilitator was very supportive which made my experience in the hospital very pleasant. It is an invaluable experience for me as I get to see what nurses actually do and how they work in a hospital. It also helped me to understand the concepts taught in class for which I had no previous clinical experience.”

Word has spread and the number of students applying for this program next year has tripled! This is clearly testimony to our positioning of this and our other nursing programs. We are attracting high achieving students who are looking for a challenging nursing program and who want to make a difference to health outcomes.

I wish you, our students, staff, alumni, professional partners and friends all the very best for the festive season and a joyous and peaceful new year.

-Warm regards, Jill White
NURSING AWARDS

WA NURSE EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to PhD candidate Rosemary Saunders who was recognised as Nurse Educator of the year in the annual West Australian Nursing Excellence Awards.

DIABETES SOCIETY CLINICAL SCIENCE POSTER AWARD

Congratulations to Fanziska Gisler who recently completed the Master of Clinical Trials Practice. Fanziska’s capstone project, supervised by Dr Nat Marshall, formed a project that was presented as a poster at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Australian Diabetes Society and Diabetes Educators Association 2012. Authors: Fanziska Limacher, Belinda Brooks, Lynda Molynex, Maria Constantion and Dennis K Yue.

HOC MAI SCHOLARSHIPS TO VIETNAM

Thanks again to the generous support of the Hoc Mai Australia Vietnam Medical Foundation we will be sending four nursing students to Vietnam over the summer break to undertake an additional one month clinical placement: They are:

- Myfanwy Pennells
- Najlah Rahme
- Travis Brown
- Suu-Kyi Saraswathee Naidoo

WOMEN’S PLANS FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Master of Nursing student, Kathleen Foster, is the recipient of this year’s Women’s Plans Foundation Award of $1000 for her demonstrated interest and understanding of family planning in developing countries.

GRADUATE MEDAL NOMINEE

Dr Timothy Wand (DipAppSciNursing, MN Hons, PhD (Nursing)) was shortlisted as a nominee for an Alumni Award graduate medal, the Rita and John Curnforth Medal (PhD Achievement), which recognises high academic proficiency.

DEAN’S GALA DINNER AND DEBATE

It was a night that we’ll all remember. More than 220 nurses and midwives, alumni, staff and students, our University colleagues, industry partners and many friends joined Sydney Nursing School Dean, Professor Jill White, at the inaugural Gala Dinner and Debate to celebrate nursing and midwifery at the University of Sydney.

In a stimulating, funny and thought-provoking debate, health leaders battled for supremacy as they argued: “Super-specialisation of health services benefits the health professionals, not patients”. Brave and reasoned arguments from the affirmative team, Adjunct Professor Debra Thoms, Dr Charlotte Hespe and Dr Jeffrey Braithwaite, highlighted the value of primary health care and well-executed health promotion campaigns for patients and the community. Our super-specialists, Professor Mary Chiarella, Greg Sam and Dr Brian McCaughan seduced the audience with the promise of longer lives thanks to super-specialisation. After Dr Brian McCaughan resorted to cheap tricks with a strip to Hawaiian shirt, baseball cap and sunglasses to woo the audience in his team’s favour the affirmative team conceded defeat. Thanks to Ben Veness, medical student and Fellow of Senate at the University of Sydney, as adjudicator.

Professor White paid tribute to the many nurses and midwives who have pioneered nursing and midwifery education and research in Australia, including special guests Professor Robyn Parsons and Judith Van der Wal. “It is thanks to these pioneers that Sydney Nursing School can stand proudly today in this Great Hall at the University of Sydney,” Professor White said.

View the video highlights at: http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/news_events/videos_index.shtml
FOR MORE INFORMATION
T +61 2 9351 0693
F +61 2 9351 0508
E nursing.info@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/nursing

Find us on Facebook:
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