

Included in this Issue:

Rural Health Teaching Site network grows from strength to strength	2
Sue Kilpatrick proposes innovative solutions to skills shortages in health	2
Rosemary Cane presents encouraging results from Dental Undergraduate Placement program	3
Support Program sharpens students' research skills	3
UDRH Tasmania hosts the ISN national meeting	4
UDRH helps build brighter futures for children in Burnie	4
The North West leads the way in Health Careers Education	5
UDRH supports professional development of Australian physiotherapists	5
UDRH papers at "Senses of Place" Conference	6
Quynh Lê wins double grants to advance her knowledge in spatial analysis	6
UDRH research student's work reaches a wider audience	7
May Shaw Health Centre	8
Health research that speaks to policy makers and practitioners	8
UDRH Service Design Study accepted in top international journal	9
Martin Harris shares his expertise on men & suicide	9
Quynh Lê elaborates on cultural meaning in health communication	10
UDRH volunteering study makes a stage in international publication	10
Rosalind Bull conducted a preceptorship workshop for ANZ radiotherapists	10
UDRH paper accepted for SPERA's National Rural Education Conference	11
UDRH Seminar 6 - Designing a residential service for adolescents with substance abuse issues	11
Upcoming training opportunities	12
Briefs	12

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From the Director's Desk

Welcome to the June edition of the UDRH Rural Health Bulletin. This edition is available in both paper and electronic format. We had an enthusiastic response to our first electronic Rural Health Bulletin in April. There will be two paper issues and five electronic Bulletins this year. Details of how to subscribe to the emailed electronic Bulletin are on page 7 of this issue.

A highlight of the last two months has been the opening of two new Rural Health Teaching Sites, one at Swansea and the other at Nubeena. I was delighted to meet rural health professionals, local government members and staff, and other interested community members at the opening ceremonies.

The commitment of both communities to the training of our future rural health workforce is impressive and I know that students who take their work placements in Swansea and Nubeena will be exposed to an excellent experience of rural practice, while staying in very comfortable accommodation.

In both centres students have access to placements with GPs and rural pharmacies. At Nubeena, the Tasman Multipurpose Service welcomes students, while at Swansea there is the May Shaw Health Centre. May Shaw CEO **Jeanette Voss** has been the driving force behind the establishment of a Rural Health Teaching Site in Swansea. The May Shaw Health Centre is this issue's featured Rural Health Partner on page 8.

A successful Health Careers Education program was run on the North West Coast in May using a new model developed by the UDRH and the Rural Clinical School with health professionals on the North West Coast. See the photos in this issue on page 5.

In April, we hosted the national meeting of the Australian Rural Health Education Network's (ARHEN) Indigenous Staff



Associate Professor Sue Kilpatrick

Network, which is made up of people working around the nation in the eleven University Departments of Rural Health. The group of 15 spent a very productive three days working on a paper and discussing issues of mutual interest. Despite the very cold weather immediately after Easter, they all said they had a great time in Tasmania.

In this issue you will read about UDRH's work with Centacare on its Communities for Children project in Burnie. There are reports of some nine papers and conference presentations that showcase the outcomes of current and recent projects.

We have welcomed **Michelle Westerink** to our research team. Michelle has been appointed under the Researcher Development Program, which is part of the Department of Health and Ageing's Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development program.

Don't forget to check out the UDRH's seminar series for topics of interest to you. These seminars and other professional development opportunities are listed on our website (www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/events/).

I hope to see you at a UDRH seminar, or one of the other learning opportunities on offer!

Sue Kilpatrick
Associate Professor and Director

Rural Health Teaching Site Network Grows from Strength to Strength

2006 is a year of expansion for the UDRH's Rural Health Teaching Site (RHTS) network. In May, the UDRH, local governments and health professionals in the community were excited to witness the opening of two new Rural Health Teaching Sites in Swansea and Nubeena, which will provide health science students undertaking placements in these rural areas with quality accommodation and IT facilities.

The two RHTSs are results of close collaboration between the UDRH and

the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and the Tasman Council. Both councils have been instrumental in the refurbishment of both properties, offering helpful technical advice and project management support.

Both RHTSs will be operated in partnership with local health care providers. The Swansea RHTS will be jointly run by the UDRH and the May Shaw Health Centre, while the Tasman RHTS will be run by the UDRH and the Tasman Multipurpose Service.

Prof **Gail Hart**, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) of the University of Tasmania, the Hon **Paul Calvert**, President of the Senate and the Tasman Council Mayor **Roger Self** officiated at the opening ceremony.

Prof Hart stressed the importance of a positive rural placement experience as a strong incentive for students to consider working and living in a rural community as a graduate. This was echoed by Senator Calvert who pinpointed the current workforce shortages of health professionals in rural and remote areas.



(From left) Jeanette Voss, CEO, May Shaw Health Centre, Mayor Howard Harris, A/Prof Sue Kilpatrick and Lisa Wardlaw-Kelly at the Swansea RHTS Opening

Both commended the UDRH for its efforts to help attract and retain health professionals in rural Tasmania.

Officiating guests at the Swansea RHTS opening were UDRH Director A/Prof **Sue Kilpatrick**, Mayor **Howard Harris** of the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and **Lisa Wardlaw-Kelly**, State Manager, Health Programs, Tasmanian State Office of the Department of Health and Ageing.

Both communities express their strong support for the RHTS and welcome the students into the region.



(From left) Prof Gail Hart, Mayor Roger Self, Senator Paul Calvert and A/Prof Sue Kilpatrick at the Nubeena RHTS Opening

Sue Kilpatrick Proposes Innovative Solutions to Skill Shortages in Health

UDRH Director A/Prof **Sue Kilpatrick** presented a paper to over 100 delegates at the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council Conference in Brisbane on 6–7 June. The title of her paper is *"Innovative solutions to skill shortages in health: Research & practice"*.

This paper reports preliminary findings from a project funded by the National Council for Vocational Education Research. The project explores solutions to current and projected skills shortages within the health and community services sector, from a vocational education and training perspective. Its purpose is to locate, analyse and disseminate information about innovative models of health training and service delivery that have been developed in response to skill shortages.

Sue began with a brief overview of

Australian statistics and literature on the structure of the national health workforce and perceived skill shortages. The impact of location (State and rurality), demographics of the workforce, and other relevant factors, were examined.

Drawing on a synthesis of the Australian and international literature on innovative and effective models for addressing health skill shortages, approximately 50 models were selected for further study. Models were also identified from nominations by key stakeholders within the health sector.

Sue reported the key characteristics of models selected for further study. The models represent a mixture of innovative service delivery models and training solutions from Australia, as well as international examples that could be transposed to the Australian

context. They include the skill ecosystem approach facilitated by the former Australian National Training Authority Skill Ecosystem Project.

Models were selected to represent diversity in terms of the nature of skill shortage addressed, barriers overcome in development of the model, health care specialisations, and different customer groups.

The presentation was concluded with a synthesis of the key findings from these models that will provide valuable information for health practitioners and policy makers to inform the development of innovative solutions to skills shortages in health. This includes information on barriers and enhancers to training and innovative delivery, features of effective models, and criteria for good practice.

Rosemary Cane Presents Encouraging Results from Dental Undergraduate Placement Program in Tasmania

Dr **Rosemary Cane**, UDRH Junior Research Fellow, will present the paper, *"Evaluating enhanced learning outcomes during a dental undergraduate extramural placement"* at the 84th General Session of the International Association of Dental Research. The conference is being held in Brisbane from 28 June to 1 July 2006.

The presentation reports on how learning outcomes were enhanced during the inaugural dental undergraduate clinical placement program conducted in Tasmania in late 2005. This program has been undertaken by a collaborative partnership formed between the Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Tasmania with a view to increasing the educational opportunities for the Tasmanian oral health workforce and as a recruitment strategy.

Since Tasmania does not have a dental school, the collaborative partnership encompassed the additional dimension of an interstate dental school at the University of Adelaide. Areas evaluated included the clinical learning processes (clinical supervisors' and students' perception of assessment processes and features of experiential learning), the student operator profiles using the Exact Information System (number of patients, items of treatment, visit type), and the relationship of the stakeholders.

The evaluation found that learning

outcomes were enhanced by varying the mix of clinical experiences, providing high quality support staff and developing strong stakeholder relationships. In turn, these factors had a positive impact on public dental practice by raising the profile of best practice, increasing staff sense of worth and restoring a balance between comprehensive and episodic dental services for patients who received dental care during the placement program. The willingness to debate, negotiate and work as a team were key features of the planning and implementation phases and sound processes have been set in place which can be applied and built upon in future

extramural placements.

Areas identified for follow up included, methods to increase local and interstate specialist academic staff input on treatment planning for paediatric and special needs patients, which would mutually benefit students' learning experiences, oral health outcomes for patients and continuing professional development for Tasmanian public sector staff. The learning outcomes would also be further enhanced by the development of an assessment process that is practical and reflects the broad range of care, clinical conditions and the level of student's clinical experience.

Overall, the 2005 program was seen to be a very positive learning experience, with highly motivated and enthusiastic students responding well to the new environment. The program was found to meet its educational objectives in providing appropriate experience in integrated comprehensive care, the development of coordinated treatment plans and confidence in diagnosis and treatment planning.

Three of the four students relocated to Tasmania to work following graduation, with a further two dentists relocating with their partners. The next placement program will take place in August/September 2006, with an increased number of students undertaking their placement in newly constructed clinical facilities in Launceston.



Dr Rosemary Cane

Support Program Sharpens Students' Research Skills

May was a busy time for the PhD and Masters candidates at Rural Health with workshops in the student support program catering to the needs of research higher degree candidates at different places on their research journey.

The mix of workshop facilitators reflects the growing levels of inter-school and inter-faculty collaboration and cooperation that the Rural Health graduate research program is achieving. Face-to-face and multi-site videoconference workshops were offered and well attended.

Developing cogent arguments within the results and discussion chapters

of a thesis was the focus of School of Sociology & Social Work's Associate Professor **Gary Easthope's** workshop. Developing this theme further, Associate Professor **Margaret Barrett** of the School of Education facilitated an animated discussion around the construction of compelling arguments from a whole-of-thesis perspective. UDRH Research Fellow Dr **Erica Bell** grasped the publication nettle, with the translation of research theses to papers suitable for publication in academic journals as the main theme of her session.

A lively session enhancing candidates' ability to develop and write researchable questions was provided by UDRH

Research Fellow Dr **Clarissa Hughes** and Dr **Andrew Robinson** of the School of Nursing built on the lessons learnt in this session with his workshop on Research Design. Recording the analytical, methodological and ethical decisions that are made during a research study was the focus of a workshop offered by UDRH Deputy Director Dr **Rosalind Bull**.

The next Rural Health Graduate Research School will take place on 21 – 22 June 2006 where students will present their research findings and there will be a plenary session to discuss successes of the Research School and improvement areas.

UDRH Tasmania Hosts the ISN National Meeting

Recently the University Department of Rural Health, Tasmania was the host for a national meeting of the Indigenous Staff Network (ISN).

ISN members are Indigenous people who work with UDRHs across Australia. As a collective group, ISN members are able to share information and resources towards positive outcomes in relation to Aboriginal health and wellbeing. The members have a diverse range of skills that include student support and student services, recruitment and marketing, lecturing, development and delivery of cultural programs, research, advisory, advocacy, policy, etc.

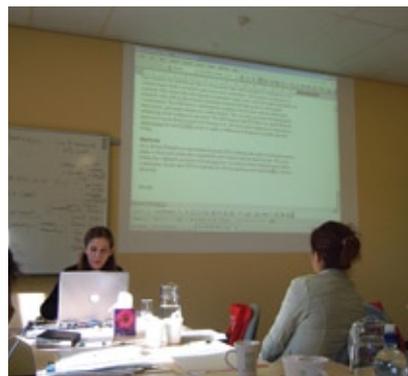
At the ISN national meeting held in Launceston on 18 – 19 April, staff of the UDRH Tasmania welcomed the ISN members with a morning tea. Guest speakers and an ABC rural radio reporter were also invited.

The ISN takes pride in including and visiting local Aboriginal people in the areas where the Network meets. This not only gives the ISN a visual appreciation and respect of the local people, places and issues, but also enables the Aboriginal community to ask questions in relation to the ISN.

The Tasmanian weather put on an incredible show and it rained consistently and snowed while the ISN were in Tasmania, which highlighted one of the differences in Aboriginal needs across Australia where some people need access to water and others need shelter and warmth.

In response to the request from the ISN members for assistance in putting together a drafted article with the aim towards publication, Tasmanian UDRH Research Fellow **Dr Erica Bell** facilitated a writing workshop and was able to help the ISN formulate a wonderful abstract.

Erica listened to each ISN member attending and was able to produce a working visual document which enabled the members to review what they had said.



Dr Erica Bell facilitating the writing workshop for ISN members

The ISN members enjoying a rare glimpse of sunshine during their stay in Tasmania



UDRH Helps Build Brighter Futures for Children in Burnie

UDRH is working as consultant and local evaluator with Centacare Tasmania, the facilitating partner for the Commonwealth Government funded Communities for Children project in the Burnie municipality. The Communities for Children project aims to help families and communities build better futures for children, build family and community capacity, support relationships between families and the communities they live in, and improve communities' ability to help themselves. There are 45 projects around Australia.

The UDRH will be advising the facilitating partner on applying evidence in their initiative design and implementation, and also providing consultancy to local initiatives in relation to evaluation, management information and data collection and analysis.

UDRH Research Fellow **Dr Pat Millar** and Honorary Associate **John Guenther** will be working with UDRH Director A/ Prof **Sue Kilpatrick** on the

project. They also work on the Southern Tasmania Communities for Children project, in which the facilitating partner is the Salvation Army.

Burnie is disadvantaged in a number of ways, with high levels of unemployment, low income families and single parent families, and with significant needs in terms of children in the early years.

The Communities for Children project has a vision for the community to "support its babies and young children to have the best possible start in life to enhance their future health and well-being". The team has just accepted tenders to deliver the first activities in line with the program's five local strategies, which are:

- **Eat Right Grow Bright:** promoting healthy young families, with a central focus of the strategy being empowerment of families.
- **Connecting and Protecting:** supporting families and parents by

connecting them with the community and the network of supports that enhance parent child relationships and family well being.

- **Socialising, Interaction and Care:** focusing on early learning and care and involving families and young children in a variety of opportunities to enhance social and emotional development.
- **Child Friendly Infrastructure:** promoting child friendly communities, raising knowledge and awareness of the Burnie community regarding the issues and importance of the early years for the children and their families.
- **Quality Service:** assisting families and children's services to work effectively as a system.

Dr Pat Millar and John Guenther recently gave a presentation on evaluation requirements and outcomes evidence gathering to the project committee.

News from the Rural Clinical School

The North West Leads the Way in Health Careers Education

In May, 40 students from six high schools in the north-west region took part in a pilot program to promote careers in health. The program, the brain child of a team of academics, teachers and health professionals from the University of Tasmania's Faculty of Health Science, the Tasmanian Education Department, and the North West Regional Hospital was held at the Rural Clinical School in Burnie and used a mix of activities based on simulating the health sector workplace, reflecting a multi-disciplinary approach to health care and modeling case-based learning scenarios.

The program was facilitated by health professionals themselves and feedback from participating students has been overwhelmingly positive.

Team member and program coordinator, **Rosalie Maynard**, explained: "In this program, we have developed a dynamic learning opportunity for students that encompasses all the good aspects of the former 'work experience' program many schools were engaged with, and expands

on these to help students learn about a broad range of health professions. Students do this by meeting the health professionals themselves, working on activities together and spending time talking with them in small groups."

Prof **Judi Walker**, Professor of Rural Health and Chief Executive of the Rural Clinical School said: "By working in partnership with the NW Regional Hospital and the Department of Education, the University hopes to be instrumental in developing initiatives in health careers education, such as this program. It will be an effective tool in encouraging young people in our region to consider a career in health. For a region that has a severe shortage of health professionals, this is an important building block in the long-term goal of improving health services to the community."

Post-program student evaluations revealed that 87% of the group affirmed that a health career was their first priority, 89% said that the program had

influenced their career plans and 95% said they were more motivated to become health professionals.

The program provided an interactive learning experience that was highly valued by students and identified a strong cohort of students who are interested in working in the health professions, in undertaking study in the region, and in eventually working professionally in their own community. In this way, the program has underpinned the value of a "grow your own" approach to developing workforce capacity in regional Tasmania.

Students from Wynyard High School said in their newsletter report: "Now many of us have a clear idea of what we want to do as a health career in the future."

A team of 45 health professionals and students of health sciences were involved in the delivery of the program which is scheduled for a repeat in August of this year.



Students from 6 high schools meet together to talk about health career



Students get "hands on" training in how to take blood pressures

UDRH Supports Professional Development of Australian Physiotherapists

The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA), Tasmanian Branch organised a professional development and collegial meeting in April, with the support of a UDRH Professional Education Bursary.

Entitled "Ageing Gracefully", the APA forum and workshop took place on the

Launceston Campus of the University of Tasmania from 29 to 30 April and attracted 56 physiotherapists. Topics covered in the two-day workshop included falls prevention, risk assessment and balance measurement.

Committed to providing professional development opportunities for rural

health professionals, the UDRH offers Professional Education Bursaries to organisations wishing to offer specialised professional development to a state wide audience in partnership with the UDRH. Please contact rural.health@utas.edu.au for more information on Professional Education Bursaries.

UDRH Papers at the “Senses of Place” Conference

Three papers by UDRH members were presented at the “Senses of Place” International Conference, held in Hobart at the University’s Fine Art Centre from 6 to 8 April. The inter-disciplinary conference was the inaugural conference of the Place Research Network (website www.utas.edu.au/placenet) linked with the University of Tasmania’s research theme area of Community, Place and Change, and was run in conjunction with the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. It was designed to showcase research into aspects of place, place attachment and the experience of place from many different perspectives. Rural communities, rural identities and the attraction of rural places formed part of this focus.

The paper by UDRH Director A/Prof **Sue Kilpatrick**, Junior Research Fellow **Susan Johns** and Associate Lecturer **Jessica Whelan** entitled “Partnerships and place: Mobilising resources from outside” explored ways in which rural communities benefit from partnerships with outside services and resource

providers in the provision of health and education services.

Subsequent to this conference presentation, Sue was interviewed by the ABC Country Hour on 10 April. She highlighted the importance of developing a “sense of place” among health practitioners in attracting and retaining them in rural Tasmania. Please visit www.abc.net.au/rural/tas/content/2006/s1612778.htm for the ABC News Online report.

In their paper entitled: “Places of the heart: A celebration of adolescents’ favourite places as ‘identity space’”, UDRH Honorary Fellow **Joan Abbott-Chapman** and **Margaret Robertson** of the Faculty of Education discussed research findings from a survey of Tasmanian secondary school students, which revealed adolescents’ expressed need for places apart inside and outside the home, especially in the natural environment, in which to escape pressures and to make sense of the fast moving world in which they live.

UDRH PhD student **Anna Spinaze**, in a paper entitled “‘I’m a rural and remote person’: Place and identity construction for health care professionals in rural and remote Tasmania”, documented Tasmanian health care professionals’ (HCP) experiences of connection to particular rural and remote places, and argued that recruitment and retention of HCPs in rural areas are dependent upon individual identity construction and confirmation through “experiential place integration”.

All sessions were well attended and the papers attracted a good deal of discussion. Conference Convenor Professor **Frank Vanclay** of the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research plans to publish an edited book of selected, peer reviewed conference papers, to be supported by the National Museum of Australia.

Conference abstracts are available at www.utas.edu.au/placenet/senses/SENSESbook.pdf.

Quynh Lê Wins Double Grants to Advance her Knowledge in Spatial Analysis

2006 is a fruitful year for Dr **Quynh Lê**, Lecturer in Rural Health, even though it is only halfway through.

Quynh has obtained a scholarship to attend the Geospatial Information System (GIS) and Population Science Workshop to be held at the University of California, Santa Barbara, from 9 - 22 July, 2006. The scholarship covers the course fee, travelling expenses to Santa Barbara, and accommodation.

She was thrilled to learn that her application was successful as competition has been very keen with only three sponsorships available to candidates in Australia.

Quynh looks forward to attending this two-week workshop as there will be a vast array of spatial data available. The workshop will encourage participants to think critically and creatively about how different forms of spatial data can be integrated into their research, and will introduce them to the spatial

analytical methods that are increasingly encountered in demographic inquiry. Hands-on exercises and demonstrations will cover issues associated with spatial data handling, e.g., address-matching, deriving new variables, integrating different types of contextual data as well as using spatial analysis tools within a GIS for data visualisation and modelling.

The workshop will focus on applications and demonstrations drawn from studies of urban poverty, neighbourhood research, racial/ethnic diversity, maternal and child health and wellbeing, and population-environment relations. Similarly, workshop lab exercises will be based on demographic and other socio-economic and health-related data commonly used by population scientists.

The international workshop is organised by the US National Institutes of Health supported GIS and Population Science Training Program and the Australian Research Council Research Network in Spatially Integrated Social Science

(ARCRNSISS) program. It is hosted by the Pennsylvania State University and the University of California, Santa Barbara, USA.

Quynh was also funded by the ARCRNSISS to attend the National Conference in Theory, Methods and Applications of Spatially Integrated Social Science at University of Melbourne, from 21 to 23 May 2006.

The conference has been beneficial to Quynh in preparing her for the spatial analysis workshop in Santa Barbara in July.

Quynh sees the conference in Melbourne and the workshop in California as pathways to enhance her research in population health. She is excited about the opportunities to network with local and overseas colleagues in this research area and share the experiences and research outcomes with them.

UDRH Research Student's Work Reaches a Wider Audience

Dr **Peter Arvier**, one of the UDRH Masters students, presented a paper at the 11th International Conference on Emergency Medicine in Halifax, Canada from 3 to 7 June 2006. The title of the paper is "*Training emergency medicine doctors for rural and regional Australia: Can we learn from the Canadians?*" The paper is based on his research Masters and is co-authored with supervisor Rural Health Prof **Judi Walker** and Dr **Tom McDonagh** of the North West Rural Clinical School.

The international conference attracted 1,200 delegates from about 40 countries including about 100 from Australia.

Like Canada, Australia is a country with a relatively small rural population dispersed over an enormous area. Similar issues of how best to deliver health services and recruit health professionals to rural areas exist in both countries. For professional and lifestyle reasons, most specialist doctors, including emergency medicine specialists, choose to live and work in major metropolitan centres.

Outside the major Australian cities, most presentations to Emergency Departments are dealt with by "non-specialist" doctors, often with limited specialist backup. Rural Australia is becoming increasingly dependent on overseas trained doctors recruited from widely varying backgrounds. In rural Canada, Family Medicine trained emergency physicians now form the bulk of "specialists" working in rural and regional emergency departments.

In his research, Peter investigated the emergency medicine workforce in rural and regional Australia by surveying doctors working in 57 rural and regional emergency departments and consulting and interviewing the key stakeholders. To further his research, Peter is currently taking up a 12-month sabbatical attachment work in rural British Columbia in Canada to experience how the Canadians cope with similar problems of providing emergency medicine services in large geographical areas with a dispersed population. Peter's research also includes field visits to selected hospitals in Australia and Canada.

In his presentation, Peter pointed out that many doctors in smaller Australian emergency departments feel overworked,



Dr Peter Arvier in Canada

undervalued, and lacking a career structure. There is considerable instability in the workforce with many planning to leave their current position or reduce involvement in emergency medicine. The vast majority feel a need to undertake further emergency medicine training. There is little agreement amongst stakeholders as to how emergency medicine should be taught, or how services should be delivered in rural and regional Australia.

Peter concluded that there is a need in Australia to offer a specific postgraduate Diploma or Certificate in Emergency Medicine for doctors wishing to practice emergency medicine outside major city hospitals. The Canadian CCFP-EM qualification may be a useful model. Unlike the FACEM qualification, the suggested Australian curriculum would be largely taught in rural and regional hospitals and contain additional elements relevant to rural practice.

Peter graduated from the University of Queensland Medical School in 1979 and has been a medical "nomad" for most of his life before settling with his family on the North West Coast of Tasmania 16 years ago. Peter was the Director of the Emergency Department at North West Regional Hospital from 1996 until he resigned that position in order to embark on a 12 month sabbatical working in rural

emergency medicine in Canada. Peter will return to Australia in August.

Peter has a longstanding interest in how emergency medicine is practised outside major teaching hospitals and has been actively involved in taking the Emergency Life Support (ELS) course to rural and regional hospitals since 1998. His research Masters study with the UDRH focuses on the training and education of emergency medicine doctors working in rural and regional areas.

Life in Canada has been thoroughly enjoyable to Peter and his family and they are overwhelmed by the friendliness and generosity of the people where they live – a stunningly beautiful part of British Columbia. Peter is also happy to report that he and his family are now proficient skiers, snowboarders and ice hockey enthusiasts.

Subscribing to UDRH Tasmania Rural Health E-Bulletin

Please visit www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/news/newsletter. Click [[Subscribe](#)] to input your email address for subscription.

Rural Health Care Partner: May Shaw Health Centre

The May Shaw Health Centre is a partner of the UDRH in operating the Swansea Rural Health Teaching Site, which opened on 3 May. (Please refer to page 2 for news on the new Rural Health Teaching Sites).

The Swansea-based May Shaw Health Centre has 31 aged care beds, up to five acute beds, a casualty and a variety of independent living units. Two highly skilled doctors have their practice at the



Clients at May Shaw enjoying tea out in the sun

Centre and patients are being treated for a variety of medical conditions without having to leave the area.

This high level of service to the local community is exemplary of May Shaw's motto "Excellence, Dignity, Respect & Teamwork".

Registered and enrolled nurses at May Shaw all undertake rural and remote education. Carers and other staff are offered a diverse range of education opportunities which include not only courses in palliative care, risk management, nutrition, multi-culturalism and infection control but also computer use and food preparation.

Day care is run in both Swansea and Bicheno in partnership with the Parkside Foundation and the Home and Community Care program.

The facility runs 24 Community Aged Care Packages which cover an area from Bicheno to Buckland. Two staff members share the co-ordination of the role with carers in each of the major population areas to ensure that maximum amount of care can be provided to clients to enable them to continue to stay at home as long as possible.

The East Coast Health and Wellbeing Centre was recently opened on the site in Swansea which provides facilities for a fully equipped conference centre with

a capacity for approximately 50 people and areas for Preventative Health Service education to be run from the Centre.

The Centre received a total of \$2.4m Commonwealth Government grants over the last four years for its major building works. A further expansion of 19 beds and a Dementia Specific Unit will commence in August 2006.

The construction of the State section which includes doctor's surgeries, a casualty and a palliative care unit is expected to commence in June 2006. This will further enable the communities in Swansea and the regional areas to be self supportive in their health care system.

May Shaw is run by a Community Board which is an Incorporated Association.

The idyllic township of Swansea is located halfway between Hobart and Launceston on the east coast and services the Glamorgan Spring Bay Municipality. It is situated on Great Oyster Bay and is in close proximity to the Freycinet National Park. There are beautiful beaches and magnificent sunrises and sunsets. The area offers many tourist attractions which includes vineyards and "Kate's Berry Farm" – which is internationally known for the quality of local produce used in its ice-creams.

Health Research that Speaks to Policy Makers and Practitioners

Dr **Erica Bell**, UDRH Research Fellow, will be attending the 2006 General Practice & Primary Health Care Research Conference on 5-7 July. Her paper will describe the potential of transdisciplinary research methods for health research that is meaningful to policy decision making and practice.

The paper will begin with brief reference to a case study where the task was to produce information in a form useable by practitioners: a Tasmanian project developing a policy and practice blueprint for a statewide residential service for adolescents with drug issues. This project demonstrates some features of information that can be translated by practitioners into service delivery decisions.

However, the major part of the paper will review the literature associated with transdisciplinary research methods, explaining key elements of

such approaches, and their usefulness for rural health research focussed on practitioner needs.

Dr Bell will argue that the problem of relevance of research is a problem of method. Much "variable driven research" characterising classical experimental methods often relies upon assumptions of linearity, additive effects, and unifinality (one optimal configuration). As suggested by methodologists such as **Peer Fiss** (2005), this fails to capture the nonlinearity, synergy and equifinality (multiple effective configurations) important to context-based decision making in policy and practice.

Transdisciplinary methods offer a basis for exploring the multi-dimensional nature of health interventions understood in terms of effective client-service-community configurations. This is particularly critical for rural health clients, services, and communities which often

do not present large enough numbers for classical quantitative studies.

Dr Bell's paper will argue that the classical experimental model dominating much health research has great limitations for policy decision makers and practitioners who want to know 'What works best for which subgroups in which contexts?' Transdisciplinary methods have their own limitations; however, they offer a point of departure for responding to calls for research with greater social utility.

The paper raises the question whether Australia should develop an international centre for transdisciplinary health research methods. Funding bodies such as the NHMRC and ARC can also offer opportunities for health research projects that properly evaluate the social utility of the classical experimental model versus transdisciplinary approaches.

UDRH Service Design Study Accepted in Top International Journal

Can lone researchers do community-based projects on a shoestring budget and have their work accepted into top international journals?

The answer is yes in UDRH!

Dr **Erica Bell**, UDRH Research Fellow, has had her work designing a youth residential service recognised by a global leader in substance abuse research.

Her paper *"Self, meaning, and culture in service design: Using a hermeneutic technique to design a residential service for adolescents with drug issues"* has been accepted for publication by the prestigious International Journal of Drug Policy. This journal is run from the Centre for Research on Drugs & Health Behaviour, at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. It is the official journal of The International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) which is the leading organisation promoting the reduction of drug and alcohol-related harm on a global basis.

The International Journal of Drug Policy provides a forum for the dissemination of current research, reviews, debate, and critical analysis on drug use and drug policy in a global context. It seeks to publish material on the social, political, legal, and health contexts of psychoactive substance use, both licit and illicit. The journal is particularly concerned to explore the effects of drug policy and practice on drug using behaviour and its health and social consequences. It is the policy of the

journal to represent a wide range of material on drug-related matters from around the world. [quoted from Elsevier website]

Dr Bell's paper aims to contribute to a relatively untheorised and unresearched area of adolescent substance abuse literature—designing residential services. In a context in which the researcher was given the "hands on" task of designing a model residential service for adolescents with drug issues in Tasmania, it explores techniques that might be useful to understanding and placing young people's views at the centre of service design.

The paper begins with discussion of the international literature on residential service design for adolescents with drug issues, and the nature of the Tasmanian service design project commissioned by The Salvation Army (Tasmania). It then explores young Tasmanians' idealisations of residential services needed for youth with drug issues.

These young people offered their thoughts along five major dimensions of the operationalisation of a residential service: service mission, activities and programs, location of the service, nature of staff, and service rationale or benefits. Their comments were analysed using a hermeneutic technique exploring the "life-worlds" suggested by their vision of the ideal residential service. Youth data were contrasted with the broad findings of interviews with adult professionals in Tasmanian youth services.

The result is a paper that questions much substance abuse research, as well as many of the assumptions implicit in the design and operationalisation of such services around the world.

"I am pleased this work has been well-received internationally," said Dr Bell, "particularly because it strongly represents the views of youth in rural Tasmania. Finding a way of bringing alive their experiences and making them speak to global policy contexts was very rewarding."

The actual service blueprint developed by Dr Bell for implementation in Tasmania reflects the results of a three-tiered consultation process involving Tasmanian youth, Tasmanian youth services staff, as well as mainland residential service staff. For more information contact Dr Erica Bell on 6226 6345 or Erica.Bell@utas.edu.au.



Dr Erica Bell

Martin Harris Shares his Expertise on Men and Suicide

UDRH Research Fellow **Martin Harris** attended the National Forum on Men and Suicide in Sydney on the 2 and 3 May this year. The forum brought together a range of committed delegates including employers, researchers, representatives of industry, sporting organisations, policy makers, service providers, national peak bodies, and those with lived experience of suicide and self-harm.

The forum provided an intense environment to explore the particular needs of men at risk of suicide and through a series of plenary sessions provided recommendations to government, the media, the corporate sector and the community. In particular,

the forum was concerned to initiate a fundamental change in the way Australian society deals with men and suicide.

In an ABC radio interview, Martin described the need to address this concern with "an assertive, well-resourced, long-term and evaluated strategy". This strategy envisages all sectors of community working collaboratively, including non-government organisations, business, media, public sector services, and Australian governments at all levels. A number of recommendations charged governments with the formal responsibility of driving suicide

prevention programs and activities for men, and acknowledged the pivotal role of the media and contributions to be made by businesses, non-government organisations and essential services working collaboratively towards the health and well-being of men.

Research suggests men become suicidal, not through weakness of character, but through complex social and individual processes that isolate men and erode their hope. This forum provided an important step in a deeper understanding of these complex issues and some pathways for future action.

Quynh Lê Elaborates on Cultural Meaning in Health Communication

UDRH Lecturer Dr **Quynh Lê**'s paper "*Cultural meaning in health communication*" has been accepted for presentation at the Youth Health 2006 Conference in Sydney from 13 to 15 November 2006. The conference will be hosted by the Department of Adolescent Medicine and the NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health and The Children's Hospital at Westmead, with the support of other centres and organisations in Australia and New Zealand which work towards adolescent well being.

Quynh has a great interest in her presentation topic due to her research and personal experience as a Vietnamese migrant. To her, health concepts and issues are deeply embedded in culture.

Communication about health needs to take this into account, particularly in a multicultural context. Words and their meanings are not fixed and not easily transferred across cultures. Apart from cognitive meaning, there are also cultural meanings which are not revealed in lexical definition. Words such as hygiene, disease, mental, drinking and pollution may mean different things in different cultures and can cause miscommunication in a multicultural society.

However, communication barriers do not just occur at word levels. Communicative problems associated with speech acts, presupposition, use of metaphors and the like are widespread but not easily recognised.



Dr Quynh Lê

UDRH Volunteering Study Makes a Stage in International Publication

Dr **Jeni Warburton** from the Australasian Centre on Ageing, the University of Queensland, and **Christine Stirling**, Research Fellow of the Tasmanian UDRH, have had a paper "*Factors affecting volunteering among older rural and city dwelling adults in Australia*" accepted with Educational Gerontology: An International Journal for future publication.

The paper uses Australian General Social Survey data from 2000, provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, to assess differences in volunteering by age

group and locality. The paper explores volunteering by older people (aged 55+) who were resident in three different Australian areas (rural, inner regional, and city). The two scholars focused on these two variables - age and location - because they are critical issues in the Australian context. Logistic regression analyses were used to assess the relationships between variables, which were conceptualised around social capital theory and human capital theory.

Volunteering is an important activity for healthy and positive ageing and studies

that can contribute to understanding the predictive ability of a range of variables will help policy makers to direct funds and other supportive activities.

Overall, the study found that neither human capital nor social capital variables adequately predict volunteering by older adults, but that there may be some evidence of the effect of Putnam's "civic generation" in the Australian cultural context. The results suggest a complex picture impacting on volunteering, but that age and locality do matter.

Rosalind Bull Conducted a Preceptorship Workshop for ANZ Radiotherapists

Twenty radiotherapists from across Australia and New Zealand took advantage of a workshop to develop preceptorship skills. The full-day pre-conference workshop was held on 27 April 2006 and was run in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Radiographers national conference in Hobart.

UDRH Deputy Director Dr **Rosalind Bull**, the invited facilitator for the

workshop, ran a highly interactive day developing the participants' knowledge and skills around teaching and learning, providing feedback and preparing the clinical setting for students.

The session was well received by the group. Their enthusiasm was reflected in this evaluation comment by one of the participants: "It was excellent! It helped me improve my knowledge of the 'mind-set' and thoughts of staff, students,

universities and management and how to deal with different types of students."

The UDRH Tasmania offers a variety of preceptor and clinical supervision training opportunities for health professionals who contribute to the health care of rural Australians. For further information, Please contact Dr Bull at Rosalind.Bull@utas.edu.au.

UDRH Paper Accepted for SPERA's National Rural Education Conference

Dr **Quynh Lê**, Lecturer in Rural Health, and Honorary Research Associate Dr **Rosa McManamey**'s joint refereed paper titled "*Multilevel analysis and its implications for rural education*" has been accepted for presentation at the 22nd National Rural Education Conference on Community, Diversity and Innovation in Rural and Remote Education and Training in Hobart from 12 to 14 July 2006. The conference will be hosted by the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) and will link people with a diverse range of interests in education and training to promote the development of rural Australia.

Quynh and Rosa's joint paper is a new

contribution to the conference as it deals with multilevel analysis which has been used in social epidemiology research but is rather new to rural education research.

Statistical methods that allow several levels of determinants in a single model are used. Thus multilevel analysis is used to conceptualise and analyse associations at multiple levels, e.g. by employing individual and area-based data in relation to a specified outcome. In this paper, Quynh and Rosa discuss how multilevel analysis is used as a research tool in social epidemiology research and examine how it can be used in rural education research on community and diversity.



Dr Rosa McManamey

UDRH Seminar 6 – Designing a Residential Service for Adolescents with Substance Abuse Issues in Tasmania

The sixth UDRH seminar was held on 23 May 2006. The presentation attracted 46 professionals from seven locations interested in adolescent substance abuse and service delivery.

The presenter, Dr **Erica Bell**, used her recent Tasmanian experience of designing a state-wide residential rehabilitation service for adolescents with drug issues to explore the multi-dimensional nature of services and the needs of clients, practitioners, and communities. She analysed the limitations of existing substance abuse research driven by classical experimental models, particularly for rural health services.

Dr Bell also explored the findings of interviews with professionals in 20 of Australia's 23 residential rehabilitation services for adolescents with drug issues. These interviews suggest the configurational nature of services, and the importance of the service's capacity to combine and recombine diverse service elements in complementary ways to meet individual client needs.

Dr Erica Bell is a research fellow of the Tasmanian University Department of

Rural Health where she is also academic research coordinator.

Erica has worked in higher education research at the University of New South Wales and as manager of research and policy development in the Queensland Government education portfolio. In these roles she led many projects involving diverse educators, community and stakeholder groups, producing over 40 qualitative and quantitative publications that have helped develop policy and practices in the post-compulsory education sectors. She has been a secretariat member and author of ministerial reviews of education, and was one of the two consultants who produced Australia's first national guidelines on assessment quality and equity for the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities.

Erica's research in health areas as diverse as chronic disease self-management, medical education, falls prevention, and substance abuse has been accepted in international peer-reviewed journals. She is currently chief investigator for a range of multi-disciplinary projects that aim to develop

health and social services design and delivery through university partnerships with practitioners and community organisations.

Pay a Visit to the Rural Health Training Events Home Page

The UDRH Rural Health Training Events (www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/events/) home page is a central repository of information about rural health training events for rural Tasmanian health professionals, health students, community organisations and consumers.

We welcome your visit to check out training information or to include your events.

Upcoming Training Opportunities

UDRH Seminar Series - Seminar 8

Speakers:

- Dr David Butler, Director of Clinical Services (Oral Health), Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
- Dr Rosemary Cane, Junior Research Fellow (Oral Health), UDRH

Subject: Managing Oral Health with Increasing Age

Date: 18 July 2006 (Tuesday)

Time: 12:15 – 1:30pm

Venue: Telehealth Studios in Burnie, Hobart, Latrobe and Launceston (Other locations by arrangement)

For details, please contact **Cecilia Chiu** (tel: 6324 4028, email: Cecilia.Chiu@utas.edu.au)

Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHC RED) Workshop 3

Subject: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods

Date: 25 August 2006 (Friday)

Time: 11:00am – 3:00pm

Venue: Campbell Town

Fee: \$25 (Lunch, morning and afternoon tea provided)

For details, please contact **Julie Forsyth** (tel: 6226 4803, email: Julie.Forsyth@utas.edu.au)

2006 National SARRAH Conference

A Conference for Rural and Remote Allied Health Professionals

Date: 13 – 16 September 2006

Venue: Albury Convention Centre, Albury, New South Wales

For details, please visit www.sarrah.org.au/Conference/.

Briefs . . .

The UDRH would like to welcome three new members who have come on board recently.

Judy Spencer has been seconded from the School of Nursing and Midwifery to the UDRH as the Rural Workforce Theme Leader to support, facilitate and monitor on-going projects in the theme area. She will also be involved in selected projects such as the Student Readiness for Interprofessional Learning (RIPLS) project, Rural Interprofessional Emergency Retreat (RIPPER) and preceptor programs.

Judy brings with her a wealth of experience in teaching and programs coordination. She has also previously collaborated with the UDRH on a number of projects including the preceptor on site preparation program, information education and support, as well as interprofessional programs and research. Judy will be with the UDRH till December 2006.



Judy Spencer

Tracey Tasker has joined the UDRH as Junior Research Fellow. She is based in Hobart, assisting the project on Healthy Eating for Healthy Ageing in Rural Tasmania. Tracey is supervised by **Kim Boyer** and Dr **Peter Orpin**.



Tracey Tasker

Michelle Westerink has joined the UDRH as Researcher in Primary Health Care. This full time position is supported by the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHC RED) program with an aim to enhance research capacity amongst primary health care workers. Michelle is doing research into cannabis use in adolescents under the supervision of Dr **Clarissa Hughes** and Dr **Peg LeVine**.

Michelle was previously employed by GP North as Mental Health Liaison Officer and by the University of Tasmania and Tasmania Haemochromatosis Study as Researcher/ Project Coordinator.



Michelle Westerink



Jason Ffello

The UDRH Executive Officer **Jason Ffello** will be joining his partner in Oxford, UK from the middle of July to January 2007. Jason will continue as the Executive Officer, but at a reduced capacity, whilst the staff in his team increase their fractions and/or responsibility. This has been at least 12 months in the planning and all are looking forward to the challenge. The exercise will provide another good example, and one that we may learn from, of those who experience working remotely from their 'home base'.

Jason will still be contactable on his usual email at Jason.Ffello@utas.edu.au, and matters that are dealt with by the Executive Officer should continue to be directed to him, but also copied to **Amanda Feely** (email: Amanda.Feely@utas.edu.au).