NURSING AND MIDWIFERY IN LAOS
Clinical placement experience lifts capacities and horizons.

GRIFFITH HIGH HEELS CIRCLE THE GLOBE
Gold Coast research stuns the world by proving the obvious.

FACING FEAR AND ANXIETY
Psychology goes mobile with new smartphone App.

The Brain Issue
The most complicated 1.3 kilograms known to humanity
WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR AND A NEW LOOK HEALTH CHECK.

Each issue of Health Check will also now centre its content around a theme that profiles some activity within the Health Group. The first issue will feature the brain or as Dr Trevor Hine from Applied Psychology calls it, “the most complicated 1.3 litres of space known to humanity”.

A new year is also a time when we welcome our new staff and students to Griffith University. This is a time of significant development for the Health Group, particularly at the Gold Coast campus. The new Griffith Health Centre is starting to take shape alongside the new Gold Coast University Hospital. Together they will be the key components of the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct.

This year Griffith Health will launch two new academic programs - the Master of Speech Pathology and a Graduate Diploma of Exercise Science. I’d like to take this opportunity to wish Associate Professor Libby Cardell and Dr Surendran Sabapathy all the best in directing their new programs.

Another new initiative being expanded is Griffith University’s development of rural health on the Darling Downs. The Health Group will soon build significant accommodation and teaching facilities in Kingaroy, Warwick and Stanthorpe in collaboration with Queensland Health and Queensland Rural Medical Education to support more students undertaking rural placements.

This investment will not only create improved facilities for the local communities, but opportunities for our rural students to undertake placements close to home and encourage more people from those communities to come to Griffith University. I’d like to acknowledge the significant support of the Federal Government’s Increased Clinical Training Capacity Program in funding this initiative.

Many staff have been finalising funding and grant applications over the last few months, which will hopefully form the financial backbone to further research programs within the University. These applications can sometimes be extremely time-consuming and stressful, but well-funded research is the lifeblood of the Health Group so staff efforts are acknowledged and very much appreciated. I wish all staff every success with the applications for this round.

The summer semester break is also a time when many researchers take advantage of the student holidays to focus on their research. The quality of the research being undertaken across all schools and institutes within the Health Group is constantly improving. This is exemplified through the work presented at December’s Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference.

Cross-disciplinary research projects and partnerships are an important feature of the new research paradigm and it is pleasing to see these projects producing such positive results. A number of these projects feature in this edition of Health Check. I was particularly interested to read about Associate Professor Alison Waters’ work on child phobias with Virginia Tech, Dr Hine’s collaboration with Oxford University on his Brain Aid project and our Public Health collaboration with Peking Health Science Centre.

Griffith University is already regarded as being among the top 10 universities for research in Australia and I am optimistic such collaborations will see this ranking rise in the coming years.

It’s already been a big start to a big year!!

Pro Vice Chancellor (Health) 
Professor Allan Cripps

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S Y M P O S I U M

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Migraine research changing lives

Tackling our children’s deepest fears

Digital neuroanatomy course

The diary in your head

Getting to the heart of the mood matter
The School of Nursing and Midwifery has recently returned from clinical placement experience in Northern Laos as part of a partnership between the school and the Seuang River Valley Community Development Project.

Midwifery lecturer Jane Menke and third-year student Coral Wilkinson were among a group of 18 students and three lecturers who homestayed in the villages and ran health clinics attended by up to 200 villagers a day.

Some clinics were held in very poor and remote villages which had never received any western-style health care.

Villagers are subsistence farmers working small plots in the mountains.

Each day women from the village were invited to a session with Jane and Coral, where knowledge about safe birthing was shared with the help of local translators.

Traditional birth attendants were strongly encouraged to attend, to provide an opportunity for cross-cultural sharing of knowledge.

The sessions had a focus on the safe management of maternal post partum haemorrhage and the prevention of infection in newborns with clean umbilical cord care – two of the biggest killers of mothers and babies in developing countries.

Sessions were fun and interactive with village women demonstrating (with a lot of laughter) how they birth their babies, with the use of upright positions aided by ropes dangling from the ceiling of their bamboo huts.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery, in partnership with the Community Development project, will continue to build this program with the active involvement of midwifery and nursing students.

The positive relationship between the communities, Griffith University and the Development Project is delivering results that can be built on long into the future.

Students also raised money for the building of a toilet and kitchen for a village health clinic, and the school is in the process of initiating a scholarship for Laos students to study in Luang Prabang to become Primary Health Care workers.
Genius, as someone somewhere once said, is the art of seeing the obvious first, and in the case of GHI researchers Dr Neil Cronin, Dr Chris Carty and Professor Rod Barrett, it has taken their research all over the world.

The obvious in this case is that particularly masochistic form of footwear favoured by some women, the high heel. While adding to height and giving the legs some shape, no-one would argue they were particularly comfortable or good for your feet or back.

The odd thing was no-one had actually done the research, so the Centre for Musculoskeletal Research took up the challenge, testing the legs and feet of women who work in high heels, including local Gold Coast “Meter Maids”.

To say the media response was huge is an understatement. More than 100 articles from all over the world were published, from the sober Houston Chronicle to the almost inconsolable Times of Oman.

“It went viral, didn’t it? Neil virtually had to hire a secretary for a week to answer all the enquiries that were coming in from all over the world.” said Professor Barrett.

First published in the Journal of Applied Physiology, Dr Cronin found high heels shortened the fibres in the calf muscles and put greater mechanical strain on the muscles, meaning heel-wearers needed more energy than those in flats.

The large muscle pressure that occurred when walking in heels could increase the likelihood of strain injuries.

Interestingly, the likelihood of injury continued when women changed to flat shoes or exercised in running shoes.

Welcome new staff, farewell old staff

The Griffith University Health group would like to welcome the following people who have commenced work with us this year.

- Janice Bass – Nursing and Midwifery
- Pam Harnden – Nursing and Midwifery
- Jo Everingham – Nursing and Midwifery
- Beth Pierce – Nursing and Midwifery
- Stephanie Oliver – Nursing and Midwifery
- Sohil Khan – Pharmacy
- Nathan Reeves – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
- Courtney Clarke – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
- Associate Professor Libby Cardell – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
- Dr Samantha Siyambalapitiya – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
- Dr Marleen Westerveld – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
- Associate Professor Faruk Ahmed – Public Health
- Dr Mindaugas Stankunas – Public Health

Griffith Health bids a fond farewell and thank you to staff who have departed or will be leaving soon.

- Jann Fielden – Nursing and Midwifery
- Sarah Stewart – Nursing and Midwifery
- Associate Professor Michael Rathbone – Pharmacy
- Dr Laetitia Hattingh – Pharmacy
- Prof Roger Hughes – Public Health, Nutrition and Dietetics
- Dr Michael Leveritt – Public Health
- Ms Alisha Lucas – Public Health
- Ms Sonia Offord – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
- Dr Jane Grayson – Physiotherapy and Exercise Science
Griffith Health has partnered with Peking Health Science Center (PHSC) in Beijing to address public health concerns in China and across the Asia Pacific region.

Professor Peiyu Wang, PHSC International Relations and Research expert, visited Griffith university’s Gold Coast campus for the signing of a new agreement with Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Allan Cripps.

The Peking Health science Center selected Griffith university for its strengths across a number of health areas and, in particular, to aid in the development of a new, comprehensive public health model for China.

“essentially this partnership forms the basis of a bilateral program of assistance for the health sector in China,” said Professor Cripps.

“It will draw upon the benefits of each institution’s programs, collaborative links and industry, to build workforce capacity in China in the fight against respiratory and infectious diseases, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, stroke, hypertension and mental health issues.

“The solutions found through this collaboration will also be a unique and beneficial lesson to the Australian health care system. We can learn from our colleagues at Peking based on their strong links with government and their ability to influence national policy in preventive medicine and health.

“It will also increase our joint capacity and reputation in public health research globally, and see our students and staff welcome the opportunity to work together with Peking University on a multi-disease international health project with China’s number one university,” he said.

Griffith Health has been a long history of engagement with Peking University and first partnered with Beijing Medical university in 1996 (which later became part of Peking University’s Faculty of Medicine) for scholarly exchanges and teaching collaboration. 

The United Nations is set to collaborate on Griffith University’s innovative 1000 Voices disability research project.

1000 Voices is a web-based storytelling exercise which invites people with disabilities to describe their personal experiences. Its long-term aim is to record the voices of 1000-plus different participants from all over the world.

Professor Lesley Chenoweth, head of Griffith University Logan campus, travelled to Bangkok in January to participate in a workshop with delegates involved in a UN action research project on Disability, Poverty and Livelihoods.

“They are very interested in our methodology and it is possible that the framework used for 1000 Voices could be developed for a much bigger study across the Asia Pacific region,” she said.

Dr Naomi Sunderland from the Griffith Health Institute’s (GHI) Population Health Research Program presented the 1000 Voices project to an expert group of UN delegates in Thailand last year. Her presentation triggered a keen interest that led to the Bangkok workshop.

This GHI initiative offers not only experience but also a potential model for the research to be implemented by the UN’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

More than 120 narrators have logged on and detailed the most intimate and personal aspects of life with a disability since the project launched almost two years ago. These range from a teenager’s account of how pregnancy led to paraplegia to the tale of one man’s life with cerebral palsy and epilepsy.

“It’s a public awareness project first and a research project second,” Dr Naomi Sunderland said. “It’s a participant-led way of collecting data where we say ‘Let’s hear what your life is like’.”

Griffith to aid development of China’s public health system

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The connection between alcohol and dehydration has long been established, mainly in its contribution to crashing hangovers. Now Griffith University researchers have found there may be a far more dangerous connection and it could be a wake-up call for sportspeople and tradies.

Medical scientists attending the Gold Coast Health and Medical Research Conference in December heard that people who began drinking after exercise-induced dehydration were more likely to undertake risky activities, such as drink-driving, than non-dehydrated drinkers.

Research Centre for Clinical and Community Practice and Innovation (RCCCPI) PhD scientist Chris Irwin set out to explore how the body absorbed alcohol after dehydration and changes in the body because of it, known as Pharmacokinetics.

The results of this avenue of research were inconclusive but the team noticed a significant difference in the way the research subjects behaved.

“The subjects all drank the same amount and kind of alcohol over the same time period while we monitored their blood and breath alcohol levels. We were looking for physical changes,” he said.

“What we actually observed was, after exercising, the dehydrated group was significantly more likely to do things like drink-driving.

“This could be partly explained by the fact the dehydrated subjects also reported experiencing significantly-lower effects of intoxication. They thought they weren’t drunk.

“The behaviour of elite athletes while intoxicated has been the subject of concern for some time, but they are less likely to be dehydrated simply because all elite programs try to minimise dehydration. It would more likely affect weekend amateurs,” he said.

Mr Irwin and his team are not only interested in athletes. As dehydration also affects tradesmen he is planning to extend his research to construction workers.
For people suffering serious anxiety disorders the wait between visits to their therapist can seem an eternity, and then there’s what to do when someone experiences a period of heightened distress.

To help carry the benefits of the therapist in your pocket Bonnie Clough, a PhD student in the School of Applied Psychology, has developed a mobile therapeutic program accessible through a smartphone application (App).

The App aims to not only assist people to overcome their anxiety disorders but provides strategies for moving beyond those critical moments when it all falls apart.

The App contains a suite of techniques developed in conjunction with the therapist to act as a kind of tool box for the sufferer. The use of these techniques can also act as the homework assigned by the therapist and developed and practised together.

When the patient uses the App the data is recorded and sent to the therapist so they can analyse the relative success of the techniques.

Communication is also two-way.

“Compliance is a huge problem in psychology. Getting patients to regularly complete the exercises asked of them before their next session is one of the major impediments to successful treatment,” said Ms Clough.

“Having the exercises on the phone makes it more easily accessible and usable. “Because it sends results in live to our remote server, if homework isn’t being done we can send out a little prompt,” she said.

Collecting data in real time means the therapist has actual information in front of them when the patient arrives for their next appointment.

So next time you see someone looking frustrated with their iPhone, it may be an issue with therapy, not telephony.
Early identification and treatment of prospective memory impairments has the potential to improve outcomes and independence of individuals with early psychosis.

How do we stop our young men from driving like maniacs and killing themselves and others?

Research by Griffith Health Institute’s (GHI) Behavioural Basis of Health program has found it may be harder than we think, with neurological research indicating young men’s brains are predisposed to risk taking and seeking approval for risk taking, particularly from their peers.

Applied Psychology Associate Professor Ian Glendon’s findings came from reviewing neurological research from the post-MRI era (1990s onwards).

“When you take an evolutionary perspective it’s not surprising. Who are the ones who will go into battle against the next village or hunt wild animals?

“The brains of young men can make them predisposed to risky activities. Put them behind the wheel of a car and you have the possibility of some very dangerous outcomes,” he said.

A shifting balance between the limbic and cortical areas of the brain, which govern risk taking and reward seeking, is one of the predisposing conditions for young men engaging in extreme acts.

This is backed by the earlier development of subcortical regions, which results in many young men seeking immediate rewards (eg. peer approval) over longer-term rewards.

Overlapping this is the relatively slower development of the prefrontal cortex, which increases the liability of becoming frustrated and the potential for disorganised or irrational decision making.

The final ingredient to the cocktail is the lack of development of the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex which doesn’t occur until a person’s 20s, initiating an individual’s emotional maturity and a lessening of their need for peer approval.

Dr Glendon’s ongoing research program is concerned with what we can do to change the situation.
Remembering future events is one of the most important aspects of memory and, as everyone who has ever forgotten their partner’s birthday knows, can have enormous repercussions. It is called prospective memory (PM).

PM is mediated by the prefrontal cortex and is instrumental in educational, vocational, psychosocial, and everyday functioning.

A study conducted by Professor David Shum, Deputy Director of the Griffith Health Institute, and his colleagues in 2011 investigated the extent to which PM in individuals with early psychosis can benefit from a memory enhancement technique. The technique, called Implementation Intentions, is a simple process of getting participants to repeat what they are supposed to remember and to visualise doing it.

Professor Shum presented his findings as a keynote speaker at the first annual Mental Health Conference organised by the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, China.

Early identification and treatment of PM impairments has the potential to improve outcomes and independence of individuals with early psychosis.

However, few studies have examined whether individuals with early psychosis suffer from PM impairment, and whether this group could benefit from memory enhancement techniques.

To explore this phenomenon, the researchers recruited 30 individuals with early psychosis from the Gold Coast Integrated Mental Health Early Psychosis Service and 33 healthy participants aged 17–25 years. Results indicated PM performance of participants with early psychosis was more impaired than that of healthy individuals.

The memory enhancement technique was found to be beneficial for both groups of participants.

Taken together, such results indicate that memory enhancement techniques may be effective in improving PM in individuals with early psychosis, though more research is needed before this technique can be generalised to everyday settings.

Sufferers call it “Chemobrain” or “Chemofog”, the memory loss and cognitive problems that accompany cancer treatment.

Unfortunately for many survivors, the fog doesn’t lift once the cancer is beaten, leaving some people with significant memory or attention problems.

For a long time doctors felt powerless to observe let alone confront this condition. However in recent years neurologists have been able to measure changes in brain function through Electroencephalography (EEG) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and have found the condition not only exists, but can persist for years after chemotherapy ends.

Behavioural Basis of Health researcher Dr Heather Green is leading a team of researchers from the School of Applied Psychology to find possible treatments for this condition, which can affect up to a third of all patients being treated for non nervous-system cancers.

Dr Green’s cognitive rehabilitation program seeks to treat not just objective “chemobrain” sufferers, but subjective (unobservable) sufferers as well.

“We developed a program involving a variety of tools from mnemonics to imagery to help patients develop new memory and attention strategies. “We developed it as a group activity, and then to test the results we put three groups together – one was cancer survivors doing our program, the others were cancer and non-cancer survivors not doing our program.

“The comparison groups got slightly better, but the people in our program significantly improved their memory and cognitive performance over the life of the program,” Dr Green said.

Significantly for Dr Green, improvement was found in both the objective and subjective groups.

The next step for the program is to repeat the process and the results and, if successful, refine the process into a recognised and respected treatment program.

Dr Green’s findings will be presented at the International Cognition and Cancer Taskforce (ICCTF) conference in Paris later in the year.
Parents looking for solutions to their children’s phobias may soon find hope if a study beginning this year at Mt Gravatt and the Gold Coast proves successful.

About 80 per cent of adult phobias develop in childhood and about 12 per cent of all children develop some kind of phobia.

The international study into childhood phobias involves researchers from Griffith Health Institute’s Behavioural Basis of Health program and the Child Study Center at Virginia Tech University in the USA.

Researchers are looking for 140 children in Brisbane and the Gold Coast to take part.

Behavioral Basis of Health researcher Associate Professor Allison Waters is leading the project and believes the study could lead to a breakthrough in helping children and their worried parents overcome fears, which can develop into lifelong anxiety problems if left untreated.

“Researchers at Mt Gravatt will focus on a computer-based attention-focusing program and the Gold Coast will use a pharmaceutical method to enhance a single session of exposure therapy,” Associate Professor Waters said.

Professor Tom Ollendick from the Child Study Center at Virginia Tech, has developed a program which can treat many phobias in a single session of exposure therapy, but recognises only 60–70 per cent of children respond to any treatment.

“If you can control your fear you can control your anxiety. A phobia is a learned fear, if you can learn it you can unlearn it,” said Professor Ollendick.

The Gold Coast group, lead by Dr Lara Farrell, is using an antibiotic traditionally used to cure tuberculosis (D-Cycloserine), but which has been discovered to improve the brain’s learning receptors.

Each child will receive a thorough assessment, receive a single session of treatment and will be monitored until the end of 2013.

For more information http://www.griffith.edu.au/health/behavioural-basis-health
Medical research can often be a lonely, gruelling profession with little personal payoff or connection to the end result of your research, if indeed there is an end result.

However world-leading migraine research at the Griffith Health Institute (GHI) is making a substantial impact, with scientists able to assist some sufferers of the debilitating events only months after the initial clinical trial.

Mrs Karen Richardson, a Redcliffe resident, had been told since she was a child that she was a “headachy little girl”, growing up drinking Disprin in her cordial.

“The headaches grew more intense and more regular into adulthood and by the age of 40 had become events which left me seeing flashing lights and vomiting for days,” said Mrs Richardson.

“I was at breaking point where if I didn’t find something to help I felt I was going to lose control of everything. It was around this time that I heard a Griffith University person on the radio talking about the (migraine) trial.”

The trial, led by GHI director Professor Lyn Griffiths, involved vitamin treatment directed towards overcoming a genetic mutation that researchers had identified in about 20 per cent of migraine sufferers.

“About six years ago we identified a genetic mutation in migraine sufferers and from then progress has been steady and promising,” said Professor Griffiths.

Mrs Richardson was given the treatment developed from the trial of B vitamins, with nearly immediate effect.

“I genuinely believe they gave me some control of my life back again,” said Mrs Richardson.

Mrs Richardson has recently found her son may suffer similar symptoms, but feels some comfort that a treatment may not be far away.

http://www.griffith.edu.au/health/check
Orientation week marked the launch of two new postgraduate programs for the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science: the Master of Speech Pathology and the Graduate Diploma of Exercise Science.

The Master of Speech Pathology will fill the increasing need for specialists working with children and adults to develop or rediscover clear, concise speech and the social confidence that comes with it. Thirty-five students make up the first cohort of the program and they have already started observation placements since the close of orientation week.

The official Master of Speech Pathology program opening was attended by staff, students and clinicians from across the state.

Dr Petrea Cornwell, Queensland Branch Manager for Speech Pathology Australia, was on hand for the launch, and said she looked forward to working with Griffith University in the coming years.

Associate Professor Elizabeth Cardell will be the foundation Program Convenor for the Master of Speech Pathology and is joined by Dr Samantha Siyambalapitiya and Dr Marleen Westerveld.

Griffith Health is collaborating with a wide range of service providers in southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales to ensure students have the best clinical placement opportunities.

The Graduate Diploma of Exercise Science also commenced teaching with fifteen students recruited for the launch of the program which will combine advanced exercise science coursework with clinical placement.

Teaching will focus on application and integration of exercise science knowledge, competency in the assessment management and treatment of chronic disease, appropriate professional communication and team relationships in the clinical environment.

Program Convenor Dr Surendran Sabapathy, Mr Nathan Reeves and Ms Beth Sheehan make up the teaching team for the program which will produce graduates able to practice as Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEP).
Griffith University researchers were at the forefront of discussions about issues affecting vulnerable Australian children at the Queensland Child Protection Research symposium held at South Bank in November.

The major themes that emerged were improving children’s participation in decisions affecting their lives, enhancing children’s wellbeing in care, especially their health and educational attainment. More action was also demanded to address the alarming level of over-representation of Indigenous children in care in Australia.

Head of School, Human Services and Social Work, Professor Patrick O’Leary opened the symposium and talked about his work on child protection in emergencies and disaster situations in international settings.

The aims for the symposium were to showcase current and recent child protection research in Queensland and to explore opportunities to strengthen research and practice through possible collaborations and links.

The auditorium at South Bank was full to capacity with child protection researchers, policy makers and practitioners, demonstrating the high degree of interest in research and contemporary practice in this field.

The Health Group was represented by presenters Professor Clare Tilbury, Dr Rae Thomas, Mr Peter Walsh and Dr Julie Clark. Ms Sue Rayment-McHugh from the Griffith Youth Forensic Service also presented.

Three Nursing students took up Griffith Health’s commitment to broaden professional experience by taking up study tours in Taiwan.

During late November 2011, three second-year nursing students were invited by Chang Gung University of Science and Technology in Taiwan to complete a 10-day international study tour.

Jennifer Besgrove, Susan Robinson and Barbara Willis from Logan, Gold Coast and Nathan campuses undertook clinical observation at the enormous Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in the ear nose and throat ward and Emergency Department. They also participated in lectures provided by the various specialists and medical staff.

The Chang Gung Memorial Hospital is the largest hospital in Taiwan with about 3,500 beds, 80 operating theatres, 3,500 nurses and about 300 doctors on staff.

The Outpatients department alone sees about 10,000 patients per day.

Jennifer, Susan and Barbara also had an opportunity to understand how Chinese traditional medicine, nutrition and medical cosmetology worked in a hospital setting.

The students were welcomed by the President of the University and each of the students was partnered with a nursing student. This allowed them to integrate into University life visiting the night markets at the University, a Confucian Temple and enjoying some local cuisine.

It is anticipated the program could be an ongoing exchange with nursing students from Chang Gung University of Science and Technology visiting Griffith University.
Gold Coast Public Health student Nicola Banwell travelled to Canberra in February to collect a Prime Minister’s Australia Asia Endeavour Award.

Ms Banwell’s research focuses on mental health following natural disasters.

The award, valued up to $53,000, allows top university students to spend six to 12 months in Asia as part of their degree, followed by an internship or work placement in Asia.

Nicola will spend 18 months in China where her honours year research project will focus on the effects of natural disasters on mental health, and what measures are in place to prevent mental health problems.

The 21-year-old will develop her research plan at the highly-rated Peking University for six months before embarking on a year-long internship through regional communities affected by floods, drought, landslides and earthquakes.

“I’m hopeful that my study can inform management of natural disasters in Australia, mainly because in China they have so many more of these weather events,” Nicola said.

“I will examine individual coping strategies and how competent and efficient people are when a natural disaster happens.

“I will also focus on self-esteem and confidence. A person’s ability to take action can be affected when these are undermined.

“In China, the work in this area is more upstream with a preventative focus through education helping people to be more prepared and able to deal with natural disaster.”

Her research will take her into some of China’s most rural communities affected by natural disaster, to be selected by her Griffith University supervisor Dr Jing Sun.

The Australia Asia Endeavour Awards are open to Australian undergraduates and postgraduates in any field of study.

In December Pro Vice Chancellor, Professor Allan Cripps, paid tribute to the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation which won the HMRI Great Australian Philanthropy Award at the gala Research Australia Awards ceremony in Melbourne.

“A key achievement of the Foundation has been its investment in young medical researchers, particularly through its highly-competitive and much sought-after medical research grant programs,” Professor Cripps said.

The Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation was established in 1992 with an initial bequest of about $60 million to benefit organisations and institutions involved in medical research into diseases, and the alleviation of hardship of the aged and sick.

Today the Foundation is worth about $150 million.

George Curphey OAM, chair of the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation, accepted the prestigious Research Australia Award.

Along with long-term partnerships with The Salvation Army, Cancer Council Queensland and Prevent Blindness Foundation, the Foundation has helped almost 100 researchers to further their careers through its medical research program.

“The Foundation’s flagship program is the Senior Medical Research Fellowship worth $975,000 over five years to support outstanding researchers to establish a research career in Australia,” Professor Cripps said.

The Foundation has also provided vital and significant backing for cancer research since 1998, with its funding for the pilot phase of a key melanoma screening trial leading to breakthrough results in 2001.

“During this time, over 16,000 people were screened for melanoma and the rate of diagnosis of early curable melanoma more than doubled in the towns receiving the program,” Professor Cripps said.

The annual Research Australia Awards recognise achievements in the health and medical research community.
A breakthrough in the treatment of non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma is within reach for researchers at the Griffith Health Institute, who have renewed an appeal for public support.

Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma is the most common blood-borne cancer. Its prevalence in Australia is increasing at a rate of four per cent each year, and it is the sixth leading cause of death in the country.

The disease is manifested by abnormalities in the blood-stream affecting the lymphoid glands and organs of the immune system.

Research by Professor Lyn Griffiths’ Genomic Research Clinic team on the Gold Coast has identified new genes involved in the development and progression of lymphoma.

Any new understanding of lymphoma and the diverse biological and genetic mechanisms behind the disease is likely to help with developing more sensitive clinical tools and improving survival rates for patients.

“If you’ve had a heart attack, your risk of developing depression is about four times higher than it is for the general population. If you’ve suffered from depression, your risk of developing heart disease is at least doubled,” said Dr Stapelberg.

Cardiovascular disease is the largest cause of death in Australia. “If this research can help with the detection of depression then that would be a significant step forward in its own right.”

Four groups of 30 people will take part in the clinical trial. The first group will include people in good health who have not been diagnosed with depression and with no heart problems.

A second group will have been diagnosed with depression but will not have suffered a heart attack, while members of the third group will have had a heart attack but no experience of depression. The final group will have experienced both conditions.

In the case of those diagnosed with depression, Dr Stapelberg is seeking people who are currently not taking antidepressant medication.

Dr Stapelberg will run the research from the Lakeside Rooms practice in Robina in collaboration with Professor David Shum and Associate Professor David Neumann from Griffith’s School of Applied Psychology and Professors Harry McConnell and Ian Hamilton-Craig from the Griffith Health Institute.

http://www.griffith.edu.au/healthcheck


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Conferences


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We need your help
We are looking for people who have experienced a mental illness such as depression or anxiety or carers and family members to take part in a study that explores the evolving role of community pharmacy. If you live in Queensland, Western Australia or Northern Rivers (NSW) we would like to hear from you.

What’s it all about?
We want to know about your experiences, needs and expectations of community pharmacies. The information you give us will inform a new program to train pharmacists and pharmacy assistants to work with consumers and carers to help them manage their medications.

What will you have to do?
We would like to ask you some questions either by phone or in a survey after you have visited your regular community pharmacy.

This will take about 10-15 minutes. The information will be anonymous and collected by a researcher employed by Griffith University. We would like to do this three times over the next 18 months. You will be reimbursed for your time.

Who is behind this project?
This project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing as part of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement Research and Development Program managed by The Pharmacy Guild of Australia. Ethics approval has been obtained from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (PHM/08/11/HREC).

If you would like more information, call us for free on 1800 600 687 or email mentalhealth@griffith.edu.au
Griffith Health will, through leadership and innovation in teaching, research and community engagement, create sustained improvement in all aspects of health and health care for local, national and international communities.

griffith.edu.au/health