FACULTY RESEARCH GOES GLOBAL
CENTRES FOR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FUNDED
OUTSTANDING TEACHER RECOGNISED
MESSAGE FROM OUR DEAN

Welcome to the 2013 spring edition of Fiat Mist. It has been a great couple of months for us as we begin to look towards 2014 and an exciting new year for the Faculty.

I have recently returned from the International Congress of FIP (the International Pharmaceutical Federation) held in Dublin this year. As always, the event attracted a huge gathering of the world’s top researchers and academics, including the Faculty’s Associate Professors Tim Chen and Parisa Aslani, Dr Rebekah Moles, Dr Betty Chaar, Dr Claire O’Reilly and many of our PhD students. Our staff and students made many significant contributions to the international conference.

There have been quite a few success stories emanating from our faculty ranks recently. First, I would like to congratulate Professor Andrew McClachlan and Associate Professor Salie-Anne Pearson, who, with Professor David Le Couteur and Dr Timothy Dobbin from the Sydney Medical School, have landed a major research grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to set up the new Centre for Research Excellence (CRE) in Health Services Research focusing on Medicines and Ageing. [LINK / pg XX]. A big congratulations also to Professor Kim Chan, Associate Professor Veyssel Kayser, Dr Fanfan Zhou and Associate Professor Salie-Anne Pearson, who received Faculty of Pharmacy Research Grants for 2013. Their projects will go a long way to boosting our research collaborations and securing competitive external grants. I would also like to commend Dr Rebekah Moles for her Office of Learning and Teaching citation for the innovative work she has done on the third-year BPharm curriculum, and also Dr Wojciech Chrzanowski who won the poster prize at July’s inaugural International Translational Nanomedicine Conference at Northeastern University in Boston.

I wish you all the best for the rest of the year and festive season at the end of the year and look forward to connecting with you again in 2014.

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

Dear Pharmacy Alumni,

As we approach the end of year, there are 2 important alumni matters to consider.

First, is the election of the Faculty of Pharmacy representative on the University of Sydney Alumni Council. The Alumni council is the University’s peak alumni body that supports the University, Alumni and Development Division in their endeavours to grow alumni engagement across the university community. There are two nominees for the position and all alumni should have recently received ballot papers in the post - remember to cast your vote prior to the cut off date of Wednesday 13 November. (If you haven’t received the papers, your postal address may not be up to date. You can quickly update your details by emailing alumni.office@sydney.edu.au).

Second, but not least, is notification of the Annual General Meeting of the Pharmacy Alumni Association on Wednesday 20 November at 10am in the Common Room at the Faculty of Pharmacy. Please email pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au or contact Sue on 02 9036 9644 if you would like to attend.

Look forward to seeing you at the next alumni event.

LACHLAN ROSE
BPharm (Hons) 2003
President, Pharmacy Alumni Association

CONTINUOUS ON PAGE 6

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CONTINUOUS ON PAGE 6
The three Centres of Research Excellence (CREs) are:
The Centre of Research Excellence in Medicines and Ageing
Centre of Research Excellence in Optimising Early Interventions for Young People with Emerging Mood Disorder
NeuroSleep, the Centre for Translational Sleep and Circadian Neurobiology Centre for Research Excellence

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Jill Trewhella said: “The success of our researchers in winning these CREs is recognition of their leadership in research that is critical to developing capacity in our health system to serve in areas that are among the highest priorities for our communities - healthy aging, mental health and workplace safety.

“These Centres will play a key role in the University’s health and medical research strategy that aims to translate the results of our excellent research into practice and policy for the greater benefit of our communities.”

The Centre of Research Excellence in Medicines and Ageing is spearheaded by a cross-institutional collaborative team of University of Sydney academics including Professor Andrew McLachlan and Associate Professor Sallie-Anne Pearson, from the Faculty of Pharmacy, and Professor David Le Couteur and Dr Timothy Dobbins from the Sydney Medical School.

Professor McLachlan, who jointly leads the CRE Medicines and Ageing, said the funding would generate quantitative evidence on the use, harms, costs and cost-effectiveness of specific medicines in relation to ageing.

“This information is critical to understanding the balance of benefits and harms of medicines used across the adult lifespan,” Professor McLachlan said.

“Medicines have an important place in health and are commonly used for long periods, sometimes life-long. Using medicines wisely requires a careful balance between benefits and harmful effects.”

“Currently, there is limited information to guide the use of medicines over a lifetime. Using large linked datasets, the CRE in Medicines and Ageing will generate much needed evidence about real world medicines use to support clinical and pharmaceutical policy decisions.”

The Centre of Research Excellence in Medicines and Ageing is a national and international collaboration between researchers at the University of Sydney, Australian National University, The Sax Institute, University of Western Australia, University of NSW, University of Technology Sydney, and the Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Sciences in Canada.

A team led by the Brain & Mind Research Institute received funding for the Centre of Research Excellence in Optimising Early Interventions for Young People with Emerging Mood Disorder.

BMRI Executive Director and lead researcher, Professor Ian Hickie, said the centre would provide unique opportunities to link developing Australian researchers with international leaders in North America, the UK and Europe.

“One of our greatest health challenges is to develop highly-personalised interventions for teenagers and young adults with emerging mood disorders, like major depression or bipolar disorder,” he said.

“This new Australian centre combines our national expertise and links it with research innovation and training in key European and North American centres.

The centre will also set up a national databank recording illness outcomes of young people experiencing major mood disorders.

A research team led by Professor Ron Grunstein received funding for NeuroSleep: the Centre for Translational Sleep and Circadian Neurobiology Centre for Research Excellence

NeuroSleep will build on emerging collaborations between the Woolcock Institute, BMRI (both at The University of Sydney), Monash University, Sleep Network and NeuRA (UNSW) to provide the clinical infrastructure and platforms to achieve aims which are beyond any single site.

Professor Grunstein said: “The key aim of NeuroSleep is to improve cognition, workplace safety, and health outcomes in patients with sleep problems such as shift workers, patients with sleep disorders, neurodegenerative and/or mental health problems.”

NeuroSleep will be a novel and distinct entity that will build on the success of the current Clinical CRE for Interdisciplinary Sleep Health (CIRUS), completing funding at the end of 2013.

Professor Grunstein said the NeuroSleep group would target three areas: the ageing populations; our 24/7 society and patient care.

“Our goal is to improve brain performance, workplace safety and health outcomes in patients with sleep and circadian dysfunction and in the general community.”
FACULTY RESEARCH IN NANOMEDICINE GOES GLOBAL

CONFERENCE SUCCESS
Nanomedicine, a relatively young scientific field (a little more than a decade old), has so far yielded promising outcomes but few commercial products.

However, there is still an exciting surge of activity in nanomedicine, with new exciting avenues of research revealing great future potential applications, such as Dr Chrzanowski’s braille-inspired surfaces.

Translational aspects of nanomedicine were the major subject of discussion during the first annual International Translational Nanomedicine Conference, hosted by Northeastern University in Boston and sponsored by the International Journal of Nanomedicine.

“The conference reinforced the fact that nanomedicine research is still incredibly active and ripe for forming products,” said conference chair Professor Thomas Webster.

“Dr Chrzanowski’s prestigious JPRS Fellowship will allow him to collaborate with researchers to better understand how a braille-inspired concept could be exploited on the smallest possible level, for the smallest possible audience - cells,” Webster highlighted the fundamental role of research and the need for integrated efforts in this area.

“If we don’t even understand the mechanism of how things are working, how are we going to convince the Federal Drug Administration to insert our materials?” he said.

The conference was an opportunity for researchers from around the world to share their work with colleagues and push closer towards understanding how to translate the many potential opportunities into real-life beneficial products and solutions.

The Faculty of Pharmacy’s Dr Chrzanowski attracted particular attention for his work, which focused on guiding cellular responses using biochemical signals incorporated into the surfaces of devices.

His poster presentation won an award and generated lively discussion amongst the attendees.

“I feel very humbled to receive the first prize for my work and I was delighted to discuss my work with researchers who came for the conference from around the world,” said Dr Chrzanowski.

“In fact, attending this meeting on its own was an award and privilege. This conference has been instrumental to conceive new research ideas and collaborations, which will advance the field of nanomedicine,” he said.

“Recent data shows the number of revision operations in Australia is steadily increasing at a rate of around six percent per annum.”

Seeking a solution, Dr Chrzanowski turned his attention to the physical and chemical nature of implants, specifically observing the effect of modifications to implant surface characteristics.

These characteristics could include the implant’s topography (i.e. patterns, rough surfaces); chemistry (e.g. oxidation and hydroxypatite coatings); and its functionalisation with bioactive molecules, such as antibiotics and proteins, that are tethered to the surface.

Dr Chrzanowski’s JPRS Fellowship will team him with Professor Tadashi Kokubo from Chubu University to create innovative, multifunctional (as opposed to currently-developed single modulation) surfaces which simultaneously control, regulate, prevent or trigger specific biological reactions, such as cell adhesion or differentiation and prevention of bacteria colonisation.

A new metallic biomaterial developed in Japan, which outperforms currently-used alloys, will be used in the project.

“This fellowship builds on our preliminary results and utilises the unique expertise of both Chubu University and the University of Sydney in fabricating the next generation of advanced healthcare materials, with many prospects for immediate clinical translation,” said Dr Chrzanowski.

On the possibility of taking this collaboration further, he said it will “allow more intensive research and the extension of our collaborative network.”

“We intend to conceive collaboration with experts from Kyoto University, Tokyo University, Toyota and James Cook University to design novel multifunctional surfaces,” Chrzanowski begins his Fellowship in November.

IT’S WHAT’S ON THE SURFACE THAT COUNTS

Behind Dr Chrzanowski’s award-winning research is the simple and brilliant concept of braille - the physical language of bumps developed in 1824 to help visually-impaired people read.

Dr Chrzanowski’s prestigious JPRS Fellowship will allow him and collaborative researchers to better understand how a braille-inspired concept could be exploited on the smallest possible level, for the smallest possible audience - cells.

Applying this idea to optimise surgical implants could prove to be incredibly beneficial to patients’ lives and the national health system.

“There is an urgent need for a technology that is capable of improving implant integration, particularly in countries with rapidly aging populations, such as Australia,” said Dr Chrzanowski.

For example, in the US, a high number of trauma incidents each year results in around six million fractures requiring implantable fixation devices.

“The implantation of metal devices into tissue carries a high risk of post-operative complications, which are caused by poor integration of the implant and biofilm formation,” Dr Chrzanowski explained.

“These are regarded as the most dreaded complications in orthopedics, resulting in repeat surgeries, patient distress and disability, and increased cost and utilisation of medical resources,” he said.

NATIONAL CITATION FOR FACULTY ACADEMIC

The Faculty of Pharmacy’s Dr Rebekah Moles was one of nine colleagues from five different faculties who received national recognition for their outstanding teaching.

The federal government’s Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) announces Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning each year to recognise quality teaching practice and contributions towards student learning.

Dr Moles was awarded for her creative approach to teaching that requires her students to search for answers and stimulates their curiosity.

She was also instrumental in January’s Sydney Pharmacy Indigenous Camp initiative, a program to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to pursue careers in pharmacy.

The University received seven other citations for 2013, including a joint citation for two staff, the maximum number the OLT awards to any one institution.

“Great teachers inspire and motivate our students. I congratulate all the award recipients for the enthusiasm and dedication they have shown to their students,” said University of Sydney Vice-Chancellor and Principal Dr Michael Spence.

“Rebekah’s commitment to supporting the continuous improvement of learning and teaching is very evident and widely recognised within the Faculty,” said Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy Professor Iqbal Ramzan.

“I congratulate her for this well-deserved national honour,” he said.
NEW LECTURESHIP IN QUALITY USE OF COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES

I am very pleased to announce that with the help of generous support from the Blackmores Institute, the Faculty of Pharmacy will introduce a brand new lectureship on the Quality Use of Complementary Medicines in 2014.

Dr Desmond Heng and Dr Philip Chi Lip Kwok were recently making names for themselves in Asia’s thriving pharmaceutical sciences scene.

PHARMACY STUDENTS TAKE THIRD AT NATIONAL BUSINESS COMPETITION

The competition, which commenced in 2006, was designed to encourage innovation among pharmacy students by asking them to create competitive business plans using their ideas, talents and creative business concepts.

The team travelled to Canberra after seeping through the quarter and semi-finals to present a live investors’ pitch to a panel of judges and delegates at the Pharmacy Business Network conference.

The team’s business plan addressed childhood obesity with a pharmacist-monitored program that covered diet, exercise and education. As a highly differentiated program, it was designed to provide daily lunches, regular exercise sessions and the creation of a mobile app to promote a healthier future.

After what organisers said was the “closest contested competition in NSBPC history,” the judges finally awarded the victory to a team from the Queensland Institute of Technology, while students from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology came second.

The competition has developed a culture of leadership amongst the students with a strong focus on incorporating innovative and dynamic mentoring,” he said.

They have all learnt valuable skills in their preparation of their business plan, demonstrated innovation and creativity and have emerged with a strong professional service focus. They worked extremely hard but also had a lot of fun.”
Community Pharmacy continues to be challenged in many ways, with PBS reform, price disclosure and competition, being some of the principal issues being discussed widely. At a grass roots management level of community pharmacy, day to day issues comprise of finding the right staff, determining the optimal staffing levels and training staff in professional models of pharmacy service delivery. These are the matters that determine whether the ‘bigger’ issues in Pharmacy become insurmountable challenges or whether they can be strategically handled by people with the correct skills and mindset.

Regarding the issue of finding the appropriate professional staff to take community pharmacy forward requires succession planning. This concept is not new and for many, including our pharmacies, this would have usually meant taking on an intern every year. Following a search sometime in the second half of every year, which meant reviewing CVs, interviews and job offers, pharmacies would then hope or longer for the intern to settle into the position. But, by putting a succession plan into place and employing students, this will assist the viability of your Pharmacy and the profession into the future.

Alumna and community pharmacist Lillian Chen spoke to Fiat Mist about actively seeking out and employing pharmacy students from the University of Sydney to help in her long-term ‘train and gain’ succession plan.

Several years ago we made a concerted effort to put a true succession plan into our pharmacies which meant actively seeking suitable candidates and employing students from all years of the pharmacy course. Currently we employ in our two pharmacies, seven pharmacy students and two interns. Our students are studying at the University of Sydney, with two from first year, three from third year and two being fourth year students. Recently our two fourth year students have accepted our offers to take on their internships at our pharmacies in 2014. In line with our succession plan, we will also need for at least five years as they progress through University and their Internship.

The experiences of the students are practical and positive. They are able to apply theory learned at university, understand the demands of the profession and the importance of gaining practical experience to augment their learning. We are always reinvigorated and inspired by the students’ passion for learning and for their commitment to their work.

From speaking with students and pharmacists, there appears to be a shortage of community pharmacies willing to take on intern positions. But, by putting a succession plan into place and employing students, this will assist the viability of your Pharmacy.

IN PRAISE OF STUDENT PLACEMENT

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INTERNATIONAL TURNOUT FOR INAUGURAL UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY PHARMACEUTICAL SYMPOSIUM

Scholars from the United States, Hong Kong and Japan joined Faculty of Pharmacy students and academics for the successful inaugural University of Sydney Pharmaceutical Symposium last month.

The Symposium, hosted by the American Association of Pharmaceutical Student’s Sydney chapter with support from the Faculty of Pharmacy, was held on Friday 18 August, with around 60 participants gathering at the University’s New Law Lounge to listen to keynote talks and poster presentations from postgraduate and honours students.

Associate Professor Veyisel Kayser from the Faculty of Pharmacy was one of three keynote speakers, joining Sydney alumnus Dr Philip Kwok from the University of Hong Kong and Dr Karim Ibrahim from St Vincent’s Hospital.

Meanwhile, 15 undergraduate honours and postgraduate students from the Faculty delivered 10-minute oral presentations, including question and answer sessions, and another six postgraduate students presented posters.

Among the themes discussed were drug discovery, pharmacy practice, molecular biology, medicinal chemistry and herbal medicine. Visiting academics from Princeton University in the US and Shizuoka University in Japan were on hand to help judge the oral and poster presentations and issue the awards.

‘Best postgraduate presentation’ was awarded to Wing-Hin Lee, while Petra Wood and Emma Rath each received high commendations. The ‘best honours presentation’ ended up in a tie between Benny Fung and Dania Akbik. Last but not least, the ‘best poster’ award went to Sally Kim.

The event’s organisers from the AAPS Sydney Chapter said the first-time event was “phenomenal and received numerous positive feedback from both students and academic staff”.

The challenges of employing and involving students in a community pharmacy such as roster flexibility to account for changes to university and exam timetables, and cross skill rostering for mentoring purposes, are far outweighed by the advantages that they bring to the pharmacy. These include:

– Fresh energy, ideas and knowledge. The students provide new perspectives and question how things are done.

– Intrinsic understanding of the importance of professional services and models, knowing that this will be their future

– Open to training and self-improvement

– Having students employed at the pharmacies encourage pharmacists to demonstrate best practice and take on mentoring/leadership roles

– Those who have completed first year do not require S2/S3 Certification for GQCP

– They would have already had four years of training in all aspects of the pharmacies prior to Internship which allows us to concentrate on the clinical and communication aspects of counselling rather than having to teach procedural aspects

– Mentoring and building relationships with each other that will continue into their future professional careers.

The experiences of the students are practical and positive. They are able to apply theory learned at university, understand the demands of the profession and the importance of gaining practical experience to augment their learning.

We are always reinvigorated and inspired by the students’ passion for learning and for their commitment to their work.
CONNECTING AND KEEPING IN TOUCH

Invitations and other communications are sent to alumni by email, so please ensure we have the correct email address registered for you. To update your details contact the Alumni relations Manager on 9036 9644 or email pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au

CLASS REUNIONS

Organisations of reunions for 2014 are in progress with final dates and venues to be decided. If you are part of the graduation class of 1994 or 2004 please send an email to pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au to let us know if you are interested in attending a combined reunion.

2014 ALUMNI AWARDS

The Faculty recognises the importance of contributions made by its alumni in the community and profession and encourages nominations for next year’s round of awards.

Do you know someone who should be recognised with a Pharmacy Alumni Award for Achievement?

The Pharmacy Alumni Association is calling for nominations for its two Alumni Awards for pharmacy graduates. The two awards are the Pharmacy Alumni Award for Achievement and the Pharmacy Young Alumni Award Achievement.

Nominations open in early 2014 and close on a date yet to be confirmed. For more information visit sydney.edu.au/pharmacy or email pharmacy.alumni@sydney.edu.au

ALUMNI STUDENT CONNECT

THE University of Sydney’s alumni community is a valuable resource for students who have much to benefit from their experience. Alumni Student Connect is a hospitality program connecting current international and local students with alumni. Gatherings over a meal hosted by alumni provide an opportunity for students to meet and engage with their fellow students and alumni families, enabling all to share academic, professional and social experiences and foster new friendships. Please assist University of Sydney students by volunteering to host a function in 2013. Contact the Alumni and Events Office on 9036 9504 or visit Sydney.edu.au/alumni/hospitality.