



## GRADUATE RESEARCH NEWS

March 2010

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Issue 1

### Welcome

Every year, late March tenderly brings along the most beautiful landscape in Tasmania for the eyes to adore and the most peaceful atmosphere for the mind to enjoy. While nature is filled with beauty and vitality at this time of the year, this positive spirit is also manifested in our UDRH Graduate Research discourse with wonderful stories of achievements to share and with promising blue skies ahead for our academic journey of 2010.

The excellent news of 2010 is that the School of Medicine has now joined our Collaborative Graduate Research discourse and this definitely enhances the quality of our research interaction and social networking. With great enthusiasm and optimism, I would like to share with you our stories in this first Graduate Research News in 2010.

### Our new candidates and supervisors

The University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) has been further enriched by the arrival of new students. Warmest welcome goes to **Danielle Berry**, a new PhD student, who was awarded an Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) Bursary. The bursary is an initiative of the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (Tasmania), Calvary Health Care and the UDRH. It is offered only to an ambulance officer with an interest in developing research skills with a clear focus on the delivery of pre-hospital care and relevance to rural and/or remote areas.

Dr **Martin Harris** has applied to be a registered supervisor. We look forward to working with Dr Harris.

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# RURAL HEALTH

## Good news from our students

I would like to share with you the success stories of our students. Please join me in our congratulations to the following students:

- **Fiona Jones**, Masters candidate, has submitted her thesis for examination and passed. Congratulations to Fiona and her supervisors, Dr **Peter Orpin** and Ms **Kim Boyer**.
- **Martin Harris** and **Susan Johns** have passed their PhD theses – congratulations to Martin, Susan and their supervisors. Martin's supervisors are Prof **Judi Walker** and Dr **Marion Myhill**. Susan's supervisors are Prof **Sue Kilpatrick** and Prof **Joan Abbott-Chapman**.
- **Martin Harris** recently presented his thesis outcome at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Enabling Education Conference in Toowoomba, Queensland.
- **Susan Johns** has her article entitled "Early childhood service development and intersectoral collaboration in rural Australia" published in the *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, 16, pp. 40-46.
- **Ha Hoang** and **Maria Yue** have had their full ethics applications approved.
- **Ha Hoang** (UDRH) and **Frances Fan** (Education candidate co-supervised by Education and UDRH) have completed all the requirements for the confirmation of progression of PhD candidature.

## The 2010 Collaborative Graduate Research Symposium

We are pleased to let you know that the 2010 Faculty of Health Sciences Collaborative Graduate Research Symposium will be held at the Launceston Hotel Grand Chancellor from 21 -22 June 2010. There will be keynote speakers, workshops, a public lecture on the Sunday evening prior to the Symposium. There will also be presentations from PhD and Research Masters students from the University Department of Rural Health, Rural Clinical School, School of Nursing and Midwifery, School of Human Life Sciences, School of Medicine and the Launceston Clinical School.

We strongly encourage you to take this opportunity to share knowledge, experience and skills, and to socialise with colleagues from across the various parts of the Faculty.

## Reflections on the PhD journey

**Dr Martin Harris**

The process of obtaining a PhD can be rewarding and frustrating, but when embarking on this journey it is wise to prepare well. This will involve pondering

over the question you might investigate, but the most important task is the selection of a supervisor (or better yet, co-supervisors). This decision will colour the direction and shape of your thesis and will, in many respects, determine how much you enjoy the journey. Select your supervisors carefully and check the credentials of those who are being considered.

The investigation and writing-up of your research will be both exciting and laborious. In many respects, this part of the journey has been well documented and described. The many "how-to" books and articles are a useful crutch as you begin to gain confidence. Take heart from the positive messages and take your problems to your carefully chosen supervisors. The opportunities to present your findings and discuss your research with others are important so it is right to accept invitations from the department or faculty to present at student forums. The pressure of presenting is far outweighed by the thoughtful feedback that follows.



*Dr Martin Harris*

The "end of the journey" is not as well documented or considered. In my case, my final thesis was prepared for lodgement shortly after the revisions were completed and approved. As recommended by the University, the unbound copies together with the binding instructions were placed with UniPrint. This lodgement is regarded (anecdotally) as "being with the university" and therefore "lodged", albeit in a tentative, preliminary form. While this is practically acceptable, UniPrint have no formal receipt process and the lodgement is only acknowledged in the system as a "job number". Leave plenty of time to manage your thesis through these last stages of submission and be assertive in regard to the care and delivery of the final, precious documents.

When the final day comes and you can take your place in among the graduands; enjoy the moment.



*Dr Susan Johns*

**Dr Susan Johns**

Having just sent hardbound copies of my thesis to the Graduate Research Office I suppose I am no longer a "PhD candidate", and it was with a tinge of sadness that I removed this title from my email signature recently. It's a strange feeling, as so much of my identity over the past four years has been tied to my status as a PhD candidate. It has been an incredible journey and I'm sorry it has ended. Would I do it all again? No way!! Do I have any words of advice for new PhD candidates? Not really.

I'm not sure that anything can really prepare you for the PhD journey. No matter how well prepared you think you are, you seem to encounter the unexpected on a regular basis. My previous experience in research, and my creative writing skills, were not as helpful as I had expected. PhD research is very different from anything I have encountered before, or will probably encounter again. The process for me was very much one of unlearning, and then relearning. This proved fairly difficult at the time, but I think it has made me more receptive to new ideas, and confirms that you can teach an old dog new tricks.

Several things kept me sane throughout the PhD process. First, my family, and particularly my daughter, who couldn't understand why anyone would choose to continue studying when they didn't have to. Both she and I questioned my sanity on many occasions. Second, making sure that I made the time every week to read fiction by my favourite writers (if you haven't read anything by Margaret Atwood then you should do so). Third, regularly debriefing/whinging/gossiping with friends and colleagues at the UDRH. Finally, having the good luck to have chosen two fantastic supervisors (Professors Sue Kilpatrick and Joan Abbott-Chapman).

## Conference funding grants for honorary research supervisors

A new initiative in 2010 is the conference funding grants for honorary research supervisors. The Rural Health Graduate Research program is offering two Rural Health conference funding grants in 2010 (one in the first round and one in the second round). The grant will cover conference registration, travel and accommodation up to \$2000 per award.

These grants are designed to allow research-active honorary research associates to attend a national or international conference in 2010. In awarding these grants, preference will be given to honorary research supervisors who have been accepted for a conference presentation, in particular if the paper is peer-reviewed.

To be eligible for these conference funding grants, the applicant must be an honorary research supervisor currently supervising students who are enrolled with the University Department of Rural Health. Closing dates for applications are: **30 April 2010** (for the first round) and **31 October 2010** (for the second round). Further information is available at: <http://www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/gr/scholarships.php>

## "Paris et moi"



Frances Fan  
(PhD candidate)

I did not know a word of French when I arrived in Australia to study at the University of Tasmania. But now, French is something close to my mind and my heart! Why? It is rather simple: in July this year, I will with excitement fly to Paris, not as a tourist (of course, a bit of it too), but mainly for an international conference there.

I am undertaking a PhD study in the Faculty of Education, UDRH is also my beloved "relative" as I am supervised by both Education and the UDRH. I would like to thank Dr Quynh Lê for accepting me as her student and for being so helpful in my quantitative analysis. You see, I can now enjoy the combined research supervision of both worlds: Education and Rural Health.

My paper was accepted for presentation at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Paris International Conference on Education, Economy and Society. It would be a great experience for me as the last conference attracted over 500 academics and practitioners from 50 countries and 450 contributions. The topic of

my paper is "*The Web as a learning resource in an Australian university context*". My attendance is funded by the Faculty of Education. The good news does not stop here and I have a joint paper with Quynh entitled "*Computer supported learning in the context of health education*" for presentation at the International conference in Istanbul in May. So 2010 is definitely one of the best years of my life.

Paris, Je t'aime! – **Frances Fan**

## Happy data collection

I am **Maria Yue**, an international PhD student at the UDRH under the supervision of Drs Quynh Lê and Rosa McManamey. My supervisors told me that "data collection could make or break a research project". At first I was not sure what they mean. I thought it should be a straightforward process and finally we would get what we want!. This is indeed not the experiences of many research students with data collection.



Maria Yue (PhD candidate), Dr Rosa McManamey, and Kim Izard at the Collaborative Graduate Research Symposium, Hobart, 30 November 2009.

My personal successful experience with data collection is a mixture of luck and strategy. Luck is always unpredictable, just like the weather in an unsettled season, whereas strategies are purposeful, goal-directed and manageable.

Here are a number of "tips" (if I may say so), which enabled me to effectively collect a considerable amount of returned questionnaires:

- Write personal emails to addressees, not a bulk email;
- Avoid dry impersonal language which easily turns the readers off;
- Give your readers an impression that his/her help means so much to you for your research (i.e., their help is indispensable);
- Make full use of your social networks such as Facebook or Twitter! (Don't just sit under an apple tree waiting for the apples to fall);
- Create a domino effect: ask a friend to contact his/her friends to participate in the survey; and

- Provide a variety of ways for participants to send their responses (e.g., online, deposit box, postal service).

I am pleased to share with you that my data has poured in so quickly that I can even see the sunlight at night. Something to share with you – **Maria Yue**

## Elite Research Scholarship

The University Department of Rural Health, in collaboration with the Graduate Research Program at the University of Tasmania, is offering one Elite Research Scholarship for potential applicant to undertake PhD research in rural health area. The Elite Research Scholarship is valued at \$30K per annum, tax-free, and is available for three years, with a possible six-month extension.

To be eligible for this scholarship, the applicant must enrol with the University Department of Rural Health and undertake either of the following research themes:

- Climate change and health;
- Innovative approaches to substance abuse prevention;
- Children's behaviour and health.

Applicants must have first class honours or a strong case for equivalence. Supervisors are encouraged to identify potential candidates and assist with the application process that may include a UTAS site visit.

Information about the Elite Research Scholarship and how to apply is available at: <http://www.utas.edu.au/graduate-research/elite>

## Graduate Research student support program 2010

Our Rural Health Graduate Research Student Support Program has been enriched by the many contributions from students and staff members. We specially would like to thank all supervisors who volunteer to help with our graduate research workshop series in 2010.

The 2010 Graduate Research Student Support Program timetable is available at the Rural Health Graduate Research web site at: <http://www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/gr/support-program.php>. Please visit this URL regularly for up-to-date workshop information.

This year, we will offer three special workshops: Advanced Features in Word 2007; Statistics for Health Practitioners, and NVivo (by QSR International). Spaces for these workshops are limited. Please register your interest at your earliest convenience by contacting **Kim Izard** (contact details on front page).

## Relocating Graduate Research students in Hobart

As you may have known, all Graduate Research students have to move from the Stanley Burbury (Sandy Bay Campus) to the CML Building, level 5. There are always some difficulties in relocating to a new place. We would like to thank fellow students for your help and patience. Special thanks must go to Lindie Lupo, and Andrew Connor for their help in the relocation.

## Event calendar

We would specially like to thank all supervisors and guest speakers for conducting workshop series in February and March 2010. Below is the list of graduate research workshops in April – June 2010:

- Ethics in Research: to explore the role of ethics in research and explore issues that may arise in the planning, conduct and reporting of research, Dr **Frances Martin**, Tuesday 13 April, 12 noon – 2.00 pm, videoconferencing.
- Translational Research for Health Policy: How can a graduate research thesis really influence what happens in the health systems? Dr **Erica Bell**, Tuesday 20 April, 12 noon – 2.00 pm, videoconferencing.
- Research Methods 2: methods used to elicit and analyse qualitative data, Prof **Mary FitzGerald**, Tuesday 27 April, 12 noon – 2.00 pm, videoconferencing.
- Research Methods 3: methods used when both quantitative and qualitative data are required, (TBA), Tuesday 11 May, 12 noon – 2.00 pm, videoconferencing.
- Academic Writing: designing and writing an "auditable" research report/thesis, Dr **David Buchanan**, Tuesday, 18 May, 12 noon – 2.00 pm, videoconferencing.
- Coding Interview Data: Dr **Peter Orpin**, Friday 21 May, 10am – 3 pm, Launceston.
- Nvivo 8 Training: **Sue Bullen** (QSR International), 31 May – 1 June, Launceston.
- Collaborative Graduate Research Symposium: 21 – 22 June, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Launceston.

When I have just finished typing the last words of this Graduate Research News, a fresh, tender autumn breeze goes through my office window at the Anne O'Byrne Centre, sweetly reminding me that there will be more inspiring news to come with the arrival of three more seasons. But now, I want to say goodbye with a brief note: Each story is a journey of self-discovery and I hope this Graduate Research News gives you some wonderful insights about our Rural Health Graduate Research discourse.

**Quynh Lê and Kim Izard**