Fulbright scholarship to advance trauma research

Brisbane nurse researcher Professor Leanne Aitken has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright Senior Scholarship to develop collaborative research with US colleagues in the area of trauma care.

Professor Aitken, Chair in Critical Care Nursing at Griffith University and Princess Alexandra Hospital, said the research will focus on improving pain relief and the management of sedation in intensive care and trauma patients.

“Severe, penetrating trauma such as gun shot injuries are much more common in the US, and as a result they have very experienced trauma networks and a well developed understanding of what systems make for effective trauma care.”

“This is an opportunity to grow research on a multinational basis and find solutions which are potentially applicable to both health care systems,” she said.

Professor Aitken said effective management of trauma patients relied on multidisciplinary teams of medical, nursing and allied health professionals working together across the acute care continuum.

“Trauma care cannot be limited to one particular area such as the emergency department or intensive care unit.”

She said while technological advances had improved survival for many critically ill patients, there was room for improvement in long-term outcomes and quality of life.

“There is some evidence that the management of pain and sedation can affect patients’ psychological recovery. However if we can improve clinical care during the acute phase of treatment, hopefully we can also improve their long term recovery.”

Professor Aitken will visit the University of Pennsylvania for four months next year where she is looking forward to working with Associate Professor Therese Richmond, who is recognised internationally for her expertise in the field of trauma nursing.

“As the number of trauma patients in Australia is low compared to many other countries and trauma nursing is a relatively new specialty here, access to an extensive team of trauma advanced practice nurses will provide me with new insights and perspective.”

The Fulbright program is the largest educational scholarship of its kind and aims to promote mutual understanding through educational exchange. Professor Aitken is one of only four Australians to be recognised as a Fulbright Senior Scholar in 2009.
Bone expert strengthens health team

Griffith’s new Chair of Anatomy Professor Mark Forwood started his career with degrees in physical education and human movement but quickly found his niche in academia with a primary focus on anatomical teaching and bone research.

He has worked to advance understanding of skeletal biology and adaptation including how bone cells respond to their mechanical environment and why bones become increasingly fragile with age.

During his NHMRC-funded postdoctoral research in the US, his team showed that fluid flow through bones with the bending and twisting of daily movement, deforms bone cells sufficiently to induce new bone formation. This observation has been crucial to defining the most effective types of activity to strengthen the skeleton.

Bone Bank, Professor Forwood has investigated the optimum radiation sterilisation doses. Ongoing research interests in Australia supported by the NHMRC, include the pathophysiology of stress fractures and the cellular and molecular regulation of bone remodelling that can help them repair.

Professor Forwood and his colleagues have observed that bisphosphonates, the drugs used to treat osteoporosis, can also lead to the accumulation of fatigue microdamage, a precursor of stress fractures.

This phenomenon has become a controversial aspect of treatment with this class of drug. However so far, the effect of bisphosphonates in preventing bone loss outweighs the slight increase in tissue microdamage.

In collaboration with the Queensland Bone Bank, Professor Forwood has also investigated the optimum conditions for sterilisation of bone allografts used in transplantation and joint replacement surgery.

This work ensuring better maintenance of allograft bone quality has led to validation by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for the use of lower radiation sterilisation doses.

Professor Forwood said the increasing group of investigators in musculoskeletal research at Griffith continues to open up new research directions and collaborations.

His responsibilities will also include ensuring the Health Group delivers world-class anatomical education to health students across a broad range of disciplines.

We look forward to further consolidation of both the School of Medicine and School of Dentistry under new leadership.

One of the most pleasing accomplishments this quarter was the prestigious Fulbright Senior Scholarship awarded to Professor Leanne Aitken, Brisbane nurse researcher, and one of only four Australians to receive this honour in 2009. The Fulbright program is the largest educational scholarship of its kind and aims to promote mutual understanding through educational exchange. This Scholarship will be used to develop collaborative research with US colleagues in the area of trauma care.

Congratulations go to the School of Pharmacy staff who received notification from the Australian Pharmacy Council that their Pharmacy programs have been fully accredited for 5 years.

Although I’d like to comment on all achievements, it is very satisfying for me to say that Health Group accomplishments to date this year, well exceed the publication space offered by this column.

Professor Allan W Cripps
Pro Vice Chancellor (Health)
Chronic pain, a significant health problem

In an exciting new innovation for Australia, School of Pharmacy Senior Lecturer Tony Hall will be responsible for running a Pharmacist lead Chronic Pain Clinic with the Gold Coast Hospital's Chronic Pain Team.

Chronic Pain is a significant health problem with an estimated ~20% of the Gold Coast population suffering with only one chronic pain issue: Low Back Pain. Whilst many are able to manage their pain symptom satisfactorily there are still a significant proportion of the population who are unable to achieve satisfactory control. The presence of chronic pain plays a significant negative role in a patient’s ability to maintain employment or manage activities of daily living.

Medications play a significant role in the management of pain but poor compliance and the potential for abuse of opioid analgesics often leave patients poorly controlled.

Tony is a very experienced Clinical Pharmacist with a specialty practice area in Chronic Pain and Palliative Care. Whilst working in the UK he was the pharmacist working in a Chronic Pain Multidisciplinary Clinic in Leeds. In this clinic Tony reviewed the medication history of newly referred patients and made recommendations on further use of medication in their pain management.

In an Australian first the Gold Coast Hospital is planning a pharmacist-run clinic where Tony will see patients referred to the Chronic Pain team. He will conduct a comprehensive medication review with the patient, identifying which analgesics have been trialled and what successes and failures have been experienced. With this information he will then liaise with the patient’s General Practitioner, the Chronic Pain Consultant and the multidisciplinary Chronic Pain Team to devise a suitable plan to manage their symptom. He may also need to liaise with Queensland Health’s Drugs of Dependency Unit and the Gold Coast’s Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Substance abuse (ATODS) centre to ensure that all arms involved in an individual patient’s care are coordinated.

Tony is planning on conducting clinical research in this area as well.

M cell research funding

Professor Allan Cripps, Pro Vice Chancellor (Health), and colleagues Dr David Gillis and Associate Professor Stephen Weinstein of Pathology Queensland, have been awarded a grant of $69890 by the Pathology Queensland – Study Education and Research Trust Fund (SERTF).

With the assistance of this grant, they will undertake research to identify the functional mechanisms associated with receptor binding and signal transduction pathways required for bacterial transcytosis through M cells, enabling optimal targeting and consistent delivery of bacterial vaccines in oral formulations.

The significance of improved antigen delivery systems is far reaching. Direct targeting of M cells will result in: optimisation of a number of oral bacterial, viral and synthetic vaccine delivery technologies currently available, leading to rapid application to clinical oral immunisation studies; oral immunisation schedules that provide more consistent and predictable immune responses; and the inclusion of a broader range of antigens in oral vaccine formulations than is currently possible. Furthermore, the knowledge gained from the project has significance to a number of other human disease conditions, besides advancing oral immunisation against infectious diseases. Knowledge of the various pathways induced by different microbial and environmental antigens will provide the potential to design immune modulation strategies for autoimmune diseases and inflammatory conditions of the bowel. Other potential applications include how microbes may modify enterocyte gene expression to favour the development of carcinoma, such as caused by Helicobacter pylori, or interact with receptors on the apical surface of M cells to breach the mucosal barrier, such as in the case of Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

Engagement with work

The Healthy Workplaces Project is a research grant initiated by Associate Professor Paula Brough, that aims to improve health, performance and management of ‘high-stress’ public service workers and has examined the issue of workplace burnout among police officers through an online questionnaire. Based on the results of 2,609 police officers’ responses, the three strongest predictors of work engagement are: ‘job dissatisfaction’, ‘turnover intentions’ and ‘general stress levels’. Excessive work pressure tends to lead to low job satisfaction and increased likelihood of officers disengaging themselves from their work (turning up late, increased absenteeism, not volunteering for other duties, becoming distant from colleagues and members of the public, etc.).

Although police work can be undoubtedly challenging, research shows that if officers have sufficient controllability of their job, and also receive a reasonable amount of support from their supervisors and colleagues, they will remain engaged with their work. The Healthy Workplaces Survey raises the question, “How can we increase the engagement of personnel in organisations through research?”

The project is developing the interventions which include leadership, workforce planning and conflict management and these interventions will be introduced to an experimental region of the Queensland Police Service from mid 2009. Further information about this project can be viewed at www.healthyworkplaces.com.au
Joint mobility program

This innovative joint mobility program takes a multilevel approach to developing capacity and resources for a global public health workforce. Through the exchange of students (40 EU/40 AUS) and staff (16 EU/16 AUS) and a comprehensive work and evaluation plan, an identified gap in global public health education is addressed. Student and faculty exchange will contribute to cultural understanding in the international context of the project, leading to a more comprehensive and inclusive global curriculum development process. Academic exchange and collaboration will facilitate broader and sustainable international university networks. This project will identify which elements of global public health – specifically in regard to human rights and social exclusion – are not addressed in existing public health education programs. Through international collaboration, three core international public health modules will be developed and evaluated as an outcome of this project; making a significant contribution to the global public health discipline and practice.

Ten $10,000 scholarships will be awarded to Griffith undergraduate/postgraduate public health domestic students in 2010 and first semester 2011. Scholarship applications will require students to demonstrate a clear motivation to travel in line with public health interests. While all European study programs will be delivered in English, successful applicants will be expected to develop functional language and a cultural understanding of the host country and act as ambassadors for Griffith University.

Three students are currently visiting Griffith University: Rikke Bach Jensen and Caroline Raben are from the University of Southern Denmark and Kirsten Nissen, who is enrolled in the Masters of Public Health Program at Logan, is visiting from Hamburg.

For information pertaining to these scholarships, please contact Kathleen Lilly on k.lilley@griffith.edu.au

Foundation Dean

Professor Judy Searle left Griffith University at the end of April to take up a position as Principal Medical Adviser, Workforce Education and Training, with the Department of Health and Ageing in Canberra. During her 5 year term as Foundation Dean and Head of School of Medicine, she made an outstanding contribution to the development and success of the new School at Griffith.

Professor Judy Searle was appointed as Foundation Dean for the School of Medicine in 2004, the first female medical Dean in Australia. Her expertise and experience in health extends over 20 years as a service provider (clinically active obstetrician), manager, leader, educator and researcher. She served on many key national and state health and education committees during her term as Foundation Dean.

Her research interests have included a 3 phase longitudinal cohort study examining the predictive factors that impact on medical graduates’ workforce decisions and ‘The Logan Study’ – a 25 year cohort study examining the social determinants of health in populations of South East Queensland.

She will continue her affiliation with Griffith through her ongoing research projects in the School of Medicine.

First dental clinic in Brewarrina

The opening of the long anticipated Brewarrina Dental Clinic took place in mid-February. Students performed their consultations on its first patients with flexibility and professionalism, despite the fact that only two surgeries were operating on the opening day. Rain earlier in the week delayed anticipated fitting and finishing of building jobs, but failed to dampen the spirits of patients and students who worked their way around each other, overcoming this slight setback, by seeing to all patients in a timely and efficient manner.

The first day saw 17 patients attend the clinic for treatment with a variety of presentations providing an educational cross section of treatment plans for the students to consider. Comments from patients included how wonderful it was to no longer have great distances to travel to see a dentist and on the professionalism of students during the consultation process. Overall, patients were most impressed by the level of service.

The Brewarrina community were most helpful in getting this project up and running to ensure the project coincided with Griffith University’s academic timetable.

The Brewarrina outreach project is funded through a Commonwealth Grant to Expand Rural Placements in the dental training program, and additional support from the Rio Tinto Aboriginal Fund, Greater Western Area Health Service, Ochre Health Group and Brewarrina Shire Council.
**Engaging the Asia-Pacific**

Third year medical student Barry Jackson was one of 37 medical students from Australia to attend the recent East Asian Medical Students’ Conference in Malaysia.

The conference brought together a total of 286 medical students around the theme *Engaging the Asia-Pacific Youth in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS*.

Mr Jackson said the five-day conference program included site visits to a number of organisations providing education, prevention, treatment and support programs to people affected by HIV/AIDS.

“The experience meshes well with my plans to do a five-week elective rotation in the Solomon Islands next year where I will also be working in the area of HIV/AIDS.”

The conference was told that increased awareness and education on HIV/AIDS issues was important for medical students. As future leaders of the healthcare industry, they are well placed to make a significant difference in reversing current disease trends and implementing better disease management.

While medical advances such as anti-retroviral treatments have decreased the mortality and morbidity associated with HIV/AIDS, for every two people starting their treatment, another five become newly infected.

Delegates committed to

- better educating themselves of the risks, trends, barriers to treatment and management of the disease, and to make positive steps to convey this information to the broader public
- getting involved in HIV/AIDS awareness activities such as hosting or attending an annual 'Red Party' or World AIDS Day events
- organising an international elective at a location with high prevalence of AIDS
- becoming familiar with the strategic directions and focus of state and national HIV/AIDS Strategic Plans
- doing what they can to eliminate any stigma associated with the disease.

Mr Jackson said the Australian delegation excelled in the academic competitions at the conference, achieving second place in both the paper and poster presentations.

**Winning Physique**

If determination and courage count for anything, Adam Kennedy is well on his way to becoming an Aussie bodybuilding champion.

Adam, a current Masters in Pharmacy student and junior bodybuilder, can already boast having won the NABBA Junior State and National titles, as well as the IFBB Junior State and National titles, both within 2007, and within four consecutive weeks. This is a remarkable feat given a serious setback on his climb to success when in December 2006 he suffered severe burns. Whilst cranking up the BBQ, the gas bottle exploded resulting in burns to the entire front half of his body. Fortunately for Adam he was able to recover within 3 months and in time to win those four consecutive titles, which is even more impressive under those extreme circumstances. In addition to those achievements, in 2008, he won the Queensland Australian bodybuilding championships back to back while working towards his Graduate Diploma in Pharmaceutical Science.

**Relationship sealed between PSA and NAPSA**

In order to strengthen the ongoing association between the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and the National Australian Pharmacy Students’ Association (NAPSA), a Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed. Mr Warwick Plunkett, PSA President and Ms Lisa Goldsmith, Griffith MPharm Student and President of NAPSA duly signed the MoU at the well attended Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference held in April. Mr Plunkett said assisting NAPSA Executive in implementing the smooth and efficient administration of the organisation, including the successful running of NAPSA conferences and events are the MoU’s main objectives. “This is a significant development in planning ahead for the future of pharmacy in this country and making the best possible opportunities available to pharmacists from their days as students through to their early career and ongoing development as pharmacists,” Mr Plunkett said.

**PSA National President Warwick Plunkett and NAPSA National President Lisa Goldsmith**

Barry Jackson (second left) with working group members
**NHMRC’s prestigious appointment**

Professor Newell Johnson from the School of Dentistry and Oral Health has been appointed to the prestigious National Health and Medical Research Council Academy 2009 to help with the NHMRC’s peer review processes.

**Combination therapy for OCD on trial**

Clinical psychologist Dr Lara Farrell has been awarded a grant from Australian Rotary Health to test the usefulness of a medication in difficult to treat obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The medication, a safe and low-dose antibiotic, is believed to help improve memory and learning. By administering the drug just before psychological therapy, patients may respond better to that therapy.

The study will test the effect of the drug in children and adolescents from 8 to 17 years of age who have not responded adequately to previous cognitive-behavioural treatment.

**US social work scholar visit**

Associate Professor Shari Munch from School of Social Work at Rutgers University New Jersey is visiting Griffith for 3 months.

Based at the new satellite office of the School of Human Services and Social Work, Shari’s clinical and research interests include perinatal health care and clinical social work (e.g., medically-complicated pregnancy, patient-provider relationship, gender-bias in women's health care, compassion fatigue). She has 25 years of clinical social work experience, and maintains a part-time private psychotherapy practice. Shari is with Griffith Health until June 1st.

**Dean’s Commendation**

The School of Pharmacy’s Satish Maganlal has been awarded a Dean’s Commendation in the Griffith Health Learning and Teaching Citations for 2008. He was honoured to receive the award in recognition of his work in the Professional Pharmacy Practice courses that aim to improve student communication skills in patient practitioner interactions.

One area of focus was the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) process; a validated assessment the School of Pharmacy utilises to assess clinical competence in all three Professional Pharmacy Practice courses. Standardised patients (SPs) are used in the OSCE process and Satish introduced a formal evaluation by the SP into the courses he taught. The SPs specifically evaluated the students communication and history taking skills against a set range of criteria; including the students’ attitude, body language, rapport, care, listening skills, manner, respect, questions asked, understanding shown and then finally whether the patient would be pleased to see him/her as his pharmacist in the future. The feedback provided an effective and meaningful contribution to ‘fitness for practice’ assessment and provided valuable additions to each student’s learning portfolio.

**Obsessive-compulsive disorder**

Obsessive-compulsive disorder affects almost 1 in 100 Australians and is characterised by repetitive thoughts and actions. Time-consuming rituals such as obsessive hand washing can interfere with normal daily activities and be distressing to those affected, their friends and families.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy is an effective, evidence-based treatment that helps people manage their condition.
Raising funds for heart research

The Mermaid Beach Rotary Art Show took place in early May with the goal of raising funds for two important medical organisations and worthy Gold Coast charities: the Heart Foundation Research Centre (HRFC), Griffith University and Cancer Council of Queensland. Funds were raised from the artists’ entry fees, a multi-prizes raffle and the majority, from the sale of the art. Half the proceeds from this year’s art show were kindly donated to HRFC.

Cardiovascular disease still remains the leading cause of premature death and loss of productive life in Australia, and is likely to remain so in coming decades as our population ages. This contribution goes a long way to assist HRFC to undertake and integrate high quality molecular, cellular and human research in order to improve our understanding of the development of cardio-respiratory diseases and to use this knowledge in developing new therapeutic approaches.

Mr Steve Paterson: Art show Coordinator, Brenda Tischendorf, Mr Rod Fry: President of the Rotary Club of Mermaid Beach, Professor John Headrick.

Dentistry equipment improves training

Griffith’s Centre for Medicine and Oral Health was pleased to receive a donation from Heine Australia for well needed medical equipment. The company donated 12 loupes which attach to dentist’s goggles, assisting with precision work. They not only improve students’ vision, but assist students’ posture by lessening the need to lean forward. The loupes are shared among Dentistry’s 43 final-year students and are used for most procedures, including fillings and root canals.

Pharmacy accreditation achievement

On 25 March, the Australian Pharmacy Council endorsed the recommendation of the Accreditation Committee that Griffith University articulated 3 +1.5 Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Master of Pharmacy (and Master of Pharmacy with Honours) degrees be granted Full Accreditation for a period of five years.

Professor Anut Itthagarun has been awarded for her outstanding contribution to the Australian Dental Journal. Since 2004, the Journal has given annual awards in recognition of the outstanding papers published in the Journal and this year selected Professor Itthagarun for her contribution to the Scientific Article category for 2008. Her award was formally presented at the Australian Dental Association Congress held from 12 –15 March 2009.

Dr Jing Sun was successful in gaining a Jackson Memorial Visiting Fellowship for Prof Jun Ma, Peking University, to visit the School from June to August 2009 for research planning and associated publication plans.

A/Prof Glen Shaw and Dr Mark Storrs each received a commendation and a small reward from the Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Student Outcomes) to acknowledge their high performance in teaching during 2008. The commendations were awarded to staff members who received student evaluations of their teaching in the top 20% of evaluations in two or more courses, either in the same semester or in consecutive semesters in 2008.

Social work at Griffith joined with the Australian Association of Social Workers Queensland branch to celebrate World Social Work Day on March 17th. The audience gathered at South bank campus to hear a panel of speakers including Griffith’s visiting scholar from University of British Columbia Prof Tim Stainton. The evening was chaired by Prof Lesley Chenoweth, School of Human Services and Social Work who is also convener of International Social Work Committee for the AASW. The theme for World Social Work day as celebrated by social workers from all around the world, was Social Work and Social Development – the agenda.

Congratulations to Dr Belinda Beck, who was recently appointed to Associate Professor in the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science.

www.griffith.edu.au/health
Health check

Funding and Conferences

PUBLICATIONS (continued)


FUNDING


Coleman EL, Hickman JJ, O’Moore-Sullivan TM, Palmer M. High attendance improves weight loss program outcomes but can we predict who will attend?, Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4–5 Dec. (Poster)


Davey J, Osborne M, Desbrow B, Leveritt M The Effect of a Slushed Ice Beverage on Thermoregulatory Responses to Exercise Induced Heat Stress: Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4–5 Dec 2008. (Poster)


Ehrlich C. Using specialised nurse educators to assist Practice Nurses bridge the divide between Primary and Acute Care. Presented at the 6th National General Practice Nurse Conference, Coffs Harbour, 26th November 2008.

CONFERENCES (continued)


Graer E, Davidson W, Palmer M. An evaluation of the effectiveness of a simple protein counter to improve protein intake in cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy., Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)

Hedges K, Ferguson M, Palmer M, Vivanti A. Impact of malnutrition on clinical outcomes and casemix based funding. Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)

Howell L, Scheelings P, Desbrow B. Consumer exposure to caffeine from commercial iced coffee: Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)


Kendall E. Trauma and Injury. Presented at the Australian Health and Medical Research Congress, Brisbane Convention Centre, Brisbane, 16th-21st November, 2008.


Macfarlane K, Carmel J. Fostering integrated practice in early years settings, as part of our ALTC Grant. Round Table held on the 19th and 20th February 2009. Video linked to the Geelong Campus of Deakin University.


Muller J, Vivanti A, Orazio L, Desbrow B. Body mass index and survival amongst prostate cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy., Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)

Palmer M, Capra S, Badke M, Banes S. The relationship between insulin resistance and waist circumference in obese adults seeking weight loss: Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)

Palmer MA, Capra S, Banes S (2008) To snack or not to snack: results from an eating frequency study. Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4 – 5 Dec (Presentation)

Palmer MA, Capra S, Banes S (2008) After 2 years, do obese adults change their usual eating frequency if you ask them to as part of a 6 month weight loss program? Nutrition Society of Australia Conference, 1 – 3 Dec, Adelaide (Presentation)


Stanley J, Peake J, Leveritt M. The Effect of an Ice-Slush Beverage on Thermoregulatory Responses During Recovery From Heat Strain and Subsequent Endurance Exercise Performance in a Hot Environment: Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec 2008. (Poster)


Vivanti A, McDonald C, Palmer M. Malnutrition in older people associated with the rate of hospital admission and the use of a nutrition screen in the emergency department (ED). Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)

Wong P, Barrett C, Grant G, Leveritt M, Desbrow B. Caffeine rates of appearance following consumption of common dietary sources., Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference, 4-5 Dec. (Poster)