

Included in this Issue:

UDRH and West Tamar Council partnership	2
Mobile skilled workforce	2
Elite Research Scholarships	2
Graduate research news	3
Rural Health Week 2011	3
Health and wellbeing book	4
Food for thought workshop	4
ARC Linkage	5
Simulation and interprofessional learning workshop	5
Rural health teaching sites go wireless	5
E-Health	6
Climate change and rural child health	6
Making a difference	7
PHCRED mentorship scheme	7
Prostate cancer awareness	7
Youth health promotion	8
Health impact assessment	8
Pharmacy news	8
Accessibility to primary health care	9
TAS research student support	9
ACAP bursary	9
UDRH seminar series	9
Professors Gert Westert and David Karoly	10
In brief	10
Stepping up to the challenge	10
UDRH capability statement	11
Staff promotions	11
Islands of aging	11
From the Director's Desk	12
Upcoming training opportunities	12

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UDRH secures major funding for food security project

The University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) is a key partner in a coalition of government and non-government organisations that have been successful in securing a grant of \$180,000 from the Tasmanian Food Security Fund to undertake research in food security.

Funding for this project was announced on 18 November 2010 at the Chigwell Community Garden by Premier David Bartlett. Community consultations undertaken by the Social Inclusion Unit revealed that many families in rural areas were finding it increasingly difficult to afford or access nutritious and regular meals. There is a direct correlation between food security and the health and wellbeing of communities. The ever changing economic landscape of rural Tasmania has resulted in an increasing number of rural communities experiencing, or at risk of, food insecurity which in turn has necessitated the need for timely and innovative approaches to address food insecurity.

The Tasmanian Food Access Research

(TFAR) Coalition will undertake a comprehensive study to identify and improve the understanding of food access in two Tasmanian municipal areas; comprising of the Dorset and Clarence City Councils.

A spatial analysis will be undertaken of food outlets and accessibility in the two study areas and the information will be used to inform the development of local strategies to address food access issues. The study will use research tools and a community development approach to assess the physical accessibility of food outlets and determine the cost, quality and availability of fresh and nutritious foods. Outputs from the study will inform the development of the Tasmanian Food Security Strategy.

The UDRH representatives on the project team are Dr **Quynh Lê** and **Stuart Auckland**. The study will commence following an announcement of the successful tender bids at a launch in November and will conclude in June 2012.



TFAR Coalition at the Tasmanian Food Security Council funding announcement. (From left) Gretchen Long (Primary Health, DHHS), Vonnie Bradford (Clarence Vale Neighbourhood Centre), Anne Hughes (Anglicare Tas), Jo Flanagan (Anglicare Tas), Ivy Hodges (Clarence Vale Neighbourhood Centre), Stuart Auckland (UDRH), Quynh Lê (UDRH) and Tracey Etchells (Dorset Council)

UDRH and West Tamar Council enter partnership to map health and wellbeing needs of residents of the West Tamar municipality

The UDRH has been engaged by the West Tamar Council to undertake a new joint project aimed at gathering the community's thoughts on health, wellbeing and the priorities for community resources and services. This project follows on from a series of similar initiatives undertaken by the UDRH in a number of rural and regional municipalities over the last few years.

The project complements the recent 'mapping' of the greater Beaconsfield catchment area conducted in 2009. The information collected in this project will be used to develop funding opportunities, service plans and other initiatives that will add value and improve opportunities for health and wellbeing in the West Tamar municipal area.

The project will involve consulting with as many members of the West Tamar community as possible who reside in the southern part of the municipality from Exeter to Trevallyn. This includes rate payers, service users, schools, community groups, businesses, organisations and service providers.

Members of the project team have been conducting surveys, focus groups and interviews with community members, groups and service providers within the municipality. The project is due for completion with the submission of a report in the second quarter of 2011. More information about the project can be provided by contacting Dr **Jess Woodroffe** at the UDRH on 6324 4020.



Vineyard at Tamar Valley

The mobile skilled workforce: optimising the benefits for rural communities

This recent study provided some solutions to the ongoing problem of retaining skilled workers in rural communities. Dr **Susan Johns**, along with Professor **Sue Kilpatrick** (Deakin University), Dr **Peter Vitartas** (Southern Cross University) and Mr **Martin Homisan** (Mackay Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Corporation) released their final report in June 2010 (available at <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/10-077>). The study was funded by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, and featured six different Australian rural communities and one Canadian rural community.

The mobile skilled workforce includes those who enter rural communities for a limited time such as locums, or other health, education and financial sector workers on limited-term placements.

Mobile skilled workers have skills, knowledge and external connections that they are prepared to use for the benefit of their 'adopted' community. Rural communities that are successful in integrating mobile skilled workers enjoy a range of benefits, such as increased community capacity and resilience, identification and uptake of opportunities such as new enterprises, good practice in natural resource management, and enhanced quality and range of local services.

Some rural communities are more successful than others in recognising and tapping into the potential of mobile skilled workers. While other research has focused on attraction and retention of rural workers, this study focused specifically on workplace and community strategies to encourage worker satisfaction, which are

likely to lead to increased retention rates. Mobile skilled workers are more likely to stay in small towns when they have social support. Workers and their families need to be positively integrated into the community. The effectiveness of the integration process determines the nature and extent of mobile skilled worker contribution to the community, and influences the decision to stay or leave. Local employers, local government, community groups, industry associations and community development associations have a role to play in encouraging mobile skilled worker integration and retention. There is also a role for the Australian government and State governments to assist in the integration process, by providing funding for programs that encourage rural communities to undertake an audit of factors that influence the integration of newcomers.



Dr Susan Johns

Elite Research Scholarships

In 2011, the UDRH and the Rural Clinical School, in collaboration with the Graduate Research Office at UTAS, are offering Elite Research Scholarships to potential applicants to undertake PhD research in rural health areas.

The Elite Research Scholarships have been introduced to encourage high quality PhD candidates to undertake their research higher degrees at UTAS and is open to all domestic and international applicants.

These scholarships are restricted to exceptional applicants whose research for their PhD

will occur in a well defined and managed (supervised) project. The scholarship will offer up to \$30,000 tax-free per year. The timeline for these projects is expected to be 3 years, which reflects the duration of the scholarship. Extensions of up to 6 months may be granted where substantial progress had been made and the likelihood of completion within this time frame can be justified.

Further information about Elite Scholarships and a list of topics are available at: <http://www.utas.edu.au/graduate-research/scholarship>

Graduate Research news

The arrival of summer has energised the land with glorious sunlight and happy tunes sung by birds in the fresh morning. It is very tempting for us to sing along and tell of the wonderful achievements in our Rural Health Graduate Research land where many seeds of research have sprung promisingly and many tunes of academic activities have echoed in a valley of achievements. Yes, it must be the time to share our successful stories.

- **Peter Mulholland** has passed his Masters – congratulations to Peter and his supervisors, Prof **Judith Walker** and Dr **Christine Stirling**. Peter was a recipient of ACAP bursary in 2006. The ACAP bursary is an initiative of the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals, Calvary Health Care and the UDRH.
- **Fiona Jones** has gained her Masters (supervised by Dr **Peter Orpin** and Ms **Kim Boyer**) and **Shandell Elmer** (supervised by Dr **Clarissa Hughes** and Prof **Sue Kilpatrick**) has passed her PhD study. Congratulations to Fiona, Shandell and their supervisors.
- **Maria Yue**, PhD candidate, has built up an impressive track record of research publications, conference papers, journal articles and research book chapters just over a year since starting her PhD course.
- **Rowena MacKean**, PhD candidate, recently commenced her research project and is supervised by Dr **Peter Orpin** and Prof **Joan Abbott-Chapman**.
- Research supervisors are the foundations on which graduate research grows. We are very pleased to welcome our newly registered supervisors: A/Prof **Tony Barnett** and Drs **Martin Harris**, **Susan Johns**, **Jess Woodroffe**, and Mr **Stuart Auckland**. A special welcome goes to Dr **Sonia Allen** from Monash University (VIC), Prof **Neil Piller** from Flinders University (SA) and Dr **Maarten Immink** from the University of South Australia (SA) who have joined us as research supervisors. They bring a wealth of research expertise and experience to our UDRH Graduate Research team.
- Dr **Rosa McManamey** has won the 2010 Conference Funding Grant for Rural Health Honorary Research Supervisors to attend the 'International Conference of Arts and Health Australia – Healthy People, Healthy Communities' in Sydney. Congratulations to Rosa for her success. Her conference attendance will contribute to maintaining and developing further research networking on the Arts and Health theme.
- **Ha Hoang**, PhD candidate, has been awarded the Commercialisation Training Scholarship (CTS) by UTAS Graduate Research to undertake the Graduate Certificate in Research Commercialisation (GCRC). The CTS is a Commonwealth Government initiative with the objective of

providing high quality research commercialisation training for the next generation of Australian researchers as a means of equipping them with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to bring research-based ideas, inventions and innovations to market. The scholarship will cover the tuition fees for the GCRC and additional scholarship support of \$2000 for each of the four units required to be undertaken. Candidates who complete the GCRC within the specified time limits will also receive a bonus lump sum payment of \$2000.

Apart from individual contributions, our collaborative spirit grows stronger. This is clearly shown in the success of the Faculty of Health Science Collaborative Graduate Research Symposium held in Launceston on 21 and 22 October 2010. We were pleased with the increased participation of students and supervisors compared to previous years. To engage the public in our research discourse, we initiated a new research sharing activity which proved to be a big success: over 130 people attended the public lecture entitled "Can we make our brains last longer: brain plasticity and neuroprotection in aging?" given by Prof **James Vickers**.

We celebrate these achievements and look forward to sharing more news about graduate research at the UDRH in the next issue.



A/Prof Tony Barnett delivering the keynote speech at the Collaborative Graduate Research Symposium.

Graduate research students and their supervisors at the Symposium social dinner.

Annette Loudon presenting her research study in progress at the Symposium.

Rural Health Week 2011- working together to create healthy communities

The UDRH is once again delighted to be associated with Rural Health Week as planning commences for 2011. Rural Health Week is a unique state-wide health promotion initiative which includes the Rural Health Awards and community based health promotion activities.

A State Planning Committee has been set up with representatives from the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Local Government Association of Tasmania and the UDRH. Rural communities will soon

be encouraged to form Regional Planning Groups to organise events and activities which are relevant to their needs and to consider nominations for the Rural Health Awards which will be staged during Rural Health Week in November 2011.

New book: Health and wellbeing - A social and cultural perspective

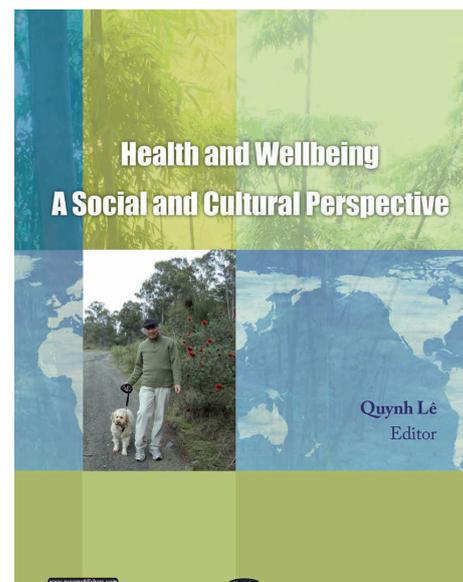
A new book *Health and wellbeing: A social and cultural Perspective* edited by Dr **Quynh Lê** will be published by Nova Science Publishers, New York in early 2011.

One of the essential aspects of life for anyone in any society is health and well-being. It is the indispensable base on which happiness is based. This book examines these two important aspects of life and has the following features:

- It focuses on the social and cultural aspects of health and wellbeing in current societies and cultures. Traditionally, health research has placed great emphasis on physical and clinical aspects such as diseases, medical treatments and rehabilitation. With an increasing interest in population health, particularly in the current context of globalisation, the sphere of health research has been expanded to also cover social and cultural factors which not only affect health conditions of individuals and communities but also are determining health factors in some respects.

- It attempts to provide insights on health and wellbeing across cultures, as a great extent of health concepts and practices are culturally constructed. Health professionals nowadays are very likely to be working with patients, colleagues, and communities of diverse cultural backgrounds whose assumptions, beliefs, and practices in relation to health and wellbeing are different and potentially lead to miscommunication and possible conflicts in dealing with health issues.
- It not only provides up-to-date research findings on social and cultural aspects of health and wellbeing, but is also an informative discourse in which meaningful voices are heard and different stories are told. They may come from the chapter writers reflecting on their research journeys, from individuals whose quality of life was affected by health conditions, and from institutions which provide health care services.

The book has 24 chapters and includes authors of different professional and cultural backgrounds who have profound



life experiences as well as research expertise in health and wellbeing. This diversity provides the book with insights from different perspectives, personally, professionally and culturally.

The book is on sale at the Nova Science Publisher's website: https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=19794.

Food for thought: Dieticians Association of Australia workshop

UDRH Senior Research Fellow Dr **Clarissa Hughes** was a guest presenter at a workshop presented by the Dieticians Association of Australia (Tas Branch). It was held on 22 and 23 October at the Sebel in Launceston. This is an annual event at which local dieticians and nutritionists can update their knowledge in multiple areas of dietetics and network with other professionals in the field. Topics covered included food security, workplace eating, emergency food relief, malnutrition screening and practice-based research.

The title of Dr Hughes' presentation was 'Research in Practice: Exploring normative and other social influences on food choice and weight management'. The first part of the presentation provided a brief overview of the social norms approach to health promotion,



and the emerging research on normative influences on eating behaviours and weight control. The second part looked at 'research in practice' issues including research support available through UDRH, obtaining ethics approval, and publishing articles.

"I was really pleased to take part in this workshop. Many of my presentations

focus on alcohol issues, so it was refreshing to look at how normative approaches can be utilised to promote healthy eating" said Dr Hughes. "The research shows that perceptions of others' behaviour significantly influence many food-related behaviours, including what, when, where and how much we eat. Approaches which focus on individual 'food choices' may neglect the extent to which eating has a significant social and cultural component", she added.

The presentation concluded with an informal discussion of the opportunities for research involvement at UDRH, including Graduate Research and the PHCRED program.

For further information please contact Dr Clarissa Hughes, Senior Research Fellow, Academic Research Coordinator at Clarissa.Hughes@utas.edu.au.

ARC linkage: Community engagement for productive aging

This rural health study funded through an ARC Linkage grant with the Rural Clinical School has completed its second phase and is now in its third and final phase. The research team is led by Prof **Judi Walker**, and includes UDRH team members Dr **Peter Orpin** and **Kim Boyer**, as well as Dr **Hazel Baynes** (RCS), A/Prof **Andrew Robinson** (Nursing), A/Prof **Elaine Stratford** (Geography and Environmental Studies), **Janet Carty** and **Nadia Mahjouri** (DHHS) and Dr **Carol Patterson** (TasCOSS).

Phase 2 of the project looked at the government policies that support the provision of community and social services to older people in rural Tasmania. The research has shown that the most effective interventions are based on an understanding of relationships between health behaviours or lifestyles and their social and environmental context.

Interventions which promote active rather

than passive social contact are more likely to impact positively on health and well-being.

During phase 3, the researchers found that when it comes to support services, 'one size' does not fit all and that a social entrepreneur approach which can work flexibly with them is a preferred option. This would provide assistance with the things that get a bit harder as people get older, like getting around, making appointments, and staying in touch with what is happening in the community.

For this reason, the research team is developing a model of support that is flexible and based on relationships. This is different to the current way that services are put together.

The research team proposes that a more appropriate model of service supports would have the following elements in communities.

- Helping community members to identify isolated people or those at risk of disconnection so people can be helped to access services.
- Based on developing real relationships and trust with individuals.
- Able to be tailored to meet the needs of individual communities.
- Is run by someone who understands older rural people (perhaps an older rural person!) and has the ability to 'think outside the square' when trying to solve problems with older people in rural communities.

The project is due to conclude in March 2011.

A copy of the Phase 1 Report by Drs Orpin and Baynes, which details the research findings, is available from the authors at: Peter.Orpin@utas.edu.au or Hazel.Baynes@utas.edu.au.

Simulation and interprofessional learning workshop

On Friday 12 November the UDRH convened the 'Capacity Building and Opportunities for Interprofessional Learning (IPL) and Simulation Workshop'.

This collaborative venture involved a number of champions and presenters from the Faculty of Health Science (FHS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) who had the opportunity to showcase their current interprofessional and/or simulation programs and projects.

The statewide workshop was held in Hobart and attracted 27 participants including academics and clinicians from a number of schools in the FHS and the DHHS.

The aims of the workshop were for participants to:

- increase awareness of interprofessional learning and education activities and simulation

activities occurring across Tasmania,

- share knowledge and skills in the application of interprofessional and simulation activities across acute care, community and rural settings,
- consider the professional development and skills needed to provide effective interprofessional education and simulation activities.

Participants had the opportunity for networking and lively discussion with colleagues across the state. This workshop was funded by the FHS through the faculty simulation interest group.

Evaluation of the workshop was very positive overall. Feedback from participants included encouraging more frequent and regular collaborative statewide forums and a proposal to convene a future collaborative FHS/DHHS interprofessional education and practice interest group.

Rural health teaching sites go wireless

The IT infrastructure at the UDRH's Rural Health Teaching Site (RHTS) network is currently being upgraded to include wireless internet connectivity. This is part of the UDRH's ongoing commitment to improving the quality of rural placements for health science students, and in response to feedback received from students at the end of their placements.

The number of students staying at RHTS is expected to increase in 2011. Due to space limitations and privacy concerns it has not been possible to increase the number of desktop computers to allow the level of access required by these additional students. Increasingly, students are also taking their own laptop computers with them on placement and wireless internet services seemed the obvious solution. They will allow more students to access the internet, at the same time, and from the privacy of their own rooms if they want to.

RHTS provide students with self-contained accommodation that includes computers with broadband internet close to local health services. IT infrastructure enables students studying in remote locations to access study materials and complete assignments, and maintain contact with their families while they are away.

E-Health

Recent initiatives such as the National Broadband Network and the Individual Health Identifier scheme introduced by the federal government will enable health informatics and e-health systems such as telehealth, electronic health records, clinical decision support and home monitoring systems to increasingly contribute to improved outcomes in health care. In recent years it has become increasingly common for exchanges between organisations to be in electronic form. It is also increasingly common for patients to arrive for their consultation armed with information about symptoms or conditions gleaned from the internet. More enterprising patients may even have sought advice or a diagnosis through an online consultation. Introduction of these systems will clearly impact on the way health professionals and patients acquire and share information, and interact with one another.

Health professionals who have some

knowledge of e-health will be more able to contribute to the development of effective e-health systems, and more able to use them efficiently in practice. Many professionals are becoming increasingly aware of this and are enrolling in e-health programs to develop their skills and knowledge. A number of programs are offered for both health professionals faced with adopting information management tools into their daily workflow and those thinking of moving into the health informatics field.

The UDRH E-Health (Health Informatics) program, aims to equip graduates with the skills and knowledge to take advantage of emerging e-health systems. It encourages graduates to critically evaluate electronic systems, exploring both the advantages and potential challenges arising from their use. It also offers participants the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to use e-health tools confidently and effectively. The course, with its flexible delivery structure is attracting increasing numbers of students.



E-Health coordinator, Sue Whetton

Congratulations to the following students who graduated in 2010:

Graduate Certificate: Linda Malone, Isuru Amaresena, Karla Peek, Heather Craigie, Philip Shipton, Abel Columba, Marion Davies, Leon Wreyford, John McKitterick

Graduate Diploma: Kay Johnson, Brearne Gibson, Suzanne Gray, Julie Hider, Shane Simpson

Climate change and rural child health



Dr Erica Bell

Deputy Director of the UDRH, Dr **Erica Bell**, is lead editor for an upcoming book published by Nova Science Publishers entitled *Climate change and rural child health*.

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to human health in the 21st Century. Many climate change 'hotspots' lie in rural and remote communities. Within these communities rural children represent a most vulnerable group that has been relatively neglected in the climate change research. Researchers and health professionals have gathered material together in this book to focus international attention on the impacts

of climate change on rural child health and appropriate responses. This book includes contributions from some of the world's leading climate change researchers, who were asked to explore the implications of their research for rural child health. The chapters offer conceptual understandings, implications for health and allied health practice, and analyses of appropriate policy responses. This book examines special issues in climate change and rural child health, providing disease-based analyses as well as consideration of education and development assistance issues. It also offers an examination of country-level issues suggesting the great diversity of impacts and the importance of considering regional effects.

Collectively, the contributions from these diverse authors show that understanding the effects of climate change on rural child health is about developing new ways of understanding interactions between individual health, community, and environment. The chapters suggest how local cultural and social factors, as well as big global events such as the global financial crisis, will continue to shape rural child health. This book explores a new frontier of health research to provide a diverse examination of the needs of this most climate-vulnerable group.

The book is designed to be used as a point of departure for developing climate change research, policy and adaptation responses. It focuses on what the evidence across the disciplines, not just in climate change, suggests for research, policy and adaptation practice.

The principal audience for this book will be researchers, practitioners and health policy-makers around the world wanting an overview of some of the key issues for rural child health in a climate-changing world.

Climate change and rural child health will be released in the first quarter of 2011 and will be available from Nova Science Publishers ISBN: 978-1-61209-014-6.

As part of the UDRH climate change and health program, Dr Bell has published two papers in A-grade journals this year. Bell, E., Horton, G., Blashki, G., Seidel, B "Climate change: Can it help teach adaptive expertise?" was published in *Advances in Health Sciences Education* and "Climate change: What competencies and which medical education and training approaches?" was sole authored by Dr Bell and published in *BMC Medical Education*.

For further information please contact Dr Erica Bell, Deputy Director, A/Director PHCRED at Erica.Bell@utas.edu.au.

Making a difference

UDRH Senior Research Fellow Dr **Clarissa Hughes** was an invited plenary speaker at the recent conference 'Making a Difference in the lives of Children, Youth and People with a Disability'. The conference was organised by the Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania, and was held at Bellerive on 8 September 2010. It brought together service providers from around Tasmania who work with families in the areas of child protection, family support, disability services, youth justice, education, police and child care.

Dr Hughes delivered a presentation on 'Young peoples' health and wellbeing: Stereotypes, perceptions and 'positivity', in which she explored the ways in which negative stereotypes of young people in the media and in everyday communication can have unintended consequences. She demonstrated how focusing on the poor choices or conduct of a minority can unfairly tarnish the reputations (and self-

image) of the majority of young people.

"I was honoured to be invited to speak at this very important conference. It is always rewarding to have the opportunity to interact with people who are working 'at the coalface' to improve the lives of young people and people with a disability", said Dr Hughes.

The presentation gave an outline of the 'social norms' model of health education. "The conference delegates were very receptive to the idea of taking a different approach to health promotion. Several people approached me after my presentation, and affirmed that a risk-focused approach is unhelpful for many young people, particularly those who are already experienced with the use of alcohol or other drugs. They also appreciated the emphasis on the need to learn from young people rather than treating them as problems to be solved".



(From left) Dr Clarissa Hughes (UDRH), Ms Andrea O'Byrne (Child Youth and Families Division, Department of Human Services, Victoria) and Prof Gwynnyth Llewellyn (University of Sydney and Australian Family and Disability Studies Research Collaboration)

PHCRED mentorship scheme

As part of the Primary Health Care Research Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) program, in September, the UDRH launched the 'New Researchers' mentoring program. This program aims to assist primary healthcare practitioners interested in research to pursue their research goals with different kinds of support such as:

- One-on-one mentoring for selected researchers;
- Regular email updates outlining research activities and events;

- Information about research employment opportunities including research assistant/fellow opportunities;
- Information about graduate research opportunities.

There are 27 participants in the program so far from a wide variety of health, allied health and other relevant backgrounds. Already this program has received some very positive feedback with participants reporting they need the tailored flexibility of the program: some of them intend to complete research degrees while others want to use evidence to improve

healthcare in their practitioner roles. The role of the mentors, including our Director **Tony Barnett**, has been critical to the start-up success of the program.

This program will offer ongoing opportunities for achieving tangible research outputs. Some participants have been invited to co-author a chapter for Dr Erica Bell's upcoming edited book on *Translational research methods for primary healthcare*.

For further information please contact Dr **Erica Bell**, Deputy Director, A/Director PHCRED at Erica.Bell@utas.edu.au.

Prostate cancer awareness

A prostate cancer support group will be established in Devonport following a highly successful prostate and sexual health evening held on 17 November.

More than fifty people attended the evening which included presentations by Northern Tasmanian urologist Mr **Michael Monsour** and Mr **David Gregory**, Chairman of the National Support and Advocacy Committee, Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA). Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers

diagnosed in Tasmania. In 2008, 658 men were diagnosed with the disease and 68 died.

Mr Monsour provided an overview of prostate cancer screening and some of the treatment options available. He also talked about sexual health issues such as erectile dysfunction which are often associated with the disease. Mr Gregory spoke about the role of support groups in providing a safe and secure place where people can share their experiences

of the cancer journey. Support groups are an effective mechanism in helping individuals and families cope with the disease and there are currently about 110 PCFA affiliated support groups in Australia.

The UDRH was proud to work with the Cancer Council Tasmania, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, and the Gateway Hotel, Devonport in raising awareness of this important health issue.

Youth health promotion - conference presentation



(Far right) Dr Clarissa Hughes taking part in Holyoake's 'Drumbeat' workshop at the ATDC Conference, led by Mwase Makalani & Judy Tyberek

UDRH Senior Research Fellow Dr **Clarissa Hughes** recently delivered a paper at the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council Conference 'Reducing Harm across the Lifespan', held at the Wrest Point Convention Centre in Hobart from 18 to 20 October 2010.

The conference aimed to raise awareness

of Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs (ATOD) issues at the local, state and national level, and link the increasingly emergent preventative health perspectives with the now traditional notion of harm minimisation. The conference featured a number of high profile speakers from around Australia (including Professor **Steve Allsop**, **Margaret Hamilton**, and **Dennis Gray**) presenting on a broad range of issues relevant to the ATOD sector. Delegates represented government and non-government service providers, policy makers, researchers, and professionals from justice, education and other fields.

Dr Hughes delivered a paper entitled "Challenging times: professionals' views on alcohol-focused health promotion for young people" which was based on qualitative research

undertaken with pre-seed funding from the University of Tasmania. "Alcohol's status as a widely used and legal drug sits uncomfortably with prevention messages that emphasise the dangers of drinking. This project focused on the challenges experienced by range of health and education professionals in delivering alcohol health promotion to adolescents", said Dr Hughes. The paper highlighted questions relevant to prevention practice, including 'Are 'scare tactics' helpful?', 'How can the needs of non-drinkers and 'at risk' students be met?' and was based on interviews of Tasmanian teachers, social workers and other professionals.

UDRH PHCRED research apprentice **Sara Stevens** (Alcohol and Drug Service) also delivered a workshop on the 'Use This' Youth Group Work Program, with colleague **Scott Winters**.

Health impact assessment

Marilyn Wise and **Patrick Harris** from the Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation, University of NSW were in Tasmania recently as part of the UDRH's Professional Development and Community Education Program. Marilyn and Patrick provided a group of 25 Tasmanian health professionals and community practitioners with training in the theory and practice of Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

The HIA process assesses plans, projects, programs and policies before they are implemented, and predicts the health impacts of these proposals. It is both a health protection and health promotion tool in which health is broadly defined to include both health hazards and health benefits.

An outcome of the training, apart from the acquisition of valuable new skills, is the establishment of a HIA interest group which will work to progress the adoption of HIA into Tasmanian Government programs.

Pharmacy news

In 2010 there were two significant parts to the PAUDRH program (Pharmacists Academics at the UDRH) – keeping the program going and pharmacy student placements with a new undergraduate student prize.

The program was threatened with termination in 2011 but by working together with AHREN and DoHA this program is set to continue in the short term. Meetings are underway to work out new guidelines and objectives for the coming year after which a competitive grant process will see additional funding until 2015.

Locally this year, undergraduate students from the School of Pharmacy have had placements in many pharmacies and other health professional workplaces around the state. The contribution of the preceptors is outstanding as they guide our future pharmacists. Rural, community, hospital and elective placements, undertaken in both 3rd and 4th years of the course, showed students the many features and opportunities in their future workplaces.

Many students again took the option to travel interstate as the Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program Student



Placement Allowance covers most travel and accommodation costs. This allows students to see and experience remote health programs at work both in pharmacies and also as part of the wider health workforce.

To encourage these placements in rural areas, the Tasman Pharmacy has awarded an inaugural prize in recognition of the most outstanding assignment in the Elective Placement component of the 4th Year Program. Students wrote about the role of rural pharmacists, the contribution of rural health professionals and their own impressions and contributions to the rural community. They were also required to give two presentations to staff or the community while on this placement. This prize will be awarded at the Graduation Dinner in December.

Accessibility to primary health care

Dr **Quynh Lê**, **Stuart Auckland** and **Andrew Harris** from the UDRH and health service providers in the Meander Valley municipality have completed a research project aimed at enhancing health service provision in the Meander Valley community by examining the relationship between locality, accessibility and outcomes of health care services. This project was funded by the Institutional Research Grant Scheme at UTAS.

This study adopted mixed-methods of research design including survey, interviews and geographic information system (GIS) in its descriptive analysis.

The research findings showed that the entire area of Meander Valley is assessed as being in the lowest 50% in socioeconomic status relative to the rest of Australia, and classified as Outer Regional. The ratio of GPs to residents

is 62 per 100,000, compared with World Health Organisation recommendation of 100, a Tasmanian average of 107, and a national average of 116. On most survey measures, primary health care access was not significantly related to location or socio-economic status.

Qualitative data showed that the main issues of concern were continuity of GP care, absence of dental and after-hours care, and emergency response times. The resourcefulness of people with chronic health issues and their carers emerged as important, as was the relationship between lifestyle choices, alternative and mainstream health care options.

The results suggest that access to primary health care was equitable for this community, but that after hours, emergency and dental care were lacking. Further exploration of the experience and



(from left) Andrew Harris, Dr Quynh Lê and Stuart Auckland

expertise of carers and alternative health practitioners is recommended.

For further information about the project, please contact: Dr **Quynh Lê**, UDRH, Locked Bag 1372, Launceston TAS 7250 or phone: 6324 4053.

TAS framework for postgraduate research student support

The Tasmania Ambulance Services (TAS) and the UDRH have been working collaboratively to promote research capacity building of TAS paramedics. A joint funded bursary of \$10,000 is offered yearly to a successful candidate from TAS to undertake a research higher degree through the UDRH.

To ensure the successful progression of each candidate, the TAS/UDRH Research Support and Advisory Committee has been established. Its membership includes **Peter Morgan**, **Steve Trewin** and **Catherine McNamara** from TAS and A/Prof **Tony Barnett**, Drs **Peter Orpin** and **Quynh Lê**, from UDRH.

It is envisaged that the committee will meet twice a year or more if special

attention is needed to deal with the following matters:

- Supporting the candidate during their candidature;
- Identifying issues which could impact on students' progress;
- Conducting reviews of students' progress; and
- Identifying initiatives and activities which will further enhance the collaboration between TAS and the UDRH (e.g. forum, scholarship, communication, interaction etc.).

Communication between TAS and UDRH on this matter has been progressing well.

UDRH lunchtime seminar series

What do climate change, vitamin D deficiency and the thriving transition cycle have to do with each other? They are all topics which have recently been presented as part of the UDRH's lunchtime seminar series. The seminar series was developed in 1995 to provide a forum through which researchers can present

their work to a statewide audience through the DHHS Telehealth network.

Since then, almost sixty presentations have been made to a varied audience of health professionals, community practitioners, NGO personnel and local government employees.

ACAP bursary

Paramedics practicing in Tasmania are invited to apply for a research capacity building bursary. The bursary, worth \$10,000 is an initiative of the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (Tasmania), Calvary Healthcare and the UDRH.

The bursary will be offered to a paramedic who is interested in developing skills to conduct research with a clear focus on the delivery of pre-hospital care and has relevance to rural and/or remote areas.

The successful applicant will be enrolled in the Graduate Research program through the UDRH.

For more information, please contact **Peter Morgan** on 0418 126 436 or email peterd.morgan@dhhs.tas.gov.au.

Applications should be received by 31 December 2010, marked confidential and addressed to:

Dr **Quynh Lê**
Department of Rural Health
University of Tasmania
Locked Bag 1372
Launceston TAS 7250

Professors Gert Westert and David Karoly

The UDRH has been lucky enough to bring two world-renowned academics to Tasmania recently to share their considerable expertise with diverse groups of healthcare professionals and the broader community.

Prof **Gert Westert** is Head of the Dutch Health Care Performance Report (National Institute of Public Health and the Environment/RIVM) and Professor of Health Services Research at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. He presented to around 50 people, from across the 6 different Tasmanian broadcast locations, on performance and quality of primary care as part of the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) program. His presentation was very well received and it was really fantastic to provide the opportunity for both new and more experienced researchers to discuss developments in primary healthcare with an international colleague of this calibre.



(from left) Prof Gert Westert, Prof David Karoly

Prof **David Karoly** is a widely respected and internationally recognised meteorologist who is currently an ARC Federation Fellow at the School of Earth Sciences at the University of Melbourne. He presented on 26 November about what the latest climate change science means for the planet and, more specifically, for Tasmania. This presentation was also broadcast live to five rural sites around Tasmania as well as to two sites as far away as New Zealand. We were very lucky

to be able to share such an outstanding speaker with the Tasmanian community and engage with such a wide variety of stakeholders on this important issue.

A video of Prof Karoly's presentation will be available to watch on the UDRH website in the near future.

For further information please contact Dr **Erica Bell**, Deputy Director, A/Director PHCRED at Erica.Bell@utas.edu.au.

In Brief

The UDRH is pleased to welcome the following colleagues:

Sarah Adams has joined the UDRH and provides reception and administration support. Sarah has been a welcome addition to the administration team and has settled into the role very well.

A/Prof **Tony Barnett** was appointed Director of the UDRH.

Yvette Massey has continued her secondment with the School of Nursing & Midwifery until December 2011. During this time, **Latha Jeyaraj** will continue to be responsible for providing administrative

and coordination support of graduate coursework including the E-Health program and Master in Health. Latha also assists in the undergraduate area and administers the Bachelor of Nursing and Allied Health Student Support Programs and the Rural Health Teaching Site Program. We are pleased to have Latha continue working with the UDRH students and staff.

The UDRH farewelled Prof **Judi Walker** on 10 November. Judi's legacy at the UDRH was remembered warmly with a number of staff and students providing anecdotes from the early years. Original members

of the UDRH team from the 1990s reminisced over projects and plans that gave the department its early direction under Judi's stewardship. New director A/Prof Tony Barnett completed the link to Monash University, with Judi promising continued partnerships and contact in the future.

Di Martin left the UDRH earlier this year to take up an appointment with Anglicare.

Cecilia Chiu, Media & Marketing Co-ordinator, has taken up a secondment position with the School of Nursing & Midwifery at the University of Tasmania.

Stepping up to the challenge

Congratulations to the UDRH's *3 Amigos + 1* team who were the Launceston winners of the 2010 Active UTAS Walking/Danceorama Challenge and came in 2nd overall across the three campuses. The four diehard walkers, **Sue Whetton**, **Tony Carew**, **Latha Jeyaraj** and **Tony Barnett** chalked up an impressive 3,629,865 steps in total over two months.

Team captain **Sue Whetton** had to crack the whip occasionally to ensure that the walkers kept their daily averages up and entered their totals regularly. Their commitment to the aims of the challenge is clearly demonstrated by the fact that

most team members increased their daily average steps over the eight week period. Sue was looking forward to seeing team members demonstrate their skills at line-dancing but unfortunately because of their busy schedule, they did not make it to that event.

Active UTAS aims to increase physical activity levels of employees across the Hobart, Launceston and Cradle Coast campuses through participation in a variety of physical activities during and outside work hours. This initiative has enabled UDRH staff members in Launceston to enjoy and enthusiastically

participate in yoga, Pilates and Zumba sessions throughout 2010.



UDRH staff enjoying a Zumba exercise class

UDRH capability statement

The University of Tasmania UDRH is a research-focused academic unit that achieves its mission by valuing close, sustained, and responsive relationships with the communities it serves. It is uniquely positioned within an island state and has developed strong strategic alliances with Local Government and the Department of Health and Human Services to promote an evidence-based rural health agenda.

We promote rural health through teaching and supporting the clinical placement of undergraduate students by maintaining 14 teaching sites in rural and remote communities across Tasmania. The UDRH delivers a contemporary continuing education program to working health professionals and also offers a range of

graduate programs in e-health to students in Tasmania and elsewhere.

We welcome graduate research students and create a supportive, learner-friendly environment in which they can undertake their studies. By drawing on a wide range of skill sets and methodological expertise, staff engage in a vigorous and diverse program of high quality rural health research that position the department as locally relevant, nationally competitive and internationally recognised.

Our research strengths are:

- Healthy ageing
- Social norms
- Community health mapping

- Migrant health and wellbeing
- Health policy and translational research
- Climate change and health
- IPE, IPL and health professional education

Other areas we are investing in or "incubating" include:

- Aboriginal health
- Food security
- Health literacy
- Uptake of new technologies
- Mental health
- Participation and transition of rural youth to higher education
- Health workforce

Staff promotions

A very big congratulations to Dr **Erica Bell** and **Sue Whetton** on their successful applications to the UTAS academic promotions committee, chaired by Professor David Rich, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Provost. From 2011, Erica will be "Associate Professor" Bell and Sue will be "Senior Lecturer" Whetton.

Erica has made a very significant contribution to translational research methods for policy and services. Since commencing at UTAS in 2004, she has published 19 journal papers, 5 book chapters, sole-authored a book, *Research for health policy* with Oxford University Press, edited 3 other books, and presented at many conferences. She has also produced 60 applied policy research reports across education and health. Erica has also built community partnerships for excellence in the non-government

sector and has been a key player in the UDRH building research capacity.

Sue joined the UDRH in 1998 to establish the Health Informatics Education and Training Program and currently coordinates the E-Health graduate program. Sue is a leader in the discipline of health informatics, facilitating the increasing focus on socio-technical perspectives in teaching, research and practice. Sue is a Fellow of the Australian College of Health Informatics, a member of the editorial committee for the electronic Journal of Health Informatics and author of *Introduction to health informatics: a socio-technical perspective*, published by Oxford University Press. In recent years, Sue has chaired a number of Faculty of Health Science committees and working groups and is Chair of the Faculty's E-Health Steering Committee.

Islands of aging - UDRH contribution to successful national conference

The UDRH was a major contributor to the recent national conference of the Australian Association of Gerontology, held in Hobart from November 17-19.

Attended by 300 delegates, the conference brought together researchers, policy makers, service deliverers in community, acute and residential settings, and postgraduate students.

The conference theme of building bridges for people, policy and practice was reflected in some exceptional plenary addresses, and in the richness of the concurrent sessions.

Recognition and praise for the UDRH came in a number of ways at the conference:-

- Minister for Health, Hon **Michelle O'Byrne** singled out for praise the 'cutting edge' research being undertaken in ageing in Tasmania through UDRH and the Wicking Institute
- Dr **Peter Orpin**, as convener of the Conference Scientific Program, was recognised for an exceptional contribution in developing a stimulated and balanced program
- Researchers Dr Orpin, **Kim Boyer** and **Karen Herne**, presented papers. They also contributed as chairs of various concurrent sessions.

The conference issues included rural ageing, palliative care and dementia, social inclusion, housing, mental health, nutrition, practice change, carers and consumers, arts and leisure, residential care and workforce.

The full program is available on the AAG website www.aagconference.com.

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From the Director's desk

Hello everyone. My name is **Tony Barnett** and I am absolutely delighted to have recently joined the staff at the UDRH here in this beautiful state of Tasmania (I started work here on 20 July). I have come from Monash University, where I worked for the last 18 years. Prior to that, I was with Deakin University (Warrnambool) and also spent time working in hospitals in both S.A. and Victoria. My background is in nursing and whilst I have worked in both Adelaide and Melbourne, my preference has always been to live and work in the country.



A/Prof Tony Barnett

My research interests include: ageing in rural areas; interprofessional learning, education and practice; as well as more "clinical" health-related topics. The two principal projects I am currently engaged with are: advance care planning in rural residential aged care facilities and, discovering ways by which the capacity of hospitals to accommodate and supervise health professional students can be expanded through Interprofessional Learning (IPL).

A clear strength of the Department here at UTAS, is that it embraces a strong collaborative approach to its research programs and its support for graduate students. As evidenced by many of the stories in this Bulletin, staff are engaged in a range of activities that acknowledge how important multi-disciplinary approaches are to public debate, informing policy and in advancing our knowledge in and around rural health. The variety of challenges that face our rural communities can only truly be solved by respecting and sharing different understandings and by embracing more collaborative approaches to finding solutions to these problems.

Over the past four months, staff have continued to deliver and contribute to a number of conferences, workshops, public lectures, seminar programs. These

have included topics such as: healthy ageing, climate change and health, health impact assessment, vitamin D deficiency, school/work/life transitions, simulation & IPE and, mental health. Through the Memorandum of Understanding we have with the Primary Health Care Reform unit (Tasmanian Government Department of Health and Human Services), planning is underway for Rural Health Week 2011. This event highlights the challenges, potential and celebrates the success of rural health across Tasmania and will be the third time that this week long event has been held. We look forward to working with a range of stakeholders and the many health care organisations that will help make this highlight of next year.

Through the PHC RED scheme, and under the leadership of Dr **Erica Bell**, a number of research "mentees" in Hobart and Launceston are working with UDRH staff to gain skills in research that they can apply within their local community and work environments. Such work complements the research "apprenticeship" scheme and underlies the commitment we have to research supervision and training at all levels. On this same topic, in August, I was privileged to be invited to contribute to the Cradle Coast Campus Research Week in Burnie as a judge of the student research presentations - not an easy task given the high quality of both the presentations and the research.

I have also been fortunate to participate in state-wide forums held to discuss the Federal government's proposals for National Health Reform and Clinical Supervision (Health Workforce Australia). In partnership with Monash University we have also made submissions to the Productivity Commission and to a Working Group established by the AHMAC to develop national guidelines on Advance Health Directives (AHD). Both submissions focussed upon enhancing and supporting ACDs in the rural aged care sector. The health care environment in Australia is clearly undergoing a number of significant changes at this time and it is critical that we recognise this as an opportunity to promote the cause of rural health

The Department is currently reviewing its activities in the context of responding to: health care reform; changes to our (DoHA) KPIs; the higher education Excellence in Research (ERA) and Quality agendas; and the need to continue to engage with rural health care providers across the State. As part of this exercise, we have developed a draft 'capability statement' and undertaken an evidence-based review to clearly identify current areas of research strength and activity. The outcome of some of this work is summarised (see page 11).

In closure, I would like to thank each and every member of staff at the UDRH for their great work and many achievements over the last 12 months and also extend my thanks to our supporters and partners who have all been critical to this effort.

I wish you, your family and friends a happy and safe Christmas and Kung Hei Fat Choy (Happy New Year) for 2011.

Tony Barnett
Director

Upcoming training opportunities:

UDRH Seminar Series

For details, please contact Latha Jeyaraj
(tel: 6324 4042, email:
Latha.Jeyaraj@utas.edu.au)

Presenters: Susan Johns and Karla Peek, UDRH
Subject: Staying healthy: Behaviors and services used by farmers and fishers
Date: 9 February (Wed)
Time: 12:15 – 1:30pm
Venue: Telehealth Studios state wide