Community pharmacies focus of major research

Two Griffith Health Institute projects exploring the role of community pharmacies for people with chronic health conditions and mental illness have secured $3.6 million of funding from the Department of Health and Ageing.

The funding, to be managed by the Pharmacy Guild, is part of the Federal Government’s Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement Research and Development Program.

Associate Professor Amanda Wheeler, from the Griffith Health Institute’s Population and Social Health Research Program will lead both teams of researchers who hope to increase the effectiveness of community pharmacies and medication services.

"Consumers have described the community pharmacy as a more relaxed environment where information about treatment and other services can be discussed," said Associate Professor Wheeler.

The first project will develop the skills and expertise of community pharmacy staff to enable them to become more involved in the area of mental illness.

"To achieve better outcomes for people affected by mental illness, health professionals need to provide collaborative and integrated care which supports the recovery process. The use of online educational training and assessment developed as a part of the mental health project will make this project particularly effective and innovative," she said.

The second project seeks to understand consumers’ experiences of chronic disease and preferences about how community pharmacies can assist them in the management of their condition.

“The burden of taking many medications is often imposed on people with little support and with little recognition that these medication regimens are demanding in time and effort. Most people with chronic conditions interact regularly with a pharmacy but little is known about how they see the role of the pharmacy in their care.”

The funding is a significant endorsement of Griffith Health group’s successful multi-disciplinary approach to health research and management. Both projects will be carried out in Queensland, northern NSW and Western Australia.
Editorial

Learning, teaching and research are the core activities of university life.

The contemporary university environment creates increasing pressure to market our product, submit successful research proposals to an increasing diversity of grant schemes, engage with industry and Government, undertake service commitments in the community, professions and the University as well as maintain a constant quality improvement cycle.

However, it is important to remember that the fundamental activities of a university have not changed since the first university opened its doors over 900 years ago.

That is why I’m particularly proud of the results gained by Griffith Health staff at the recent Excellence in Teaching and Vice Chancellor’s Awards.

In October Medical Science academic, Jessica Vanderlelie was awarded Vice Chancellor’s teacher of the year. At the same ceremony Drs Niri Nirthanan, Roselyn Rose’meyer, Natalie Colson, Helen Naug and casual lecturer Daniel Donne, all from the School of Medical Science were deserving Excellence in Teaching award winners. In addition, Dr Greg Redden from Physiotherapy and Exercise Science, Dr Mary Sidebotham from Nursing and Midwifery, Dr Stephen Larmar from Human Services and Social Work and Janine Chipperfield, who runs the Health Group’s Peer Assisted Study Sessions, also received awards. All our winners are congratulated for their contributions to the Health Group, students and their professions.

Over the last few years the School of Human Services and Social Work has been building a reputation as a leading school within the Human Services and Social Work professions. This was recently highlighted by the appointment of Professor Lesley Chenoweth and Associate Professor Donna McAuliffe to fellowship positions within the new Australian College of Social Work (see page 5).

The School of Human Services and Social Work also welcomed their new Head of School, Professor Patrick O’Leary. Professor O’Leary arrives after a strong academic and professional career in Europe detailed on page 12 of Health Check.

Research is the other major activity of a university and recent rounds of grant funding have put the Griffith Health Institute in a strong position to build on our excellent research reputation. Significant grants were awarded from the National Medical Health Research Council (NMHRC), the Australian Research Council (ARC), the ANZ Wicking Trust, the Australian Dental Foundation, and the Queensland Council for Social Service Innovation. Professor Amanda Wheeler from the Population and Social Research Foundation also secured grants of over $3.5 million for research with Community Pharmacies (page 1).

In December Griffith Health Institute will be hosting the Health and Medical Research Conference at Sea World Resort on the Gold Coast. This is the largest event of the year for Griffith Health Institute featuring over 90 presentations on all aspects of health research as well as annual meetings of our research centres and will be opened by Chair of the Griffith Health Institute Development Board, Professor Clive Palmer. It is a wonderful occasion in which our finest minds gather to discuss, debate and form ideas on the future of health research and interventions.

As we reflect on 2011, the Faculty should be proud of its achievements. I look forward to 2012 and the wonderful contributions Health Group staff and students will again make to the global community. My very best wishes for the Summer break and keep safe.

Pro Vice Chancellor (Health)
Professor Allan Cripps

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Griffith health tops teaching awards

Griffith Health has been recognised as an elite teaching faculty at the 2011 Griffith University Excellence in Teaching Awards. Medical Science won awards in five of the six open categories and lecturer Dr Jessica Vanderlelie won the Vice Chancellor’s award for the University’s teacher of the year.

Dean of Learning & Teaching Professor Nick Buys was elated by the result and said it reflected Griffith Health’s emphasis on promoting quality learning and teaching outcomes.

“Our excellence in teaching is critical in building the foundation for future practitioners in the area of health care practice” said Professor Buys.

“That is why as a leading health education institution we have to be always at the top of our game. It’s great to see the university recognise this.” The awards were separated into two general categories, group-based awards and open awards.

Dr Roselyn Rose’meyer and Dr Jessica Vanderlelie from the School of Medical Science were joint winners of the “Health Group Award”.

In the open categories Daniel Donner from the School of Medical Science was awarded the “Casual Academic Staff” award and Dr Stephen Larmar (School of Human Services and Social Work) continued his impressive run of teaching awards in the “First year advisor” category.

Dr Greg Reddan (Physiotherapy and Exercise Science) stepped off his surf ski long enough to win the “Work Integrated Learning” award, Dr Natalie Colson (Medical Science) won the “Teaching Large Classes” award and Dr Mary Sidebotham (Nursing and Midwifery) was highly commended in the “Early Career” section.

The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) run by Janine Chipperfield took out the “Programs and Teams that Enhance Learning” award.

Gala award evenings were held at Griffith University’s South Bank and Gold Coast campuses in late October and early November.
Billion-dollar saving beckons from IV drip research

A Griffith Health Institute study into the use of intravenous (IV) drips in intensive care units and hospital wards has the potential to save the Australian economy $1 billion each year.

Professor Claire Rickard, a researcher with Griffith University’s Research Centre for Clinical and Community Practice Innovation, is leading a major trial involving 6500 patients across five Queensland hospitals.

IV tubing is used to give life-saving fluids and medicine to hospital patients via IV drips in a major vein or to monitor blood pressure in an artery.

Intravascular catheters or ‘IV drips’ are the most common invasive medical device, with approximately 15 million IV drips inserted in Australia each year.

Infections associated with IV catheters are a costly and potentially deadly outcome for patients with about 3500 such deaths occurring each year in Australia, more than the national road toll.

“The current practice of routine tubing changes every three to four days is not backed by evidence and costs Australia about $1 billion annually,” Professor Rickard said.

The National Health and Medical Research Council has provided $1.56 million for Professor Rickard’s latest research project, known as the RSVP trial, which will compare four and seven day IV tubing changes.

Her team will study the infection and cost benefits of less frequent changes of IV tubing during a three-year study at the Gold Coast, Prince Charles, Princess Alexandra, Royal Brisbane and Women’s, and Royal Children’s Hospitals.

“Our previous smaller scale trial found large cost savings and no threat to patient safety when tubing was changed less often.

“In addition, nurses felt it freed up a lot of their time to spend on other patient care, and they thought it made a lot of sense not to interfere with sterile infusion tubing if they didn’t need to.”

Professor Rickard said the benefits were projected to save two million nursing hours per year. Environmental benefits are also expected from lower use of disposable medical equipment.

Prestigious award for health planning tool

A groundbreaking health planning project, led by Griffith University, has won a Queensland Spatial Excellence Award in the Research and Innovation Category.

Griffith Health Institute researchers collaborated with the Logan Beaudesert Health Coalition and spatial technology leader Spatial Vision to develop the Health Decision Support System (HDSS).

Funded by an Australian Research Council grant, Queensland Health and Logan City Council, the geographical information system (GIS) has been designed specifically to inform health planners about building and promoting health and preventing chronic disease.

Professor Elizabeth Kendall who led the three-year project from Griffith’s Logan campus said the award recognised the important and hard work ongoing in Queensland.

“It has been a real pleasure getting this project off the ground. The data available up to now has been largely based on disease rates and hospital beds.

“But planners had little access to data that addressed the broad determinants of health, such as the environment, financial resources or community assets.”

The benefits of the HDSS tool reach beyond the healthcare system into community service. The tool includes service area computation, health risk hot spot identification and proximity analysis.

Griffith University’s research fellow on the project Ori Gudes was joined by Malcolm Wolski (Griffith University e-research computing), Natalie Kent (Logan-Beaudesert Health Coalition) and Ian Miller (Spatial Vision) at the presentation ceremony at Victoria Park Golf Course in Brisbane.

The highly competitive Research and Innovation Category recognised contributions to spatial science research and technical innovation.

The HDSS is currently being used by Logan-Beaudesert Health Coalition stakeholders to make decisions on how health funding is spent in the region to promote better health and build capacity to address chronic disease.
School of Human Services and Social Work recognised amongst Australia’s best

The newly-established Australian College of Social Work (ACSW) has recognised Griffith University’s School of Human Services and Social Work as one of the nation’s leading institutions in the field with the appointment of two Logan-based academics as Inaugural Fellows.

Professor Lesley Chenoweth was appointed a Foundation Fellow of the College while Associate Professor Donna McAuliffe was made an Inaugural Fellow fellow.

Foundation Fellows are permanent positions concerned with creating and overseeing the College’s governance structures; Inaugural Fellows are three year appointees expected to design programs which will shape the different areas of the College.

Associate Professor McAuliffe, whose background is in ethics, will be part of the team establishing the research and education structure of the College. She expects the fellowship will open Griffith University students to the absolute latest in practical and theoretical developments.

“It really puts the School of Human Services and Social Work at the forefront of contemporary theory and practice,” Associate Professor McAuliffe said.

“Our students will have the most up-to-date knowledge of codes of practice and ethics, which really puts the school in the know.

“In addition, our students will be able to trial some of the techniques and codes before they hit the street, meaning they will carry a working knowledge of the latest ideas into their professional practice,” she said.

New Head of School of Human Services and Social Work, Professor Patrick O’Leary was keen to promote the fellowships and the work of two of the School’s leading academics.

“This is a big deal. Future students will attend Griffith University knowing they will graduate at the leading edge of their profession, from one of the finest schools in Australia.”

Nurse practitioners a success in community pharmacies

Nurse practitioners based in community pharmacies have the potential for more front-line roles in primary care, research by Griffith and Curtin University has found.

The independently funded research, undertaken by lecturer Sara McMillan of Griffith University and Associate Professor Lynn Emmerton of Curtin University explored the roles of nurse practitioners who work in community pharmacies in Western Australia.

Community pharmacies are a relatively new site for nurse practitioner clinics, which have traditionally operated in hospitals and, more recently, local general practitioner (GP) clinics.

Nurse practitioners have at least three years’ post-university nursing experience and a Masters (Nurse Practitioner) degree. They can perform some roles of a GP, including ordering blood tests and X-rays and writing prescriptions for a wide range of medicines. They can also manage immunisations, wound dressings and suture and staple removals.

The services are covered by Medicare and many are bulk-billed.

Ms McMillan explained that nurse practitioners offered another convenient healthcare option to people.

“People now have a choice whether they consult their regular doctor or a pharmacy-based nurse practitioner,” Ms McMillan said.

“Importantly, the nurse practitioners are trained to recognise when they are outside their limits of expertise, and when necessary, can easily refer people to their regular doctor or write a referral to a specialist.”

Curtin University Associate Professor Emmerton said interviews with people who had consulted an ‘in-store’ nurse practitioner revealed they appreciated the convenience of a ‘walk-in’ service at their local pharmacy.

Many rural, regional and even some metropolitan areas do not have access to a GP and are looking for access to timely and affordable healthcare.
Farmer suicide research seeks to answer the ‘why’ question

The reasons behind the high rates of suicide among Australian farmers will be investigated by the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP).

"Farming is a physically stressful job with a high rate of injury," researcher Dr Allison Milner says.

"There are also social stresses involved. It’s not a job that someone can easily get away from as most farmers live and work on the farm, so there is often an overspill between work life and home life."

Researchers from AISRAP will team up with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health NSW, which is aligned with the University of Newcastle, for the three-year study.

Dr Milner said the research will analyse environmental and occupational factors affecting where farmers live, as well as individual level factors such as mental illness and distressing life events as precipitating factors for suicide.

Financial stress, global environmental changes and how mining-related activities like coal seam gas exploration affect life in the agricultural sector will also be studied.

"There appears to be an attitude among farmers not to seek help because of a perceived stigma associated with looking for help."

"We will investigate the attitudes of farmers towards suicide and towards seeking help. We will look at what help is appropriate to the community and whether it is accessible."

The research project is funded by the Australian Research Council and the work will be carried out in collaboration with industry partners Queensland Health, Office of the State Coroner (Queensland), Department of Communities (Queensland), Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health Queensland, Hunter New England Local Health Network and New England Division of General Practice.

‘Clever’ cancer cells on researchers’ radar

Griffith Health Institute (GHI) researchers are targeting cancer cells using a selective method that has potentially huge ramifications in the field of cancer biology. The process involves a key translational spin.

An innovative chemical modification of an anti-cancer compound gives researchers the potential to seek out and kill cancer cells only, with little or no harm to normal, non-malignant cells.

Professor Jiri Neuzil from the School of Medical Science and GHI is leading a research team that has developed anti-cancer agents derived from Vitamin E (VE), with the capacity to induce programmed cell death, a process known as apoptosis.

"This (chemical modification) potentially represents a new paradigm in efficient anti-cancer therapy. It has a very solid scientific basis because it sends the compounds where they matter most," Professor Neuzil said.

"Thus, the process is much more efficient when the relevant drugs are targeted to mitochondria."

Mitochondria are organelles inside cells that contain their own DNA and supply the cells with energy, but also contain proteins needed to kill cells through programmed cell death.

The process has been successfully tested on mice, focusing on breast and colorectal tumours.

"The new compounds don’t harm good cells. And they’re more efficient than (parental) compounds that don’t target mitochondria directly.

"Their potential is huge. We now want to test these agents in other types of tumours, preferably those that are hard to treat."

Using this innovative approach, Professor Neuzil is attempting to ‘outwit’ cancer cells he describes as ‘bloody clever’. 
Unique interactive therapy reduces risk of child abuse

The coercive, stressful family environment which leads to incidents of child abuse in the home is being addressed through a hi-tech interactive therapy program.

Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is central to a Griffith Health Institute trial involving 150 Queensland mothers and their children.

The specially-adapted early intervention program significantly reduces risk factors associated with child abuse by coaching parents to have more positive interaction with their children.

Families known to child protection services and identified as vulnerable to child abuse were surveyed for the research, which was led by Dr Rae Thomas and Professor Melanie Zimmer-Gembeck from Griffith Health Institute’s Behavioural Basis of Health program.

It found increased parent sensitivity, better behaved children and lower child abuse potential among families who received the therapy.

A unique part of the therapy involved mother and child in practice sessions where mum was offered guidance by a PCIT therapist using a bug-in-the-ear device. The therapist observed real-time interaction between the mother and child from behind a two-way mirror.

Half of the participants received PCIT while the second half (control group) was placed on a 12-week waiting list and were contacted weekly to discuss concerns. This group was offered PCIT at the end of the 12-week period.

“With the first group there were significant reductions in the potential for child abuse to occur and this ultimately resulted in fewer notifications to child protection services compared with the families on the waiting list,” Dr Thomas said.

Previous research has shown coercive parenting, a lack of positive parent-child interactions and low levels of parental warmth to be key risk factors for child abuse.

3D animated story-telling to journey inside the human body

Medical students at Griffith University are set to get a new tool to help them learn how the human body functions.

Griffith has teamed up with Gold Coast-based animation company 3Dme to produce a series of educational 3D movies that can boost learning outcomes for students.

The movies, developed by Griffith Enterprise with Griffith Health, also have the potential to improve teaching aids for education providers around the world.

Professor Lewis Adams from Griffith University’s School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science played a key role in the production of the first in the series, an animated insight into how oxygen gets to the lungs and is absorbed by body tissue.

The 3D movie is expected to lead to better learning outcomes for students and to improve teaching aids for education providers across the world.

Griffith Enterprise Director Nicholas Mathiou said Griffith University was constantly developing novel and innovative ways to deliver its learning and teaching content to students and the broader community.

“Developing high quality e-learning content provides unmatched visual stimulation in the classroom and allows students to access content online to study,” he said.

Deputy Director, Dr Jens Tampe added the project will allow students to take a first-hand look and explore some of the basic biological processes that take place inside the human body.

A sample of the videos can be viewed at www.YouTube.com/3dmecreativestudio and the first instalment is also available for download from the Apple App Store.
Thanksgiving service marks outstanding human generosity

In a solemn but beautiful service at the Gold Coast Arts Centre, Griffith Health gave thanks to the families of the region whose deceased loved ones chose to donate their bodies to the University's Body Bequest Program.

The program provides anatomy students with the essential opportunity to study the human body.

Final year medicine student Nick Cocks had the honour of carrying the Book of Remembrance at the third annual Griffith University Thanks Giving service, and the occasion was not lost on him.

“I've been able to learn so well because of those who have donated their bodies,” he said.

The Book of Remembrance contains the names of 75 people who have bequeathed their bodies to Griffith University for anatomy teaching and research since the first in 2006.

Nick and his peers have already reaped vital education benefits from the body donation program, and he feels he has a head start toward a career in surgery.

“It's hard to know from a textbook how thick skin is or how deep a layer of tissue is but having this kind of hands-on experience is so important. I'm now confident assisting in surgery because of my laboratory experiences with real humans.

“I am eternally grateful to the people who have donated their bodies. Hopefully my work in the future can do justice to their extraordinary and generous decisions.”

Head of the Discipline of Anatomy, Professor Mark Forwood said the program supports the education of health students in disciplines such as medicine, medical science, pharmacy, physiotherapy, exercise science, dentistry and oral health.

Over 1000 Griffith University first year students use the anatomy facility every year.

Griffith Health claims two places in Three Minute Thesis final

Griffith University Nursing PhD student Debbie Massey won Griffith University’s Three Minute Thesis Competition held in September at the South Bank campus.

Debbie, one of 12 contestants, went on to represent the University in the Australia/New Zealand competition in Western Australia, but was knocked out before the final round.

“It's a great achievement for nursing, which can sometimes be overlooked as a research discipline,” Debbie said.

“The competition has been great in terms of consolidating and conceptualising my research, and has helped improve my presentation and communication skills.”

Her research could reduce the number of negative events, and even deaths, in hospital patients that result from a failure to alert medical emergency teams to a problem in a ward.

Medical Emergency teams effectively bring Intensive Care Unit specialist doctors, nurses and equipment to a ward patient who is in difficulty, increasing the patient’s chance of survival, Debbie said.

Public Health PhD student Lauren Ball was the runner-up in the Griffith University final.

Lauren’s research looks into the nutritional advice that General Practitioners (GPs) provide to patients, and aims to clarify and enhance the information given.

Lauren said the Three Minute Thesis competition was innovative and helped her to formulate her research topic in a way that was coherent and concise.

“All of the finalists were of an extremely high quality,” she said.

The Three Minute Thesis competition aims to improve communication skills among research students.
Royal reward for Dentistry legend

Foundation Dean of Griffith University’s School of Dentistry and Oral Health, Professor of Dental Research and Emeritus Professor of Oral Health at Kings College, Newell Johnson has been made a Companion of the Order of St George and St Michael (CMG).

The academic with honorary chairs in South Africa, Kenya, the West Indies and India was presented with his award by HRH Prince Charles at a ceremony at Buckingham Palace on the 26 October.

Ordinarily the ceremony would be performed by the Queen but she was in Brisbane at the time.

The order is based at St Paul’s Cathedral and was established to recognise extraordinary service in foreign (to England) countries. Back at the Gold Coast Professor Johnson was delighted with his “gong” though keen to move the conversation on.

Given the chance to explain his success he is matter of fact.

“It’s quite unusual for people in academia to be invited into an order of chivalry. I suppose it comes from the fact I’ve spent 50 years promoting oral health as part of general health all over the world,” he said.

“My experience is unusually broad, it would probably be very difficult to establish a career in the way I have. These days you have to specialise much earlier and more narrowly.”

Professor Johnson has maintained a long-term focus on oral, neck and head cancers as well as Epidemiology, Molecular Biology and the effects on oral health of HIV diseases.

Born and educated in Melbourne, Professor Johnson spent 42 years of his professional life based in the UK mostly with Kings College, but has also travelled the world researching and teaching in developing countries and contributing to health policy.

He currently leads a taskforce for policy formation at the International Association for Dental Research.

In 2005 Professor Johnson came out of retirement in England to travel home to Australia and re-establish himself on the Gold Coast because he “thought it would be fun to start up a dental school.” Clearly time has not dimmed his energy or enthusiasm for his vocation.

“It’s (dentistry) just a marvellous mixture of biological, behavioural and physical science, endlessly fascinating,” he said before heading to Sri Lanka.

Health Excellence awards

Unearthing and rewarding high achievers across the Health Group is becoming something of a passion for Pro Vice Chancellor, Professor Allan Cripps.

The September Health Excellence Awards went to two Public Health professors and an administrator for Pharmacy.

Professors Don Stewart and Ross Sadler from the School of Public Health were awarded for their hard work for the school and students.

Professor Sadler is an environmental scientist, who has worked closely with high schools on the Gold Coast, engaging with students who are considering careers in the field and education at Griffith University.

He has established a foundation program to facilitate this process.

Professor Stewart has been working at the other end of the student population, forging greater links with higher degree research students and creating opportunities for student collaboration.

Gillian Salinos is an administrator from the Pharmacy School awarded for her fantastic work and dedication to the staff and students, which Health Check is told, literally keeps the school running.

In October six staff members from the School of Medical Science received awards after the School dominated in the Excellence in Teaching awards at the end of October.

Drs Niru Nirthanan, Roselyn Rose’meyer, Jessica Vanderlelie, Natalie Colson and Helen Naug as well as casual lecturer Daniel Donner were deserving winners from a school which has placed a premium on teaching and the learning experience.

Professor Lesley Chenoweth was another October winner, recognised for her excellence in the School of Human Services and Social Work and outstanding professional reputation, which has resulted in her becoming a Foundation Fellow of the Australian College of Social Work.
Breathing new life into a labour of love

As pioneers of their profession, their lives have been inextricably linked for a generation.

As mothers, the lives of Jenny Gamble and Jennifer Fenwick are similarly intertwined. Jenny was Jennifer’s midwife when she gave birth to son Christopher, before their roles were reversed for the birth of Jenny’s daughter Nicole.

Now the Griffith Health Institute Researchers are together again at the hub of one of Australia’s leading midwifery programs and their work has received a major boost with National Health and Medical Research Council funding worth more than $470,000 to extend research into fear of childbirth and the preference for caesarean sections.

Jenny Gamble was promoted to Professor of Midwifery at Griffith University earlier this year. The subsequent appointment of Professor Fenwick sets Griffith University out on its own with the only professors of midwifery to be appointed in Queensland.

“There are no other professors of midwifery in Queensland to date so in that sense Griffith significantly outs Tristan the field in investment in midwifery,” Professor Gamble says.

Professor Fenwick’s joint appointment to Griffith University and the Gold Coast Health Service District also signals another significant step forward.

“This appointment presents great opportunities as the Gold Coast Hospital transitions to the new Gold Coast University Hospital during the next year or two,” she said. “We already have some exciting research projects underway including investigating the retention of midwives, improving care for women experiencing a caesarean section, and determining the health needs of extremely overweight pregnant women.

“The transition to the new facility will allow us to build and vary our research.”

The $1.76 billion Gold Coast University Hospital and Griffith Health Centre are currently under construction.

Robotic revolution for dementia patients

Treatment of dementia patients could be in line for a robotic revolution, in the wake of an international research project led by the Griffith Health Institute’s Professor Wendy Moyle.

The study’s success has prompted Professor Moyle, Director of the Research Centre for Clinical and Community Practice Innovation (RCCPPI), to investigate if robotic seals can become a cost-effective fixture in Australian nursing homes.

Dementia residents in Queensland responded positively to contact with the robots during a study of 18 residents, behaving less anxiously and with brighter dispositions.

“They were also less likely to wander off,” Professor Moyle said.

The seal robot can respond to touch and temperature. It also learns its name, responds to voice and sound and even learns to react to words its owner uses frequently.

It can show emotions such as surprise, happiness and anger and will cry if it is not getting much petting time. It produces sounds similar to a real baby seal and is active during the day and asleep at night.

“Our research compared the effects of the robot and participation in a reading group in terms of social engagement, communication and quality of life in people living with moderate to severe dementia in a residential care setting. It also looked at changes in participants’ emotional state,” Professor Moyle said.

“In the past researchers have found that communication with animals can have a positive effect on older people, by increasing their social behaviour and verbal interaction, fostering the building of relationships through interaction with others, and decreasing feelings of loneliness.”

The robot which resembles a furry, white, cuddly toy was christened Millie during the Queensland study. It was initially used for working with young children with disabilities.
Nursing research boosted by mentorship

When Laura Pfundt’s father was diagnosed with cancer last year, the Griffith University nursing student took a different interest in treatment. A third-year research project, involving a systematic review of literature on the comfort and self-esteem of cancer patients, was the academic upshot. Her refreshing findings have been as interesting and noteworthy as the mentorship process which brought her to that point. Patients receiving radiotherapy to the breast and armpit area are often advised not to use deodorant because its aluminium content might interfere with their treatment. It is a practice that leaves people who feel terrible also feeling socially awkward. Laura’s review of the literature discovered natural deodorants are entirely safe for patients undergoing this treatment.

For her review of the literature, she worked with mentor Raymond Chan, a researcher who specialises in evidence-based nursing practice at the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital and an adjunct staff member of the Griffith Health Institute. Research internships had previously been unpopular with students who couldn’t see the relationship between learning results and career paths. The School sought to address this through the Griffith Industry Mentoring Program, focusing on short-term, intense mentorships, rather than generic internships. “I wanted it to fulfil her expectations,” Mr Chan said. “Not many other unis do this and I wanted Laura to see how research affects clinical practice.” The mentorship provided intense, practical training in how to carry out research. “I wasn’t being assessed or judged so the pressure was off. You learn more when the pressure’s off,” said Laura whose father is doing well.

Pharmacy students worth their weight in denarii

Two Griffith University Pharmacy students attracted significant attention when they took out second prize at the recent International Conference for Pharmacy History in Germany. Lyndsee Baumann-Birkbeck and Gemma Hack produced a poster on reproductive medicines in Greek and Roman antiquity and were fêted for not only its content, but the fact two young women from Australia were so interested in a field Europeans see as their own, but in steady decline. The Gold Coast students’ supervisor Denise Hope, herself a pharmacist and archaeologist, believed all these elements went toward the result. “Pharmaceutical history is a dying field, which is why the Germans were so excited. Their pharmaceutical history goes back thousands of years,” Ms Hope said. Women have been trying to control their fertility for as long as they’ve been having babies, so Lyndsee and Gemma had no shortage of material by the time the Greeks started writing it down. “I was amazed at how many recipes there were in Ancient Greek literature,” said Gemma. “The books we used were an amazing source full of information and it is crazy to think about all of the other potential recipes used that weren’t written down.” Both students completed their Masters of Pharmacy in July and are hoping pharmacy students take greater interest in the history of the field. “That may not necessarily be pharmacy history, but it demonstrates that pharmacy does not have to be just about dispensing and counselling,” said Lyndsee. According to the poster Silphium (a fennel extract) was “worth its weight in denarii” (gold coins) and because of its shape may have been the origin of the association of the heart shape with love.
Health check

International partnerships blossoming

Broadening international networks for quality research, academic and student experiences is a core part of Griffith Health’s development.

Recent trips to Canada and Singapore by Dean (Academic) Professor Debra Henly and Executive Officer Peter Westwood have achieved those ends with Professor Henly doing a whistle-stop tour of Canadian universities in October, following Peter Westwood’s trip to Singapore in September.

The same month Vice Chancellor Professor Ian O’Connor and a Psychology delegation led by Professor David Shum visited the Institute for Psychology in Beijing.

The main purpose of the Chinese visit was to strengthen the existing collaboration between the two institutes and to explore further research possibilities at different levels.

The success of the Canadian tour saw students enthusiastically completing applications from universities such as Simon Fraser in Vancouver, McGill in Montreal and Ryerson in Toronto before the month had ended.

“We’ve signed up over 30 applicants to our programs already, so we believe the relationships we’re developing in Canada will deliver deep and long-term results for Griffith Health,” Professor Henly said.

“I was really impressed with the collaborative spirit of the Canadian academics and the campuses are absolutely beautiful.

“We’ve also got considerable interest from the universities in future student and academic exchanges, especially Indigenous exchanges,” she said.

Professor Henly delivered seminars at the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University (Vancouver), Ryerson University and the University of Calgary.

Vice Chancellor O’Connor also signed MOU’s with a number of Canadian community colleges to promote future student and staff exchanges.

Peter Westwood’s tour took him to Singapore where particular interest has been shown in Griffith University’s Biomedical Science, Physiotherapy and Human Services and Social Work programs.

New Head of School for Human Services and Social Work

He’s helped refugees in Darfur and southern Lebanon, reviewed post tsunami conditions in Sri Lanka, worked with young earthquake victims in Pakistan and he’s now the new head of the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University.

Professor Patrick O’Leary’s social work career has thrived along the extremes of human existence, where the safety of the most vulnerable often collides with the most desperate of circumstances.

His research into the long-term effects of child sexual abuse, especially on men, has been widely published.

Professor O’Leary’s career began at Flinders University in Adelaide where he completed his PhD, in 2002, before moving to the University of South Australia, eventually becoming an Associate Professor.

In 2007 he moved to the University of Bath in the UK, where he worked with Swiss-based NGO Terres des Hommes (Land of Men) and their Lausanne Foundation specialising in relief for children.

Most recently he was the Director of International Child Well Being Research Centre and Head of the Division of Social Work Studies at the University of Southampton in the UK.

He will maintain a professorial post with the University of Southampton helping Griffith University build its international collaborations.

He is excited and impressed with Griffith’s programs and the depth of experience and leadership within the staff.

“Child protection and community development are big things at Griffith University and they have some great academics in the School of Human Services and Social Work. The School’s commitment to Indigenous communities is something I’m also really looking to re-engage in.

“We are creating better networks through Asia, especially in China where the government is looking to train 3 million social workers in the next ten years,” he said.

Professor O’Leary is based at Griffith University’s Logan campus.
Nursing colloquium

Griffith University Nursing students about to begin their clinical rounds were farewelled with a colloquium at the Gold Coast campus in October.

Presenting the students with their portfolios, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Professor Elaine Duffy reminded the students of responsibilities and privileges of becoming a registered nurse.

“People have expectations of registered nurses, you are expected to know everything,” Professor Duffy said.

Nursing is a passport to the world, an art and a science. It is the art of caring and the science of your practice.”

Clearly excited and nervous about moving on from study and into practical work the future nurses were recognised with awards for outstanding academic, clinical and community work.

The value of postgraduate study was highlighted by all speakers, who emphasised the need for nurses to embrace life-long learning as part of their chosen profession.

Program Convenor Dr Francis Lin reminded the students “nursing is a job where you need to study all your life.”

Deputy Head of School Dr Louise Ward emphasised the value of the profession’s self development potential.

“Nursing will honour your individual uniqueness,” said Dr Ward.

“Grow your degree, it’s a wonderful journey. Remember to always nurse like you’re nursing a loved one.”

Students next embarked on an eight week clinical placement (mostly around the Gold Coast) before graduation.

Academics join international journals

Two Griffith Health academics have been appointed to editorial boards of prestigious international journals in their fields.

Dr Mark Boschen from the School of Applied Psychology was appointed to the Editorial Board of the Journal of Behaviour Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry (JBTEP) and Associate Professor Rod Barrett from Physiotherapy and Exercise Science has been appointed to the board of the Journal of Applied Biomechanics (JAB).

JBTEP is an influential journal focusing on experimental psychopathology, including examination of basic cognitive and psychological processes in explaining the causes of psychological disorders.

The journal publishes research using experimental methods and represents another feather in the cap of a School quickly becoming one of Australia’s elite institutions for the study of Psychology.

“The journal has a long history and deep connection to a community of researchers who have been doing pioneering work in the area. It’s a great honour to be involved in its production,” said Dr Boschen.

JBTEP was founded by South African born Dr Joseph Wolpe, a pioneer in the development of behavioural treatment methods for anxiety and phobias at Temple University in the USA, and has been in continuous publication since 1970.

JAB publishes papers on applied aspects human biomechanics in sport, exercise and rehabilitation.

“The applied focus of JAB is aligned with my own approach to research which involves using innovative biomechanical approaches to address issues of importance to human health”, Associate Professor Barrett said.

“It’s a tremendous honour to be appointed and a great opportunity to contribute to the discipline.”

Associate Professor Barrett’s current research spans the areas of falls prevention in older adults, hip osteoarthritis and muscle and tendon pathology.
**Hip osteoarthritis**

The chronic condition hip osteoarthritis (OA) is common in the ageing population and its only cure is a hip replacement. Griffith University researchers are looking for research subjects to gain a better understanding of the condition's progression and find a better solution.

The University’s Musculoskeletal Research Program, led by Maria Constantinou, is investigating the relationships between muscle function, bone health, joint cartilage, movement, and walking dysfunction in hip osteoarthritis in order to identify risk factors for progression of the condition.

“If we can identify risks contributing to progression of hip OA we can devise management plans to minimise these risks. Hopefully we can then slow down the progression of the disease and delay the need for hip replacement surgery,” Ms Constantinou said.

The study is seeking volunteers over the age of 45 with pain in one hip of more than 3 months or volunteers without any pain or history of major trauma or surgery in their lower limbs to participate.

All volunteers will receive a free X-ray, bone mineral density and MRI scans, a blood test and will have their strength and walking pattern analysed at the Griffith University Biomechanics Laboratory. Anyone interested in participating or finding more information please contact Maria Constantinou at m.constantinou@griffith.edu.au.

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**Acupuncture for Hay Fever sufferers?**

When people can’t sleep, they can’t concentrate, when they can’t concentrate they can’t learn and people with hay fever allergies get less sleep than those who don’t.

Recent studies in Europe have found allergic rhinitis (hay fever) can affect sleep causing inattention and mood disturbances contributing to reduced school and exam performance.

Griffith Health Institute scientists are testing a new acupuncture treatment which, if successful, may bring relief to allergy sufferers.

They are seeking people on the Gold Coast, aged between 18 and 45 to sign up for the trial and help make a difference to the lives of allergy sufferers.

All participants should have a two-year history of moderate to severe hay fever.

The 13-week trial is being led by Associate Professor Peter Smith and PhD student John McDonald from the School of Medicine at Griffith University.

Participants in the Griffith study will be asked to complete a daily symptom and medication diary for their hay fever, and a rhinitis quality of life questionnaire on three occasions during their ongoing assessment at a Gold Coast allergy clinic.

To inquire about taking part in the study please contact the Study Administration Centre at hayfever@griffith.edu.au.
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**ANZ Wicking Trust**


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