HOW OLD IS SUPA?

We would like to apologise to our readers for the misinformation printed in our last edition regarding the establishment date of the Sydney University Pharmacy Association (SUPA). Apparently SUPA wasn’t established in 1963.

But this begs the question… how old is SUPA? Iain Macdonald (Mat Med ’60) wrote in to tell us that he believes it was established sometime in the mid 1940’s, and that Rector Les Cashman was the president of the club in the early 1950’s. We also know that there was a badge redesign in 1959, pre-dating our claims that SUPA was founded in the 60’s.

So we are still searching for the answer, does anybody know? If you have any further information on SUPA and its formative years, please contact us.

Meanwhile, back in the year of 2011, we have a new executive SUPA team taking the reins! We will profile Akshay Sidana, the current president, in the next edition but already his presidency has started with a bang. A pub crawl and a busy pharmacy rugby schedule tabled (the pharmacy team have already beat the law school, dentistry and medicine teams); Akshay and his team are already making their mark.

See photo below of the new SUPA executive team.
MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

As the end of 2011 quickly approaches, I would like to welcome you to the spring edition of Fiat Mist. 2011 has been a great year for the Faculty of Pharmacy with much progress being made within the Faculty and also connecting with our alumni community.

Many alumni events were held throughout the year, including the most recent ones: the class of 1961 Materia Medica 50 year reunion; the Bachelor of Pharmacy class of ‘92 reunion, both held on campus; and a reunion of alumni from the Newcastle and Hunter region. All events were well attended and I had the pleasure of meeting with many alumni at each one. The Newcastle event in particular was a great way for graduates living in areas outside Sydney to reconnect. If you are interested in holding a reception in your local area, please contact our Alumni Officer on 02 9351 7829.

The International Congress of FIP (the International Pharmaceutical Federation) 2011 was recently held in Hyderabad, India and we had a very successful contribution from our seven academics that attended. You can read more about this on page 9. This conference was a great way to connect with others in our community on a global platform of professional learning and growth.

More recently, we have commenced long awaited refurbishments on three research laboratories within the Faculty. These refurbishments create more space, more seating and include new state-of-the-art equipment. This refurbishment will benefit current and future researchers and research students.

Lastly, I would like to mention how much we value alumni contributions to the Faculty. Pharmacy is a very tight knit community and it is important for alumni, staff, students and friends to stay well connected. Whether it is attending reunions or other alumni events organised, or contributing to a research project being undertaken in the Faculty as a recent alumni did, we value the contribution you make to our community.

After such a busy year, I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you a relaxing, safe and happy festive season and look forward to seeing you back on campus in 2012 for some of our upcoming alumni activities.

PROFESSOR IQBAL RAMZAN
(MSc 1977, PhD 1981)
Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni,

We have entered the realm of online social networking! The ‘Pharmacy Alumni Association – The University of Sydney’ facebook page was launched on 8 August. We see this webpage as a useful medium for connecting with our alumni and informing you of upcoming events, activities and news. There is also the capacity to create discussion around areas of interest to alumni – why not start one today? Head to facebook and ‘like’ the alumni page to begin.

Several pharmacy alumni attended the recent Graduate Connections breakfast. David Mortimer, one of Australia’s most inspiring and recognised businessmen, provided an insider’s view on the workings of big business – it was an engaging talk. The Graduate Connections breakfast is held four times a year in the Sydney CBD. These events allow alumni to catch up with old and new friends and colleagues, over a breakfast with plenty of ‘food for thought’. The next breakfast is on 22nd November and the guest speaker is Amanda McCluskey. I invite you to join the pharmacy alumni table. See page 12 for RSVP details.

The association has a busy calendar of events planned for 2012, so make sure all your contact details are up-to-date so we can invite you to attend. Contact our alumni officer on pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au to update your contact details.

Have a safe holiday period, and we look forward to seeing you all in 2012.

LACHLAN ROSE
(BPharm (Hons) 2003)
President,
Pharmacy Alumni Association
A TALE OF TWO PHARMACISTS
WITH A SMALL POPULATION OF LESS THAN 2000, MOLONG HAS PRODUCED TWO HIGH ACHIEVING PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS

Molong is an agricultural town situated in the beautiful, undulating and abundant countryside of central west New South Wales.

It is a town where the people who walk through the pharmacy door are not just customers, they are friends and associates. Everybody is addressed by their first name and the local pharmacist is an integral part of a very close-knit and supportive community.

This story is about Mr Colin Powell (Mat Med ’52) and Dr Lynn Weekes (BPharm ’82, MSc ’95) both from Molong and graduates of pharmacy from the University of Sydney. In different ways, both have made enormous contributions to the profession of pharmacy.

In the year 2000, Mr Powell was inducted as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for Services to the Community and Services to Pharmacy.

Colin says: “When I first arrived in Molong to inspect the pharmacy business, being a city slicker, I was not at all impressed. It was a very hot and oppressive day, rollie-pollies were tumbling down the main street and rodeo-looking types were watering their horses at the trough outside the Telegraph Hotel.

“The business owner presented himself, chewing a piece of straw and limping badly because he had shot himself in the foot. I immediately became nervous and asked myself, ‘is this me in twenty years time?’

“However, after viewing the books it became obvious that it was a very solid little business. I said to my wife, ‘we will come here for a minimum of three years and a maximum of ten’. Some forty years later I was still the town pharmacist.

“Up until the late 1980s, I was just a ‘backwoods’ pharmacist but that all changed with the dispute between the pharmacists of Australia and the Hawke Labor Government.

“I became the inaugural President of the Central Tablelands Pharmacist’s Association (CTPA) and found myself travelling four hours each way to attend the fortnightly Sydney meetings of the NSW Branch of the Pharmacy Guild ‘War Cabinet’.

“It was the most frenetic period of my life. I seemed to spend hours of each day with the telephone receiver tucked into my shoulder answering queries from CTPA members and having interviews with the media, while I dispensed prescriptions and directed my assistants. In amongst all that I organised the occasional protest (pictured page 5).

“Following the historic Guild/Government Agreement of 1990 and the granting of the Essential Pharmacy Allowance (EPA), it appeared to me that isolated pharmacies were being disadvantaged in a number of ways. I expressed these views to Peter Webeck (Mat Med graduate), the then President of the NSW Branch of the Pharmacy Guild and he introduced me to Patrick Mahony (BPharm ’68) of Manilla, NSW, who had similar misgivings. Thus was formed the Isolated & Essential Pharmacy Association (I&EPA), with me as President and Patrick as Vice-President.

“It all came to a head when we fronted up at Parliament House to appear before the Senate Standing Committee for Community Affairs on 23rd August, 1991. I presented a paper which was an overview of the difficulties faced by isolated pharmacies and Patrick brought forth the results of his survey, which was monumental in size and elucidating in content.
“Eventually, with the support of both the Pharmacy Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society, every isolated pharmacy in Australia became the recipient of the new and more relevant Remote and Isolated Pharmacy Allowance. Our association became the Remote and Isolated Pharmacy Association of Australia (RIPAA). Even after many changes to the original Guild/Government Agreement over the decades, this allowance continues to benefit isolated pharmacies to the present day.

“During my years in Molong, I became aware of a young girl, who was exceedingly bright and who did remarkably well in the Higher School Certificate. I knew her family well and regularly dispensed prescriptions to them. It gave me great pleasure when I learned that she chose pharmacy as her discipline at university.”

Dr Lynn Weekes completed her Bachelor of Pharmacy and post graduate studies at the University of Sydney. She progressed through hospital pharmacy and has enjoyed a stellar career, with her pioneering work in the National Prescribing Service (NPS). She is currently Chief Executive Officer of the NPS.

Colin says: “In May of 2010, I read an Australian Pharmacist article, in which Lynn gave an account of her career. It began: ‘I grew up in the small town of Molong in central west NSW. I initially wanted to do medicine after I finished school, but ours was a one-pharmacist town and I’d known the pharmacist all my life. He was a lynchpin in the community, someone I really admired, so I enrolled in pharmacy at the University of Sydney’.

“I was really chuffed. I had no idea that I had been such an influence on Lynn’s decision to become a pharmacist. I was proud to have performed my role as a community pharmacist successfully and to have been a role model for Lynn in her earlier years. She has gone on to be an outstanding contributor to the pharmacy industry.”

Lynn’s memories of Colin are from very early years. A visit to the pharmacy usually meant he would look in her ear or at her throat, diagnosing some minor ailment, providing appropriate advice to her mother and some foul tasting concoction for Lynn. Later, while she was studying pharmacy, Lynn was fortunate enough to spend holidays working beside Colin and his team in the pharmacy. Lynn was impressed by his empathy for patients and the currency of his pharmacy knowledge. He was also very versatile, providing veterinary pharmaceutical advice when the occasion arose. Colin exemplified the value that a community pharmacist has in a community and inspired Lynn to embark on a long fulfilling career in pharmacy.

Colin says: “The final part of this story occurred recently when I attended a Golden Graduates luncheon at the University of Sydney, organised by the Alumni Association. I learnt that Lynn was now the wife of Professor Iqbal Ramzan, Dean of Pharmacy. It was delightful to reconnect with her again and we plan to stay in touch.

“I feel that, in our different ways, we have both strived for the betterment of the pharmacy profession and the community at large. I am now very much engaged with the Faculty and continue to have a genuine interest in our community of trusted professionals.”
“The University of Sydney has a proud history, much of which has been enabled because of the farsighted generosity of others,” explains Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence. Now, more than ever, the support of our alumni and friends plays a critical role in making the difference between our University being a good and a truly great institution. Helping to make that difference is the Faculty of Pharmacy Foundation.

This Foundation is a small body of highly successful and dedicated volunteers whose goal is to ‘bridge the gap’ between the University, industry and professions and to attract financial support for pharmacy education and research for the improvement of public health.

Foundation President, Maurice Renshaw (BPharm ’72) explains, “Philanthropy can transform an individual’s life, an institution’s output and a community’s wellbeing.

“At the Foundation we are supporting the Faculty’s work so that it can continue to make a pivotal contribution to national and international healthcare issues.”

If we consider the role of a university, it is to contribute to society - finding creative solutions to complex problems and educating the next generation of thought leaders. The University of Sydney is a wonderful mixing pot of bright ideas and there is potential for a huge contribution to be made if researchers collaborate, communicate and focus their energies.

The Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy, Professor Iqbal Ramzan explains: “We make our contribution by providing world class scholarship and research in pharmacy and the pharmaceutical sciences.”

It is through donors such as Richard Stenlake (from Stenlake Compounding Chemist) that research outcomes can be accelerated. Mr Stenlake recently contributed a major gift towards the important work of Professor Kim Chan and Dr John Brannan: a clinical trial aimed at improving and optimising patient medication for asthma.

As Professor Chan explains, “There are over 2 million asthma sufferers in Australia and 400 die per annum. That’s more than one person a day. We urgently need to find a way to improve the efficacy of asthma medicines. We are grateful for donors like Mr Stenlake as their gifts accelerate our work and improve research outcomes.”

The Foundation, alumni and faculty staff will host the inaugural Pharmacy Research Innovations Dinner in May 2012. The aim of this event is to raise funds for pursuing scientific innovation in the treatment of cancer.

Pharmaceutical science research is currently being undertaken to improve the delivery of drugs to treat cancerous tumours. The potential benefits of new and improved drugs and drug delivery methods will help sufferers of prostate and breast cancer, brain tumours and more.

As Development Manager, Rebecca Palser, explains, “The Pharmacy Research Innovations Dinner to be held on Friday 18 May 2012 will provide an opportunity to acknowledge the importance of, and raise funds for, new knowledge and advancing medicines and best practice in chemotherapy of cancer.”

“Guests of this black-tie event will enjoy an evening of beautiful food, music and science at the historic MacLaurin Hall. We are currently seeking sponsors for the event and enthusiastic friends and alumni who will captain tables on the night. It will be a very special event, for an important cause.”

Cancer is a stated national health priority and the cause of death of over 41,000 Australians per year. By supporting the Faculty of Pharmacy’s research, guests and donors will be helping to improve the well-being and save lives of many cancer sufferers.

For enquiries about sponsorship or to captain a table, please contact: Rebecca Palser, Development Manager, Faculty of Pharmacy on 02 9351 7828 or email rebecca.palser@sydney.edu.au
Join us for the inaugural fundraising dinner for the Faculty of Pharmacy. Enjoy an evening of entertainment and catching up with friends while helping to raise money for research into innovative cancer treatment that will help to save the lives of many Australians.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR FIONA WOOD, AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR and pioneering doctor, world renowned for her patented invention of spray on skin for burn victims, will deliver an inspirational keynote address at this event.

We welcome all our alumni and friends, so please ensure we have the correct contact details for you, as invitations and further information will be sent out in the coming months. Email: pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au to update your details.
What is asthma? Asthma is a chronic disease that affects millions of people worldwide. Its prevalence makes it clinically and socio-economically important, both nationally and internationally. Approximately 10% of Australians suffer from asthma, which is high by international standards, and has resulted in the Australian Government identifying it as a national health priority area.

The episodes of wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath experienced by asthmatics in response to a variety of ‘triggers’. However the underlying cause is the same - inflammation of the lung associated with structural remodelling of the airway wall.

What is airway remodelling? Asthma is a treatable health condition and we have a number of effective drug treatments to tackle acute asthmatic attacks. With good asthma management, asthmatics can lead normal active lives. But, there are still a number of unanswered questions. We now know that the airways of asthmatics can become ‘thickened’ or remodelled over time. This occurs when the inflammation that is part of an acute asthmatic attack is not treated or controlled effectively.

The consequence of uncontrolled asthma is that permanent changes in the airways can occur and unfortunately, these cannot be completely reversed with current treatments.

As development of remodelled airways is correlated with deterioration of lung function, we urgently require therapies that reduce and reverse structural changes in remodelled airways.

The challenge and the goal
Corticosteroids are the major class of anti-inflammatory drugs currently used in the treatment of asthma, yet despite their efficacy, the array of side-effects following chronic corticosteroid use cause significant unwanted effects, especially for children.

The challenge for asthma treatment today is to identify alternative anti-inflammatory strategies with reduced unwanted effects.

In order to aid the future design of efficient anti-inflammatory strategies, we need a greater understanding of the molecular mechanism/s underlying inflammatory pathways.

Our goal is to harness the power of endogenous anti-inflammatory proteins that already exist in the body. Theoretically, this can be achieved by increasing the protein level and/or their anti-inflammatory activity. The aim of our NHMRC-funded research is to investigate a novel strategy to reverse the development of the airway remodelling phenotype by increasing the anti-inflammatory protein – mitogen-activated protein kinase phosphatase 1 (MKP-1).

Current work
The Respiratory Research Group at the University of Sydney is at the forefront of discovery of the MAPK pathways responsible for critical pro-remodelling functions in airway smooth muscle cells. We now wish to use our knowledge to aid the future design of drugs that help tackle the development of airway remodelling in asthma.

One of major signalling pathways that drive the development of the pro-remodelled phenotype is the mitogen-activated protein kinases (MAPK) superfamily. As the name suggests, MKP-1 is a phosphatase and removes two critical phosphates from MAPK, inhibiting its activity. Thus, MKP-1 plays a crucial negative feedback role as an endogenous MAPK deactivator to represses inflammation. But in severe asthma, MKP-1 activity is reduced, allowing inflammation to continue unchecked. Therefore, enhancing the levels and/or activity of MKP-1 may provide a novel anti-inflammatory strategy in asthma and airway remodelling.

Research from our laboratory and others has shown that one of the ways in which corticosteroids achieve their anti-inflammatory effects in asthma is by increasing the expression of anti-inflammatory proteins, such as MKP-1.

The search for dissociated corticosteroids is under intense investigation world-wide. Choosing novel therapies based on their ability to induce MKP-1 would benefit the future development of effective anti-inflammatory medicines that separate the wanted from the unwanted effects in asthma. Our current research aims to understand how we can increase gene expression of MKP-1 in a corticosteroid-sparing manner.

Our future research aims to increase our understanding of the molecular basis of MKP-1 regulation, discover novel strategies and candidate drug molecules rationally designed to increase the anti-inflammatory activity of MKP-1.

Alaina J Ammit BAppSc MSc PhD
Associate Professor Alaina Ammit completed both her MSc and PhD studies through the University of Sydney. Associate Professor Ammit’s research spans the respiratory disease and cancer themes at the Faculty of Pharmacy.
NATIONAL MEDICATION SAFETY WEEK

As an intern pharmacist many years ago, I was seriously shaken by my first dispensing error. Fortunately, the patient was not harmed. On that same day, and on every day since, many other incidents have occurred around the world where patients have been unintentionally harmed by health systems that exist for their care.

Currently, the rate of harm from health care is significantly higher than in other, once high-risk, industries. These other industries recognised human fallibility and designed their systems to prevent or mitigate the failings of humans. They also recognised that latent factors in work conditions, environments, processes and tools can set up people to fail.

A central strategy to improving safety involves the use of incident reporting programs. For the health care industry, these systems allow individuals to report incidents where patients have (or could have) been harmed from unintended actions or omissions. Analysis of these events often reveals latent systemic failures or traps that can be addressed through designing new ways of delivering care.

Community pharmacists are well placed to identify problems and contributing factors associated with the prescribing, dispensing, access, use or monitoring of medicines.

This November, all community pharmacists around Australia are invited to help Faculty of Pharmacy researchers to identify factors that pose a risk to patient safety in Australia through participating in National Medication Safety Week. To participate, we ask you to report anonymously any medication safety incidents that you encounter during practice between 7th to 13th November.

Research student and pharmacist, Rachel George, will be coordinating this initiative. The researchers will categorise the types of medication use problems that are occurring in the Australian community and their contributing factors in order to develop strategies that will improve patient safety.

For more information about this initiative and to participate, please visit: www.australianpharmsafety.org

Written by Dr Romano Fois, Lecturer, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Sydney.

Those with mobile devices can access the web site and report incidents using the following QR code:
ALUMNI NEWS

It’s been a busy few months for pharmacy alumni from the University of Sydney. We have had events, reunions and many notable achievements.

MATERIA MEDICA CLASS OF 1961 REUNION
The 50 year reunion for the final class to graduate with Materia Medica certificates in 1961 took place at the end of September. It was a well attended event with over 50 graduates travelling back to the pharmacy building to reminisce! Organised with expertise by Maurice Mountain, the class caught up over morning tea, followed by a faculty tour run by the SUPA representatives, and then lunch. One of the highlights of the day was examining the original class photo that Maurice had turned into a slide show and individual photos on name tags!

BACHELOR OF PHARMACY CLASS OF 1992 REUNION
The BPharm class of 1991 (graduating in 1992) met after work on a Friday in October. The Dean hosted drinks and canapés in the faculty building before sending them off to party into the night at the Taste Café on campus. A close knit year, the graduates in attendance picked up where they left off 20 years ago. The majority still work in the industry, with some entering into business together.

“It was great to welcome these alumni back to the faculty, many of whom I have taught over the years,” the Dean Iqbal Ramzan commented. “We hope to see them all at our coming activities in 2012.”
THE DEAN’S INAUGURAL NEWCASTLE ALUMNI EVENT
Dean, Professor Iqbal Ramzan travelled north to Newcastle to host an inaugural alumni cocktail reception for those who live on the central coast and in the Newcastle and Hunter region. A great night was had by all, with the Dean and guests reluctant to leave at the end of the night! It was agreed that this event should take place annually, and a date is currently being decided for 2012. If you live in the area and didn’t hear about the event, let us know. We will update your details for next year and ensure you are on the guest list.

GRADUATE CONNECTIONS BREAKFAST
Another Graduate Connections breakfast took place in September with David Mortimer as the speaker. It was great to see so many pharmacy graduates in attendance. We are always encouraging our alumni to attend these breakfasts. It is a great opportunity to hear an inspiring speaker, and catch up with each other over breakfast. The breakfasts are open to all alumni and only cost $35 (that includes a 3 course breakfast-yum!). The last speaker of the year will be Amanda McCluskey on the 22nd November. For more information visit: http://www.alumni.sydney.edu.au/s/965/index.aspx

NEW VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE NSW PSA
Claire O’Reilly (BPharm ’04), Associate Lecturer and current PhD candidate at the Faculty of Pharmacy has been appointed as a national Vice-President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA).

Claire has been a member of the NSW PSA Branch Committee for six years and is currently in her second term serving on the board. Claire was voted in as one of two national Vice-Presidents of PSA by the newly elected board. Claire brings extensive experience and expertise to the role. She is a practising community pharmacist and a researcher, who has a special interest promoting the quality use of medicines to healthcare professionals and the public, particularly in the area of mental health.

PHD STUDENT RECEIVES EXCELLENCE AWARD
Mr Vidya Perera (BSc ’06) has just been declared the NSW winner of the AusBiotech/GlaxoSmithKline Student Excellence Awards as a result of his research.

Vidya Perera, a final year PhD student at the Faculty of Pharmacy, has found that people from South Asia could need lower doses of these medicines because they are likely to have lower levels of CYP1A2, an enzyme that metabolises drugs. “Vegetables such as cabbages, cauliflower and broccoli are known to increase levels of CYP1A2, as was demonstrated in this study and previous studies in people of European background. The lower levels of CYP1A2 in South Asians, however, appears to be due to the common practice of cooking these vegetables in curries using ingredients such as cumin and turmeric, ingredients known to inhibit the enzyme, overriding the effect of the vegetables,” Mr Perera explained. To find out more on Vidya’s PhD research go to http://sydney.edu.au/pharmacy/

If you have any news or achievements you would like to share with pharmacy alumni, email pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au so we can include it in our news pages.

CONTINUED...
UPCOMING EVENTS

Below is a snapshot of some of the events taking place for alumni in NSW and the ACT. More information on these events is commonly posted on the University website at http://www.alumni.sydney.edu.au. Invitations are sent to alumni by email, so please ensure we have the correct email address registered for you. To update your details contact: Alumni Officer on pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au.

Friday 18 November
Blue and Gold Cricket Luncheon
Four Seasons Hotel, 12pm-3pm
Contact: Rodney Tubbs
r.tubbs@sport.usyd.edu.au, (02) 9351 7958

Tuesday 22 November
Graduate Connections Breakfast
The Ballroom, The Four Seasons Hotel, 7:15am-8:30am
Guest Speaker: Amanda McLuskey
Contact: Alumni and Events Office on alumni.rsvp@sydney.edu.au, (02) 9036 9278

Saturday 10 December
Poetic Inspirations, Sydney University Graduate Choir concert
The Great Hall, 8pm
Contact: Seymour Centre Box Office, (02) 9351 7940

Sunday 11 December
The Playing of the Merry Organ
The Great Hall, 3:30pm
Enjoy the festive spirit of Christmas with favourites old and new
Contact: Amy Johansen, amy.johansen@sydney.edu.au, 0433 792 259

SAVE THE DATES IN 2012
Thursday 29 March
‘Sydney 10’ Alumni Reunion
The Great Hall, 6:30pm
A reunion for all faculty classes of 2002, to celebrate 10 years since graduating from The University of Sydney
Contact: Alumni and Events Office on alumni.rsvp@sydney.edu.au

Friday 18 May
Pharmacy Research Innovations Dinner 2012: Cancer
MacLaurin Hall, 7pm
A fundraiser open to all alumni to raise funds for cancer research at the Faculty of Pharmacy. Tickets are $175 each. Get a class, work or social table together now! Email rebecca.palser@sydney.edu.au to register your interest as a table captain

June 2012
Bachelor of Pharmacy Class of 1982 Reunion
Organisation of the first reunion of 2012 is in progress, with final dates and venues to be decided.
If you are part of the graduation class of 1982, please contact our alumni officer on pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au to make sure your contact details are up to date. We will be sending out a Save the Date email in early 2012.

We are looking for graduates from 1962 and 1972 to help put together reunions in 2012. Please contact Alumni Office to offer your assistance.

Do you want to organise an alumni event or a reunion? If you live in an area where there are lots of Pharmacy alumni or even just want to catch up with some old friends you haven’t seen since University, let us know and we can try and help. Contact the Pharmacy Alumni Officer on pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au.