



# Rural Health

## GRADUATE RESEARCH NEWS

April 2013

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Issue 1



Photo courtesy of Darren Grattidge

### Welcome

When we have nothing else interesting to talk about, we turn to the weather to fill the conversation gap.

This is untrue, actually the opposite, when I sit down to prepare this Newsletter. Marcel Proust, one of the greatest novelists of 20th century, is on my side with his profound remark: *"A change in the weather is sufficient to recreate the world and ourselves."* Yes, the changing weather in the past seasons has also shown creativity and achievements in the world of our UDRH Rural Health Graduate Research. We can't wait to share them with you!

### Our new candidates

The Rural Health Graduate Research Program has been enriched by the arrival of new students and supervisors. Warmest of welcomes goes to our new research students: Linda Jaffray and Martin Stalker. Linda will be co-supervised by Dr Heather Bridgman and Professor Timothy Skinner. Martin is co-supervised by Drs Quynh Lê, Si Fan and Thao Lê.

### Good news from students

We are so proud and delighted to share the following wonderful achievements of our students:

Dr **John Henshaw** (PhD candidate) and **Annette Loudon** (MMedSci) have passed their thesis examinations. Dr John Henshaw is supervised by Prof **Dominic Geraghty** (Human Life Sciences and Deputy Dean of Graduate Research), Prof **Judi Walker** (Monash University) and Dr **Helen Malcolm**. Annette Loudon is supervised by A/Professor **Tony Barnett** (UDRH) and Dr **Andrew**



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**Williams** (Human Life Sciences). Congratulations to John and Annette and their supervisors.

- **Heather Brookes** (PhD candidate) has submitted her thesis for examination and **Ree Van Galen** will submit hers soon. Heather is co-supervised by Dr **Peter Orpin** and **A/Prof Tony Barnett** (UDRH). Ree is co-supervised by Drs **Clarissa Hughes** and **Christine Stirling** (Nursing and Midwifery).
- **Rowena Mackean** was presented with her award as the City of Clarence Senior Australian of the Year at the Australia Day celebrations in Bellerive, Tasmania. Rowena is supervised by Dr **Peter Orpin** and Professor **Joan Abbott-Chapman** (Menzies Centre).
- **Daniel Terry**, PhD candidate, has been awarded a conference grant for a graduate research student to attend and present a paper entitled "*Recruitment and retention of International Medical Graduates: the experience of living and working in rural Tasmania*" at the 20th WONCA World Conference on Family Medicine – Care for Generation in Prague, Czech Republic, 25 – 29 June 2013.
- **Ha Hoang**, after PhD graduation, was awarded a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Centre for Excellence in Oral Health. She also had her article entitled "*Women's access needs in maternity care in rural Tasmania, Australia: A mixed methods study*" published in *Women and Birth* journal.
- **Yun Yue** had her article entitled "*International Students' Social Engagement and Social Well-being in an Australian Regional Area*" published in *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society*, Volume 2, Issue 3, pp. 119-132.
- Warmest congratulations to the following students for passing the foundation of their candidature. Their candidature has been confirmed: **Robyn Collins, Helen Edwards, Joanne Yeoh, and Deborah Zwolsman**.

## John Henshaw – A journey with happy ending

I was brought up in Bristol and did my medical training in Leeds. I moved to Ireland for my anaesthetic training in Derry and Belfast. There I met Freda, a theatre nurse from Donegal, and we had two girls, Niamh and Ciara. I took an overseas aid job in The Seychelles training nurse anaesthetists, and we stayed there for two years.

We moved to North-West Tasmania and I've worked here ever since, except for a brief period at the Cairns Base Hospital. I did my pain medicine training in Sydney and Freda did her teacher training in Launceston. I combined anaesthetics and pain medicine at the North-West Regional Hospital and was appointed as a Senior

Lecturer at the Rural Clinical School teaching medical students.

I began this doctorate whilst at the RCS. I was fortunate to meet Professor Dom Geraghty, now the Deputy Dean (Graduate Research), who is the world's best supervisor (no bias). He introduced me to the 'thesis by publication' model, especially suited to quantitative research.

The result is three published papers and a PhD as well, not bad for an old bloke! We now live in Wynyard on the beach with our two golden retrievers. Anyone need a supervisor?



Dr John Henshaw (PhD)

## Annette Loudon – A time to say goodbye with a smile



Annette Loudon (MMedSci)

At last the time has come to say goodbye to UDRH and the beautiful shores of Tasmania that I have come to love. In February this year my Master of Medical Science degree was conferred by the University Council. I chose to celebrate with some Tassie friends who had supported me loyally through all the ups and downs of research and thesis writing. One of my pals asked me how I could have spent so much time and effort doing a post-graduate research degree. My answer to her was "how could I not?"

For twenty years I had taught yoga to women with the medical condition of secondary arm lymphoedema from breast cancer treatment. These women continually professed the benefits of their yoga sessions. Due to their special requirements, I had done several courses in lymphoedema management and so developed a specialised yoga system for them. As their medical practitioners were sceptical about the benefits of yoga, the women continually urged me to do research... something I hoped someone else would do if I delayed long enough. It was only when I closed my business in Sydney and did voluntary work in remote central Australia that I finally decided it was time to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching. The reason being that I was surrounded by women with secondary lymphoedema. This occurred because women opted to stay in Alice Springs and have radical surgery and lymph node removal rather than go to Darwin or Adelaide for treatment. This decision was based upon their desire to not leave their families and work.

Tony Barnett and A/Prof Erica Bell.

Her recent publications include:

- Women's access needs in maternity care in rural Tasmania, Australia: A mixed methods study. (2013 – in-press version). *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2013.02.001>
- The commonalities and differences in health professionals' views on home birth in Tasmania, Australia: A qualitative study. (2013). *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, 26(1), 55-59.

Being given the opportunity to contribute to her "home", the UDRH, for the last 5 years is a big reward for Ha. She may still have other challenges in her new role but she knows that once she passes them, excitement will come!



Dr Ha Hoang (Postdoctoral Fellow)

## Oral health to be featured at the annual PHC RIS conference

Energetic, enthusiastic, and proactive are the ongoing driving forces of The University of Tasmania's Department of Rural Health (UDRH) team. They are leading research projects dealing with "rural oral health" for the Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) in Primary Oral Health Care. Dr Leonard Crocombe is leading a project titled "*Dental Practitioners: Rural Work Movements*", A/Prof Tony Barnett on "*Relationship of dental practitioners to rural primary care networks*", and A/Prof Eric Bell on "*Oral health policy: International policy implications for Australia.*"

The Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) has sponsored a one hour symposium at the annual PHC RIS conference in

And so began my journey into the techno world of document delivery, Endnote, statistics, formatting a thesis and navigating the UTAS website. The actual research was a pleasure due to the wonderful volunteer support I received from breast cancer and lymphoedema therapists, other students and my wonderful research participants in Lonnie and Hobart, not to mention the generous donations of food from local stores I received for the measuring sessions.

In spite of the turmoil and exhaustion I experienced at times, I have come away from this experience believing that research is a valid and ethical practice that we as practitioners should embrace and learn from in order to advance our learning and endeavour in our chosen field. My research has led to huge interest from medical and yoga professionals and from the people who have lymphoedema as well as from community groups. It has led to publications, conference and community presentations, an accredited training course for yoga teachers, the submission by UTAS for a larger scale research project on the same topic and hopefully one day the making of a yoga DVD for women with lymphoedema.

After my pals and I shared morning tea to celebrate my degree, my always supportive partner and I went into the remote south-west area of Tasmania for several nights. Walking amongst the giants of the forest, I finally was able to think of the beauty of the moment rather than the turmoil of my study. It was in this quietude that I could finally agree with my chief supervisor, A/Professor Tony Barnett, who tried to calm my cries of anguish at the demands of post-graduate study with the seemingly simple reassurance that as humans we strive to answer the questions that confront us, in spite of the difficulties and challenges that this inevitably brings. However, the greatest achievement of my research has been the excitement of women with secondary lymphoedema from breast cancer to have another proven method of self-management for their lifelong condition. In the words of one:

*When you go through the yoga, if you can just lay there at the end, the pain's not there; there's no heaviness, the lightness is just absolutely wonderful, and you'd like to actually stay there...*

## Ha Hoang – Journey from PhD study to Postdoctoral Fellowship

Two words that could closely describe Ha's academic journey so far: challenges and excitement! Undertaking a research degree coupled with raising a young family was challenging for her. However, with great support from her family and the UDRH staff including her supervisors, she was awarded with a PhD degree in August 2012. Her journey was getting even more exciting after her PhD graduation in that she obtained a position with the Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) in Primary Oral Health Care at the UDRH as a postdoc fellow. Since then, she has been enjoying working with and been mentored by the other team members of the CRE, Dr Leonard Crocombe, A/Prof

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Sydney on 10 – 12 July focusing on the CRE in Primary Oral Health Care. Dr Leonard Crocombe will showcase the four research themes of the CRE: *Successful ageing and oral health, rural oral health, Indigenous oral health, and the oral health of people with physical & intellectual disabilities*. He will present some of A/Prof Bell's results that show that oral health policy was so different from research evidence as to raise doubts about whether the policies were evidence-based.

## The most wonderful news: Dr Melinda Minstrell and the new baby

UDRH former student Melinda Minstrell (PhD 2012) and husband Andrew Nettlefold welcomed Eliza Jade to their family on 16 December 2012. Melinda's daughters served as 'bookends to her thesis', with her eldest daughter, Mackenna, being born after collecting - what she thought was - the majority of her data, and the newest addition arriving 4 months after graduation! Melinda is cherishing her time with her children, and appreciating UTAS' supportive maternity leave from her postdoctoral role with the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre where she will return later this year.



Mackenna and Eliza (Dr Minstrell's children)

## Daniel Terry – Conquering research Mt Everest!

*"No one who cannot rejoice in the discovery of his own mistakes deserves to be called a scholar."* - Donald Foster (1950)

As the summer ends in a few short days, I am reminded that the best time of year is about to commence; the colours, the warm days and chilly crisp evenings of autumn. However I am not looking forward to getting home in the dark at the end of each day again. As I reflect in disbelief over the disappearance of the past six months, I am reminded that a lot has gone on in my cosy cubical.



Daniel Terry  
(PhD Candidate)

A colleague in our office said to me that he has not seen me away from my desk since we moved in more than six months ago. I assured him that I did emerge from the office occasionally, particularly when the moon is full. All jokes aside, the past six months has been full of data collection, transcribing, analysis and profuse writing. I have worked as part of a team on a project examining the workplace based assessment processes for IMGs at the Launceston General Hospital, amongst other projects, and presented local oral presentations over this time.

In between all the excitement, I have also prepared and completed many chapters of my thesis and in one case I had to completely re-write a whole chapter. It was devastating at the time; it was a real low point, however it was a gentle reminder that I was not infallible. As I reflect, I think it was this fact that was more demoralising than the need to re-write.

Regardless of this set back, I regrouped, had long hard look at myself and the direction the chapter needed to go. I realised I was making the chapter more complicated than it needed to be – I often need to remind myself of the 'keep it simple' method. I think the largest contribution to my studies was the ability to pick myself, shake off the dust and keep going. I was grateful for the insight gained through supervisors – although it was tough at the time. I have since completed a total re-write of the chapter.

As we reach those ebbs and flows of the thesis journey, we realise it is not in vain, but part of the learning process and the development of becoming a scholar.

## Dr Maria Yue – Postcard from Beijing

The cold winter is starting to kiss goodbye to Beijing, and I remember well that Tasmania is now in the middle of autumn. I must say this is the nostalgic time in my life when I look at the grey sky wishing that I were right now in romantic Tasmania, where heaven and earth meet to create a paradise in my heart and mind.

After graduating from the University of Tasmania with UDRH as my research home sweet home, like many other graduates, I kept wondering what would happen to my career and where would be the next door step of my destiny. Wonderfully I did not have to wait long.

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South Cape and South West Cape to Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour and then on to Macquarie Harbour and the Gordon and Franklin Rivers.

My study explores the relationship between connectedness to nature, anxiety and psychological well-being in a changing climate in Tasmania.

The academic literature on connectedness to



*La Golondrina*

nature distinguishes different typologies based on fundamental characteristics (attitudes, knowledge, views, perceptions) of the human species and values placed by people on the natural environment describing cognitive, spiritual, emotional and physical ways of connecting to nature. On the journey I was able to witness tangible evidence of the way in which people, who had passed before me, had connected with nature in the rugged and remote south west.

At Stephens Bay on the south west coast we saw extensive midden sites perhaps hundreds and possibility thousands of years old and reflected on the spiritual and physical connection Tasmanian Aboriginal people have with the land.



*Aboriginal midden site at Stephens Bay, South West Tasmania*



*Dr Maria Yue at Beijing University, China*

I have just been offered a wonderful job: research fellow at Beijing University, one of the top universities in the world! Sometimes dream and unpredictability turn into reality.

As I wrote in my previous email, UDRH gave me its outstanding academic support that opened a new career development window for me. Now I am embarking on a new life journey in historic Beijing, but I will never forget those at the UDRH who prepared the safe luggage for me to move ahead in my career and life.

All the best wishes from Maria, Beijing University!



*Beijing University, China*

## Christine Matera – Delving into PhD studies on another level

Towards the end of February I took a much needed break which resulted in some unexpected bonuses for my doctoral studies. I set off from Kettering on board a charter boat the La Golondrina with three other couples to explore Tasmania's SE and SW coast, and found myself immersed in nature and the wonder of Tasmania's rugged coast; its harbours and anchorages, coastal caves, wild rivers and wildlife.

We travelled via South East Cape, Maatsuyker Island,



*View from the summit of Mt Rugby overlooking Bathurst Harbour and Tasmania's South Coast*

We travelled up the Gordon and Franklin Rivers where in 1982-83 thousands of people were driven by a connection to nature to blockade the river and ultimately save the rivers from being dammed and the inundation of 35% of Tasmania's South West Wilderness.



*Gordon River*

We spent time in Bathurst Harbour visiting the home of Win and Clyde Clayton who lived in the south west wilderness and worked their fishing boat in some of the most treacherous waters in the world. We visited Deny King's home and the abandoned south west tin mines at Melaleuca. We saw huge logs of Huon pine cut tens of years earlier washed up on beaches miles from where they had been cut by the early loggers for boat building.

The trip has lead me on an extraordinary journey physically, mentally and emotionally and as a result I have come to a deeper understanding of the academic literature around connectedness to nature and the notion that humans derive both physical and psychological benefit from spending time in nature.

## Alexandra King – Rural Health Graduate Research student representative

Alexandra King (PhD Candidate) has kindly accepted the invitation to be the Rural Health Graduate Student Representative. Alexandra's role is to represent the interests of graduate students across the Department. Graduate research students are welcome to contact Alexandra if they would like to discuss any issues concerning HDR candidature in the Department. A quarterly email to Rural Health graduate research students will be sent from Alexandra if they need any support from their fellow students and or reflection on recent conference/ seminar. Alexandra can be contacted at [Alexandra.King@utas.edu.au](mailto:Alexandra.King@utas.edu.au)



*Alexandra King  
(PhD Candidate)*

## Reflecting on the 2012 Rural Health Graduate Research Symposium

Each time I drive past the Tramsheds just outside our Inveresk campus, I can't help feeling my heart beating at the thought of the Rural Graduate Research Symposium which was held on 12 November 2012. It seems so far away, but also as vividly close as the events of yesterday.

The fond memories come back with images of Research students, staff, friends of Rural Health from Melbourne, Hobart, Burnie and other rural areas coming to the Tramsheds, our Symposium venue, to share their research



*Rural Health Graduate Research Symposium, 12 November 2012, Tramshed Conference Centre, Launceston*

journeys, with interesting presentations and wonderful achievements to share.

It was great to have Dr **Sonia Allen** of Monash University and Professor **Gerard Gill** of Deakin University as our keynote speakers. The highlight of last year's symposium was a Q & A style session conducted by Professor **Dominic Geraghty**. But of course, it was the graduate research students who were our shining stars of the symposium: joining the organising team, presenting papers, performing multicultural activities such as singing, dancing, fashion showing, and joke-telling. Added to all this excitement, the food was incredibly tasty!

We look forward to our next symposium this November in Hobart.



*Snapshots of students, supervisors and staff at the Rural Health Graduate Research Symposium, Tramsheds, Launceston - 12 November 2012*

## Collaborative Graduate Research Student Support Program 2013

The program has been running this year by videoconference to several locations including Sydney and I am very pleased to report that the sessions have been well attended by RHDs and staff. The feedback from students at the Sydney Campus has been terrific. It is great that we are able to reach so many students and staff who have been able to benefit from the wealth of knowledge to be gathered.

We would like to thank the Graduate Research supervisors and staff who have given of their time to pass on their knowledge and their passion to our students. The updated Collaborative Research Program for the rest of the year can be found at: <http://www.utas.edu.au/rural-health/graduate-research/support-program>

## Event calendar in 2013

- **Introduction to statistics for health professionals**, Wednesday 8th May, 12 noon-2.00pm, videoconference - Dr Thomas Hartley.
- **Questionnaire construction: validity and reliability**, Wednesday 29th May, 12 noon-2.00pm, videoconference – Dr Thomas Hartley.
- **Auto-ethnography: Reflections on Play Therapy education**, Wednesday 19th June, 12 noon-2.00pm, videoconference – Dr Judi Parson.
- **Managing your supervisor**, Wednesday 17th July, 12 noon - 2.00pm. Videoconference – Professor Steve Campbell.

- **Accessing personal health records and tips for managing data in research**, Wednesday 7th August, 12 noon-2.00pm – Drs Lindsay Smith and Penny Allen
- **Thesis submission process**, Tuesday 20th August, 12 noon - 2.00pm – Professor Dominic Geraghty.
- **Using SPSS for understanding and analysing data – Part 1** (face to face session only), Wednesday 28th August, 12 noon – 3.00pm – Daniel Terry and Dr Quynh Lê.
- **Using SPSS for understanding and analysing data – Part 2** (face to face session only), Wednesday 18th September, 12 noon - 3.00pm – Daniel Terry and Dr Quynh Lê
- **Coding your interview data samples** (face to face session only), Wednesday 9th October, 10.30 – 3.00pm – Dr Peter Orpin.
- **NVivo 10 workshop** (face to face session only) 2days, Wednesday 30th & Thursday 31st October, Sue Bullen.
- **Rural Health Graduate Research Symposium** (TBA), November 2013, Hobart.

The UDRH Graduate research stories are numerous and inspirational. This does not mean that it is all smooth sailing for all of us. There are moments of thoughts wandering in a vast sky and wondering “Why I am here?” or “When will the blue sky come up in my horizon?” However, with determination, positivity and creativity, the journey will come to the end with a smile on our face: “I have done it! Yes I have done it my way!” as Robert Frost beautifully wrote in his poem:

*The two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Quynh Lê and Kim Izard



Photo courtesy of Darren Grattidge