



FACULTY OF HEALTH

best of health

July 2009 newsletter



- QUT Health Clinics – A ‘one stop shop’ for specialised health services
- Text messaging research supports breast feeding mothers
- QUT leads national review into drug and alcohol websites
- Researchers lead online support for students

Contents

QUT Health Clinics – A ‘one stop shop’ for specialised services	1
Researchers lead online support for students	2
QUT research projects to target high-risk road users	3
QUT report profiles injury prevention in Queensland	4
Metabolic disorders in children research attracts industry support	5
National recognition for health researchers	6
Infant nutrition project receives further nourishment	7
QUT leads national collaboration to support international students	8
Health records impressive result among QUT student awards	9
Industry expert joins School of Public Health	10
Psychology trio awarded for teaching excellence	11
Research aids bone health of elderly Australians	12
Prestigious appointment to tackle national obesity issue	13
QUT leads national review into drug and alcohol websites	14
Self-management of chronic disease	15
Aged care partnership attracts \$900 000 grant	16
Text messaging supports breastfeeding mothers	17
Vice-Chancellor welcomes Minister to Dementia Collaborative Research Centre	18
Higher degree highlights	19

From the Executive Dean’s desk



The first six months of 2009 have proved to be a very rewarding and busy time for the Faculty of Health. This issue of *Best of Health* reports further support for the excellent research outcomes and teaching being delivered by the Faculty. Across these pages you will find example after example of the outstanding achievements of our staff and students, both in research and teaching and learning.

We have been successful in securing a number of national funding grants for their research projects, the outcomes of which will undoubtedly make a positive contribution to the health of the broader community. A national project to promote best practice in wound management in residential aged care led by the School of Nursing and Midwifery has been funded by the Federal Government’s Department of Health and Ageing. The two-year *Creating Champions for Skin Integrity* project will promote the implementation of evidence-based practice in prevention, assessment and management of wounds for residents in aged care facilities.

Other projects, which have attracted national funding include an Australian Learning and Teaching Council research project to support international students enrolled in undergraduate health programs, funding from beyondblue for the development of an online resilience program for university students, and a national review of drug and alcohol websites commissioned by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing. Young children in Australia are also set to benefit from QUT research projects, including further funding for an infant and early child nutrition project, and a ground-breaking study into breastfeeding and the use of mobile phone messaging for new mothers.

These projects highlight our strong and successful partnerships with government and industry, and reflect our ability to provide real-world outcomes to the national health community.

In this issue we also profile our students and staff who have been rewarded for their academic and teaching excellence, as well as the appointment of Associate Professor Nuala Byrne from the School of Human Movement Studies, who has been elected President of the Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society.

I would like to extend my congratulations to these students and members of staff for their dedication and commitment to the delivery of successful outcomes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Courtney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Professor Mary Courtney
Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Health

QUT Health Clinics – A ‘one stop shop’ for specialised services



‘Added to the cost savings available at QUT Health Clinics, our consultations are thorough and in-depth’

Quality health services that also provide value for money are important considerations for consumers in today’s current economic climate.

QUT Health Clinics provide health services for those seeking specialised care in podiatry, optometry, wound healing, psychology and counselling.

Human movement and exercise programs and nutrition and dietetics are also scheduled to open at the clinics this year.

Offering a wide range of specialised health services, the clinics are open to the general public regardless of age, from children to the elderly.

QUT Health Clinics Manager Ms Allison Vautin said the clinics provided an integrated, high quality, ‘one stop shop’ for allied health services at a price people could afford.

‘People who have diabetes usually have to see a podiatrist for their feet, an optometrist for their eyes, they need wound healing advice for diabetic ulcers and they may also need counselling,’ Ms Vautin said.

‘Having all these services makes life a bit easier for those people who need to access care across several areas.

‘Our clinics provide comprehensive, thorough and quality consultations in a range of specialised health services,’ Ms Vautin said. ‘We take the time and offer high quality health care at affordable prices to the community.

‘The benefits are twofold; we provide high standard health services and contribute to the health of the general community, while the clinics provide essential education and practical experience to our future health professionals.’

Located in a new, purpose-built building at Kelvin Grove, the QUT Health Clinics are easily accessible by public transport and also offer ample undercover parking for patients.

Patients enjoy access to highly experienced clinicians from the university and private sector, who are supported by world class facilities and technology.

‘Added to the cost savings available at QUT Health Clinics, our consultations are very thorough and often longer and more in-depth than those normally available to patients,’ Ms Vautin said.

A specialised wound healing service is also available to members of the public who have a wound or an ulcer that is long-term, persistent or non-healing. Most chronic wounds are preventable as long as patients access early intervention and attention. Wound prevention assistance is part of the service and patients with diabetes are welcome.

Through the clinics, members of the community also have access to counselling and family therapy services. Options include individual to group therapy, as well as children’s play therapy and psychometric assessments of adults and children for example of IQ, memory and concentration, learning difficulties and personality assessment.

Supervisory staff are all experienced professionals. Therapists within this service include mature professionals working towards a

- Master of Counselling
- Master of Psychology
- and provisionally registered psychologists studying for a Master of Clinical Psychology.

QUT Health Clinics are located at 44 Musk Avenue, Kelvin Grove. For further information visit

www.healthclinics.qut.edu.au



Researchers lead online support for students

For many students university life can be a challenge. Stress in meeting multiple assessment deadlines, adjustments to a new way of learning and thinking, new surroundings and people, and the ability to manage time, are all common pressures, which can impact on the mental health of students. The situation may be compounded by financial and study/life balance problems.

And, according to QUT's School of Psychology and Counselling Post-Doctoral Research Fellow Dr Helen Stallman, the problem can escalate as many students experiencing pressure do not seek help.

To address this issue, Dr Stallman has secured a grant to develop an online resilience program for students seeking help and assistance.

Dr Stallman, with colleagues, Professor Ian Shochet and Professor David Kavanagh, have been successful in securing a \$500,000 grant from beyondblue, the national not-for-profit initiative designed to address issues relating to depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders. The QUT team has also welcomed Associate Professor Brett McDermott from The University of Queensland's Department of Psychiatry to the project.

Dr Stallman said the grant was designed to meet a gap in the provision of national online prevention programs for students who engage in tertiary study.

'Recent Australian data has found that the majority of university students report elevated levels of psychological distress, which is associated with reduced capacity to meet academic commitments and places students at risk for developing serious mental illness,' Dr Stallman said.

'While there has been an immense focus on the mental health of adolescents over the past decade, and generic online programs available for adults, the psychological wellbeing of university students has been largely overlooked.



'The high prevalence of mental health problems in this population highlights the need for universal prevention programs.'

'Our own research has found that students are more likely to access positively focused resilience-building interventions to promote positive mental health if they were online,' she said.

'The accessibility of the Internet and the lack of stigma attached to this medium make it an ideal platform to deliver quality tailored prevention programs.'

The 10-module program aims to enhance student resilience and targets issues relevant to university, TAFE and vocational education (VET) students.

The program will be developed over two years and will be evaluated on an ongoing basis through the use of focus groups, to ensure consumer acceptability and usability. On completion, the online program will be the only one of its kind in Australia and, quite possibly, internationally.

It is hoped all tertiary institutions across Australia will adopt the online program as part of their standard support services to students.

'The major strategy to promote the program at a student level will be integrating it within institutional processes to normalise the relationship between tertiary study and stress,' Dr Stallman said.

'This will include locating the program on the institutional student homepages and online teaching interfaces and positive recommendations by course coordinators and faculty members, health and counselling services, and other student support providers.'

Dr Stallman said a key focus of the program development would be on engagement and retention of users, through high-quality video, graphics and interactive components.

'We will focus on how people access the site, keeping them engaged and making them want to revisit,' she said.

'Our research has found that students are more likely to access positively focused resilience if they were online.'

QUT research projects to target high-risk road users

Road user groups at high risk in Queensland will be examined by QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety (CARRS-Q), through two new research projects commissioned by Queensland Transport.

CARRS-Q was successful in its recent tenders for two research projects, which has resulted in \$400 000 in funding over three years for each project.

The *Unlicensed Drivers and Unregistered Vehicles* project, led by Professor Barry Watson, will build on existing CARRS-Q research to update estimates of the prevalence of unlicensed and unregistered driving, as well as examine the personal and social factors which contribute to these behaviours.

One of the primary aims of the project will be to examine the linkages between unregistered and unlicensed driving. A previous study conducted by Professor Watson found 13 per cent of convicted unlicensed drivers were also convicted of driving an unregistered or unlicensed vehicle at the same time.

'We need to better understand the scope and nature of both unlicensed driving and the driving of unregistered vehicles, in order to develop and implement more effective countermeasures to these behaviours,' Professor Watson said.

'The study will enhance our understanding of these two behaviours and examine possible linkages to establish whether common countermeasures are both warranted and feasible.'

Professor Watson said despite ongoing improvements in traffic law enforcement, unlicensed and unregistered driving were serious issues affecting safety on Queensland's roads.

He said unlicensed driving undermined the effectiveness of the State's licensing system as unlicensed drivers' behaviour could not be monitored or managed through typical sanctions such as demerit points.

Unlicensed drivers also represent over six per cent of the drivers involved in



Professor Narelle Haworth

fatal crashes and five per cent of those involved in serious injury crashes. Further, it has been estimated that almost five per cent of vehicles on the road are unregistered.

'The driving of unregistered vehicles also poses a number of road safety problems, including the possibility that such vehicles do not meet relevant safety standards,' Professor Watson said.

The second project, led by Professor Narelle Haworth, will investigate the safety of motorcycle riders in Queensland.

Professor Haworth said the project was important to road safety in Queensland, given the high incidence of motorcycle injury around the state. Motorcycle riders and passengers comprise about 20 per cent of road fatalities in Queensland; a percentage that is the highest in Australia.

She said the project would research the best ways of training and assessing new motorcycle riders to reduce their involvement in crashes.

'The project will examine what has and has not worked elsewhere, and assess the relevance to Queensland,' she said.

'It will also gather input from riders and those involved in rider training and assessment.

'Motorcycle riding is much more likely to result in injury than car travel, and the resulting injuries are likely to be more severe for motorcyclists than for vehicle occupants. Fatality and serious injury rates have been found to be more than 20 times greater for motorcyclists than car drivers, with brain and orthopedic injuries prevalent.'

Since joining CARRS-Q, Professor Haworth has focused her research on motorcycle safety and has now been appointed to the American Academy of Science Transport Research Board (TRB) Committee on Motorcycles and Mopeds. This appointment provides CARRS-Q and QUT with international linkages and access to research regarding motorcycles, motorcyclists and the transportation environment.

QUT report profiles injury prevention in Queensland

QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety (CARRS-Q) has presented a profile of injury prevention to the Queensland Injury Prevention Council (QIPC) as part of the establishment of an evidence base for the QIPC's future deliberations and activities.

Presented to the newly-formed QIPC in March this year, the report explores the types of injuries affecting Queenslanders, as well as community perceptions in relation to injury preventability. Health professionals and community groups were also invited to supply details of any known interventions or programs currently aimed at reducing or preventing such injuries.

The research was conducted by a collaborative team from QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety (CARRS-Q) and the School of Public Health. The report included 31 recommendations relating to various areas of injury to be considered by the QIPC.

Project Coordinator Dr Alexia Lennon said the research team examined the types of injuries and injury trends in Queensland using injury data from mass databases relating to injury, including

the Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit, Emergency Department Information System and Queensland Hospitals Admitted Patients Data Collection.

She said to identify the types of injuries on which to focus, injury data was examined according to age groupings and types of injury, with some interesting results.

'Falls in young children and the elderly were identified as responsible for a large proportion of injuries in Queensland,' she said.

'Motor vehicle crashes also resulted in a large number of hospital admissions and fatalities.

'We found that there was little difference in the patterns of injuries that Queenslanders sustain and those that affect people in similar age groups in other states around Australia.'

Injuries to children aged under two years, such as poisoning, drowning, and scalds and burns from hot beverages, accounted for a high percentage of hospitalisations and presentations to emergency departments.

As part of the report, the research team also conducted a survey of community attitudes and beliefs regarding safety and injury.

More than 1000 community participants were surveyed by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing to seek their views in relation to injury.

'We were surprised to find that over 21 per cent or one in every five people who responded to our survey had been permanently affected by injury or had someone in their immediate family who had been affected,' Dr Lennon said.

Respondents were asked their views regarding whether injury was preventable in the following four situations: at home, on the road, on/in the water and in the workplace. Encouragingly, the majority of people gave high ratings of agreement to this question.

'When asked whether they personally could make a difference to their own safety in those four situations, respondents gave even higher ratings of agreement,' Dr Lennon said.

According to the Queensland Health's *Strategic Directions for Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion 2008-2011*, unintentional injuries are a major cause of illness, death and disability across the world. While deaths from injury in Queensland have declined, rates of hospitalisation for many injuries have increased over the last decade.

'We found that there was little difference in the patterns of injuries that Queenslanders sustain and those that affect people in similar age groups in other states around Australia.'

Metabolic disorders in children research attracts industry support

As PhD scholar Rachael Sharman travels around Queensland this year testing children with metabolic disorders, her connection to the topic is not just academic, it's personal.

After completing her Honours project on executive function deficits in children with metabolic disorders, Ms Sharman is using the preliminary results of her Honours project and extending this research to form the basis of her PhD project. The results of the Honours project were published earlier this year in *Clinical Genetics*.

It's a topic that is close to her heart, having been interested in paediatric neuropsychology for years; an interest which was compounded when her daughter was diagnosed with a metabolic disorder 12 years ago aged 14 months. Thankfully her daughter has overcome the disorder and now lives a healthy life, but Ms Sharman has maintained her interest in metabolic disorders in children.

'Children with PKU can now expect to develop a normal IQ.'

The project has been well supported by industry, with the PhD receiving financial support of \$25 000 from Brisbane's Royal Children's Hospital Foundation, while the Honours project received funding from the Metabolic Dietary Disorders Association and QUT. Early this year, Ms Sharman was also nominated for a Fresh Science Award for her research.

Both the Honours project and current PhD involve collaboration with QUT and the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation (IHBI) and the Royal Children's Hospital, represented by the Director of the Hospital's Metabolic Clinic, Dr Jim McGill. QUT supervisors are Dr Karen Sullivan from the School of Psychology

and Counselling and IHBI Executive Director Professor Ross Young.

Ms Sharman's project focuses on children born with phenylketonuria (PKU), a genetically inherited metabolic disorder where individuals are born without the enzyme required to metabolise just one amino acid in the protein in their diet – phenylalanine – and convert it to tyrosine, which is a precursor to the neurotransmitter, dopamine.

All babies are screened for PKU via the heel prick test 72 hours after birth. If untreated, PKU causes elevations in phenylalanine (phe) levels that are toxic to the developing brain, resulting in severe intellectual disability.

'Treatment consists of a severely restricted protein diet as well as the daily intake of phe-free protein formula,' Ms Sharman said.

'Early detection and treatment for PKU has resulted in one of the greatest success stories for prevention of neurological disability, in that children with PKU can now expect to develop a normal IQ.'

'However, PKU still predisposes children to developing more subtle executive function deficits, especially in attention, processing and working memory, which leads to a rate of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder five times the norm in this population.'

Treatment for PKU focuses largely on keeping phe levels low enough to prevent severe brain damage. The research undertaken as part of Ms Sharman's Honours degree suggested that residual executive function deficits were more strongly related to a combination of high phe and low tyrosine than phe levels alone.

'It is hypothesised that this high phe:tyr ratio is causing a deficiency of the neurotransmitter, dopamine, as the children's brains are developing. It is this dopamine deficiency that is then thought



Rachael Sharman

to result in their executive function deficits,' she said.

'The results now beg the question as to whether lowering the phe:tyr ratio throughout childhood (via tyrosine supplementation) may eliminate these persistent executive function deficits in this population of children once and for all.'

Ms Sharman said her PhD project involves analysis of a thorough suite of executive function measures using a seven-year longitudinal design of children diagnosed with early and continuously treated PKU. The project is the most comprehensive, in terms of biochemical data, that has been published.

'Incorporating the children's lifetime of biochemical data gives the study enormous power to detect the effects we hypothesise are responsible for executive function deficits,' she said.

'We hope that PKU will provide a unique window through which we may better understand how neurotransmitter dysregulation may underpin the development of executive function deficits in children.'

Ms Sharman will finalise data collection and analysis by the end of the year, in preparation for the submission date of her PhD in September 2010.

National recognition for health researchers



Left to right: Dr Alison Marshall, Dr Monika Janda and Dr Sandi Hayes

Three senior academics within QUT's School of Public Health have received national recognition for their research excellence.

The awards place cancer and physical activity research on the national agenda, with each member of the trio winning personal funding grants for their health research.

The funding allows Dr Sandi Hayes, Dr Monika Janda and Dr Alison Marshall to conduct studies into specific areas of cancer and physical activity research for the next four years.

Nationally recognised as a leading exercise physiology researcher, Dr Sandi Hayes received the prestigious Early Career Development Fellowship from the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Dr Hayes' research focuses on improving patient recovery after treatment for cancer. The funding from the National Breast Cancer Foundation will allow her to conduct research to improve diagnosis and early detection of lymphoedema in cancer patients. She also plans to examine the role of exercise

in assisting the cessation of cancer treatment and the return to 'normal' life for cancer survivors.

Senior research fellow Dr Monika Janda received a National Health and Medical Research Committee Career Development Award for her research into prevention and early detection of cancer, especially melanoma.

As part of the research funding, Dr Janda will also investigate the provision of effective medical/supportive care interventions to patients diagnosed with cancer (particularly those with gynaecological cancer) to improve or maintain the patient's quality of life. She also has an interest in measurement issues related to quality of life questionnaires.

Behavioural epidemiologist and health promotion specialist Dr Alison Marshall also received funding from the National Health and Medical Research Career Development Award to promote physical activity in rural communities.

Dr Marshall will build on her previous physical activity programs and redevelop/adapt to the needs of

rural communities with the objective of encouraging members of these communities to be physically active. This will include the development and evaluation of innovative programs using mobile technology, which can reach, engage and encourage people to be active where they live.

The trio work collaboratively together forming a group called IHOP (improving health outcomes for people (with cancer)). IHOP projects include the conduct of longitudinal observational studies and randomised controlled trials with the intent to improve understanding of the physical and psychosocial recovery following cancer treatment and the assessment of targeted interventions in the prevention and recovery of cancers and other chronic illnesses.

The funding allows studies of cancer and physical activity research for the next four years.

Infant nutrition project receives further nourishment

A QUT research group investigating infant and early child nutrition has received a welcome boost following funding from a leading Australian food and beverage company.

The Early Child Nutrition Research Group, led by Professor Lynne Daniels, is a multidisciplinary research team examining early feeding, parenting practices and feeding behaviour in the context of childhood obesity prevention. The research group has received \$355 000 in funding support from HJ Heinz Australia.

Professor Daniels welcomed the funding which will be used for the Heinz Postdoctoral Research Fellowship.

'This position will make a very significant contribution to our research capacity, including our ability to communicate the results of our research to both health professional and parents,' Professor Daniels said.

One of the group's major projects is *Nourish: Your Child's Future Health Today* which has core funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council and is run in conjunction with researchers from South Australia's Flinders University.

Nourish aims to investigate how first-time mothers approach feeding their children, as well as the impact of nutritional education and peer support to promote healthy feeding practices. The project monitors the feeding habits and preferences of a large group of children up to the age of two years.

Professor Daniels said results from the study are likely to be used by the Heinz Infant Feeding Advisory Service, which is a network of nurses and dietitians who provide new mothers and health professionals with information about early child nutrition.

'We are working with first-time mothers, and looking at the when, what and how of feeding these infants solids,' Professor Daniels said.

'The purpose of the study is to promote healthy growth and eating habits. We will follow the progress of the children and examine a range of areas, including maternal feeding practices, the child's growth, food intake and preferences of the child.'

Professor Daniels said children's food preferences were well developed by the age of five, leaving parents a relatively short time to establish positive eating habits for the life of their child.

She said regularly giving babies even small amounts of sweet, fatty or salty foods could contribute to them learning to prefer such foods over those with nutritional value.

'A lot of people think all that's needed to form good eating habits is to ensure children have high exposure to fruit and vegetables, but just small 'tastes' of sweet and fatty foods for babies may make an impact,' she said.

'Babies learn to like what they get exposed to and then they eat what they like.'

Professor Daniels said a recent survey revealed many mothers used food to influence their child's behaviour or mood, and frequently misread babies' signals.

She said it was also common for mothers to offer food rewards and to encourage children to eat more after they have signalled they have had enough.

The survey also found around one third of mothers at least sometimes offered food if their child was bored, upset or to keep their child occupied. Almost half the mothers at least sometimes used food as a reward for good behaviour.

'This emotional use of food is not related to hunger and satiety,' Professor Daniels said.

'In fact, it is undermining a child's ability to self-regulate and know to eat when they are hungry and not to eat when they aren't.

'Feeding practices are often handed down from grandmother to mother to daughter. However in the past 20 years or so our food environment has changed dramatically so that high energy, low nutrient foods such as sweetened drinks are everywhere and really very cheap. Now one of the threats to child nutritional health is too much food. We need to promote new approaches to early feeding that takes account of our environment of food plenty.'

The study has attracted over 650 mothers who have enrolled in the study in Brisbane and Adelaide. Researchers are currently seeking further funding to follow the babies from two to five years of age.

'The purpose of the study is to promote healthy growth and eating habits. We will follow the progress of the children and examine a range of areas, including maternal feeding practices, the child's growth, food intake and preferences of the child.'

QUT leads national collaboration to support international students



A QUT project designed to support international students enrolled in undergraduate health programs has received funding through the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC).

The ALTC awarded a Competitive Grant of \$220 000 over two years to the project, which is designed to develop, implement and embed a supportive model to assist international students enrolled in health programs when on practicum placement during their studies.

Entitled *Promoting resilience and effective workplace functioning in international students enrolled in health courses*, the project will be implemented by a multi-institutional team headed by Faculty of Health Assistant Dean (Teaching and Learning) Associate Professor Robyn Nash.

The project team includes Dr Sandy Sacre (QUT Faculty of Health), Mrs

Pam Lemcke, Dr Yvonne Osborne and Dr Leonie Cox from QUT's School of Nursing and Midwifery, Associate Professor Elizabeth Parker from QUT's School of Public Health, Dr Carol Grech from the University of South Australia's School of Nursing and Midwifery, Ms Dee May of Ramsay Health Care, Mr Scott Tyler from the Princess Alexandra Hospital and Mr Tony Azzopardi of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

International students assisted through the outcomes of the project will be those studying nursing, nutrition and dietetics, and public health.

Associate Professor Nash said the project was aimed at providing an excellent model for supporting international students in health courses and addressing their needs, particularly in relation to working confidently and effectively in healthcare settings.

'It is important to ensure that these students are provided with quality learning experiences, while being supported in their personal and educational aspirations,' Professor Nash said.

'While there is significant diversity among international students in terms of educational expectations and English language proficiency, there are common challenges which affect international students embarking on a health degree. It is these challenges that our project seeks to address.

'These students come to university and, as part of their program, they are required to participate in healthcare settings including large teaching hospitals, where it can be very difficult for them to adjust to studying in new and often complex systems.'

Associate Professor Nash said it was increasingly being recognised that



Associate Professor Robyn Nash

international students often struggled integrating into Australian culture in general, and health systems in particular.

'While many higher education and healthcare institutions have processes

in place for supporting these individuals, there is also a need for complementary course-related support to ensure high rates of student retention and successful completion of study,' Professor Nash said.

Dr Sandy Sacre said the project aimed to develop resources to assist international students with their studies, including support with specific language skills, adaptation to Australian culture and health system, and understanding of employment pathways in Australia.

She said health-specific resources and programs were required that could assist international students with social, vocational and cultural integration, adjustment and understanding.

'Additionally, targeted approaches are needed, which ensure system cultures are welcoming, helpful and sensitive to the needs of international students,' she said.

'Culture change must be engendered through system-wide social marketing of the inherent benefits of adopting more openness, acceptance and support towards international students, as well as students from a range of equity groups.'

Dr Sacre said the project would also develop mechanisms and resources to support those who supervise and mentor international students in clinical settings.

The two-year project will be developed within three phases, being the development of a supportive model and capacity building framework; implementation and review of the supportive model; followed by evaluation, review, dissemination and reporting to the ALTC.

'There are common challenges which affect international students embarking on a health degree. It is these challenges that our project seeks to address'

Health records impressive result among QUT student awards

The research efforts of five students from the Faculty of Health have been rewarded by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Commercialisation), Professor Arun Sharma.

An Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award (ODTA) and four Dean's Commendations were awarded to recognise the students' excellence in research.

The awards evidence the high standard of research excellence within the Faculty of Health, which is not only producing the next generation of health professionals, but also that of health researchers.

The QUT Research Degrees Committee considered nominations consistent with the ODTA guidelines and recommended 10 nominees for the 2008 Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award in April this year.

Faculty of Health Doctoral student Lynette Vromans from the School of Psychology and Counselling was among these 10 students recognised for their excellence in postgraduate research.

Lynette is supervised by Associate Professor Robert Schweitzer, Dr Roger Lowe and Dr Julie Hansen from the School of Psychology and Counselling.

Lynette's research represented the very first randomised control study ever undertaken of narrative therapy for the treatment of depression. This modality of therapy was developed in Australia.

'Professor John McLeod recommended the thesis for an Outstanding Thesis Award, on the basis that it was 'the most accomplished psychotherapy thesis I have ever read',' Professor Schweitzer said.

Four of the 12 recipients of Dean's Commendations are from the Faculty of Health:

Hui-Xia Shen: Nursing and Midwifery (supervisor Professor Helen Edwards)

Merilyn Banks: Public Health (supervisor Associate Professor Sue Ash)

Jenny-Kay Sharpe: Human Movement Studies (supervisor Professor Andrew Hills)

Melanie White: Psychology and Counselling (supervisor Professor Ross Young).

The Faculty of Health congratulates these students on their hard work, dedication and excellence in postgraduate research, the outcomes of which will play a significant role in improving the health of our communities.

Industry expert joins School of Public Health



Susan Mahon

Health at QUT continues to strengthen its real-world connection to industry with the appointment of Mrs Susan Mahon to the School of Public Health.

A senior health professional with 27 years' experience in the health industry, Mrs Mahon has been appointed to manage the School's Master of Health Management program.

The appointment demonstrates the School of Public Health's commitment to developing the next generation of health professionals by incorporating real-world experience into curriculum and student learning.

Mrs Mahon, who holds a Bachelor of Nursing and Master of Business Administration from QUT, has enjoyed an extensive career within the State Government health system. Her employment commenced as a nurse in public hospitals in Queensland, then moved to middle management positions within the health industry in organisational development, industrial relations and service reform.

Mrs Mahon was then appointed to senior executive positions in Queensland Health; positions, which included leading the organisational restructure of Queensland Health following the 2005 Commission of Inquiry, and operations management of Queensland Health's Central Area Health Service, covering one third of the State's health services

'The appointment at QUT provides me with an opportunity to enjoy what I see as my third career.'

including hospitals, community health, mental health and population health.

In 2002, Mrs Mahon was appointed to Queensland Treasury for three years, as part of the senior management team responsible for the design and implementation of the Government's Shared Service Initiative. In this role, Mrs Mahon led the change management and business transformation agenda.

Mrs Mahon said she was looking forward to bringing her significant experience in managing the delivery of public health services to the School of Public Health and its students.

'The appointment at QUT provides me with an opportunity to enjoy what I see as my third career; my first being a clinical career as a nurse, my second when I combined clinical knowledge with postgraduate education and built a career as a health service executive. And now my third career – the opportunity to continue to build on that knowledge and experience through research and teaching in an academic environment,' she said.

'The issues that health service managers face are becoming more and more challenging. I hope that my first-hand experience in managing these challenges and the opportunity I have to discuss and debate issues with students and my QUT colleagues, will provide high-quality learning outcomes that contribute to the development of innovative and resourceful health services leaders and managers.'

As a leader in the development of the School's Master of Health Management, Mrs Mahon said she was developing a program of learning for clinicians, other health professionals and managers, preparing them for the breadth and depth of health management.

'The level of complexity of legislation, policy and regulation within the health industry, combined with the thousands

of different services and products available, makes health one of the most complex service delivery environments,' she said.

'Building an understanding of the systems, frameworks, strategies and processes that support service delivery through an experiential education program will prepare health leaders and managers to achieve the aims and expectations of the community that they serve.

'It is important the learning experiences of our students are relevant to their current or future careers, to challenge their current thinking and paradigms, and provide them with support to develop their leadership and management skills in a health context.'

The Master of Health Management is a postgraduate program offered by the School of Public Health for clinicians, other health professionals and managers, to equip them with the skills and knowledge to address the complex issues confronting health systems around the world.

Mrs Mahon said the program would develop the next generation's leadership and management expertise in the ever-changing environment that is the future health industry.

'The next generation of health professionals will need to be innovative and flexible in the way they manage the delivery of services,' she said.

'Their roles may well change many times throughout their career to fit with changes in technology, community expectations, resource limitations and workforce shortages. Ongoing education and learning will be the key for these professionals to remain flexible in an ever-changing environment.'

Psychology trio awarded for teaching excellence



Dr Julie Hansen, Dr Zoe Pearce and Dr Renata Meuter

The teaching excellence of three lecturers within QUT's School of Psychology and Counselling has been celebrated through a number of prestigious awards.

Dr Julie Hansen, Dr Renata Meuter and Dr Zoe Pearce have each received awards to recognise their teaching excellence within the School's psychology program.

Senior lecturer and Undergraduate Course Coordinator, Dr Hansen was awarded a Carrick Award for Teaching Excellence for her work in teaching research methods and statistics, and in pursuing career development and workplace learning opportunities for psychology students.

'The greatest rewards of teaching come from working with our wonderful students, and helping them to realise their potential,' Dr Hansen said.

'But it's also very motivating when your hard work is recognised at a national level.

'Our School has many outstanding and dedicated lecturers who are deserving of a teaching award.'

Senior lecturer and fourth-year coordinator, Dr Renata Meuter was awarded a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in December last year, for her client focus and leadership within the School of Psychology and Counselling.

The Vice-Chancellor's award recognises Dr Meuter's high teaching standards and innovative teaching practices, especially her leadership and contribution to the success of the School's large fourth-year program.

Dr Meuter has integrated a number of innovative leadership initiatives into the program and has been instrumental in instituting School-based awards, which recognise excellence in research and academic performance by students.

Dr Meuter said simply to be nominated for the award was very rewarding, while actually receiving one of the awards was an unexpected pleasure.

'Given the importance of grades, it can be all too easy to focus on a desired grade outcome at the expense of true learning,' Dr Meuter said.

'I encourage students to deepen their understanding and to be critical consumers of new information (the grades will follow), and I try to help

them appreciate the relevance and 'real - world' applicability of the skills they acquire in the process.'

Dr Pearce, a lecturer within the School, was successful in the recent Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Citations for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. She was recognised for her contribution to QUT's first-year students.

Dr Pearce is responsible for teaching and assessing up to 1000 first-year students across several schools, on three campuses of the University. Dr Pearce's first-year students are typically taking her introductory communication units to improve their ability to interact with health professionals and patients or clients.

'One of the best ways for students to learn is to stop and reflect on the content of a lecture and apply it to their own lives and experiences,' Dr Pearce said.

'Classes should also be fun and engaging, so I try to find ways to use popular culture and everyday experiences that students can relate to. This helps them understand a concept more completely and have a little fun at the same time.'

Research aids bone health of elderly Australians



Marion and Dr Carolyn Lang

The threat of injury from falls and fractures can be an ongoing concern for many elderly Australians as their bone health deteriorates with age. A study from QUT's AusSun Research Laboratory may help to combat these concerns through new recommendations regarding daily intake of minerals.

The study into the bone health of Australians aged over 55 has found increasing the levels of vitamin D and calcium could assist in the prevention of falls and fractures.

PhD student David Borradale led the research into calcium and vitamin D levels of older Australians, with some surprising results.

The study found that only 32 per cent of residents aged over 55 in South-East Queensland met the recommended intake of calcium, while 13 per cent registered appropriate levels of vitamin D.

'The findings have major public health implications, as lower vitamin D may affect physical (muscle) function in older Australians which could lead to increased risk of falls and fractures,' Mr Borradale said.

'As people age, their bones become more porous and as a result become weaker and more vulnerable to fractures. Older people are also at increased risk of falls due to decreased muscle strength, which results in poorer balance.

'Vitamin D plays an important role in both bone health and muscle strength and calcium is essential in maintaining bone strength.'

Mr Borradale said these findings were a warning to healthy, independent Australians aged over 55 who may be unaware that they do not meet the required levels of these nutrients.

'Most volunteers in my study thought that they were getting enough of these nutrients, but that was often not the case,' he said.

'People may be aware of the dangers of osteoporosis and that low calcium intake is a risk factor in osteoporosis, however there remains confusion on how much is needed.

'Greater media attention and, perhaps more importantly, community programs aimed at vulnerable groups such as older adults, are required to raise awareness of this issue.'

The research also found female participants with lower vitamin D had significantly decreased physical function ability for simple tasks, such as getting up out of a chair.

Mr Borradale said while the study focused on Australians aged over 55 due to the high risk in depletion of bone health within this age group, the vitamin D status and calcium intake of all age groups was a concern.

'This is especially true when it is considered that we reach our peak bone density at approximately 25–30 years of age,' he said.

'Bone health is also important in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood to build and maintain a strong skeleton to offset age-related bone losses that occur late in life,' he said.

'It is important for people to ensure they are getting enough vitamin D and calcium in their diets.'

It is recommended females under 50 years of age receive 1 000mg of calcium per day, while females over 50 years receive 1 300mg daily. Males aged under 70 years have a 1 000mg daily recommended intake, while for men aged over 70 the recommendation increases to 1 300mg per day. Generally, these levels of calcium intake can be obtained with three serves of dairy foods per day and a balanced diet. For vitamin D, it is recommended people aged under 50 years receive 5ug per day; 50–70 years receive 10ug daily; and over 70 years 15ug per day.

Mr Borradale said while 95 percent of vitamin D was sourced from sunlight, he strongly recommended against increased exposure to the sun as a means to enhance personal vitamin D levels.

'This only leads to heightened skin cancer risk and is therefore not a suitable means to increase vitamin D levels,' he said.

'If people are concerned about their vitamin D status I would recommend seeing their GP for a vitamin D blood test. If the results are low then the GP may recommend a vitamin D supplement to boost vitamin D levels.'

The research has been well received from health organisations who regard the study as further evidence of the importance of an increased emphasis on osteoporosis and risk of fall.

Mr Borradale said he had also received interest from some fitness centres interested in vitamin D's role in muscle strength for older adults.

Prestigious appointment to tackle national obesity issue

Developing a coordinated program of action to address obesity and related chronic disease in Australia will be the focus for Associate Professor Nuala Byrne over the next two years.

Associate Professor Byrne, Clinical Programs Director for QUT's School of Human Movement Studies, has a busy two years ahead following her recent election as President of the Australia and New Zealand Obesity Society (ANZOS) Council.

Associate Professor Byrne was elected to the position in March by her peers, having been a member of the Council for the past four years and Treasurer for the Executive for the past two years.

As President, she will be responsible as an independent and authoritative voice that represents the broad multidisciplinary membership of the Society, as well as being actively involved in policy development, research and the promotion of public and professional understanding of obesity-related issues in the Australasian region.

Established in 1991, ANZOS is a scientific organisation of medical practitioners, dietitians, exercise physiologists, scientists and other health-care professionals interested in obesity research and treatment, and public health initiatives directed at the prevention of obesity. The Society has over 600 members throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region and is a full member of the International Association for the Study of Obesity, which provides a combined representation to over 11 000 professionals in over 50 national obesity associations throughout the world.

The ANZOS mission is to improve the management and prevention of obesity in the Australasian region through increased awareness and understanding, improved research on obesity issues and identification of improved management and prevention practices.

Associate Professor Byrne said obesity was a national issue in Australia that

required immediate attention, both on a community and national level.

According to a range of information sources, including ANZOS, the level of overweight and obesity in Australia is rising rapidly, with adult obesity rates rising from 7.2 per cent in men in 1980 to 17.1 per cent in 2000. For women, the rise has been even greater, moving from 7.0 per cent in 1980 to 18.9 per cent in 2000. The greatest rate of weight gain occurred in young adults and the rate of children overweight has doubled, and level of obesity tripled, in the past 15 years.

'As well as these alarming health issues, obesity also places enormous financial burdens on governments and individuals.'

'Obesity is a health and wellbeing issue, not a cosmetic concern,' Associate Professor Byrne said.

'There is now a wealth of evidence to demonstrate the relationship between excess weight and risk of ill health, leading to health consequences such as risk of premature death, development of serious chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers, as well as several non-fatal but disabling complaints that reduce quality of life.

'As well as these alarming health issues, obesity also places enormous financial burdens on governments and individuals, accounting for up to six per cent of total health-care expenditure in some developed countries. In 2005, Access Economics estimated the total economic burden of obesity on Australian society was around \$21 billion.

'Overweight and obesity was also considered to cause an estimated 7.5 per cent of the total burden of disease and injury in Australia in 2003.'

Professor Byrne said current dietary and physical activity behaviours were likely to be contributing to the problem of obesity in Australia. Over the past 20 years, adults and children have increased their energy intake from food despite the reduction in levels of physical activity. However many questions remain regarding the relative influence of the biological, environmental, and behavioural determinants causing this weight gain.

'It may be easy to provide a list of probable causes; but determining the relative magnitude of effect of each is more challenging,' Professor Byrne said.

She said tackling the issue of obesity required a multi-faceted approach, which included a well-funded and coordinated program of action and research that targeted individuals, community, health-care professionals and government.

Action must include the provision of cost-effective primary and specialised care services to those already dealing with the health consequences of a weight problem, as well as support for the implementation and evaluation of promising community-based programs aimed at preventing weight gain.

'We also need to ensure the existing health workforce and new professionals are up-skilled and educated with the competencies necessary to effectively treat people with weight problems,' she said.

'Structural change that supports rather than inhibits the necessary changes in dietary and physical activity behaviours is also required to bring the population back into energy balance and prevent weight gain.

'To address this problem will require a whole of community approach with the involvement of all sectors of society. Any response requires clear and strong leadership from government.'

QUT leads national review into drug and alcohol websites



Professor David Kavanagh

A QUT research report presented to the Federal Government in May is set to affect the future of online information about drugs and alcohol in Australia.

The report, presented to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing at the end of May was commissioned to investigate the availability and content delivery of online information about drugs and alcohol in Australia. The research was led by Professor David Kavanagh of QUT's School of Psychology and Counselling and the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation (IHBI). The project was coordinated by Dr Angela White, also from IHBI.

QUT was fortunate to collaborate with a number of other Australian universities to undertake the project, namely The University of Queensland, the University of Newcastle, The University of New South Wales and Victoria's Swinburne University, all of which provided support to the research.

Professor Kavanagh said 56 drug and alcohol websites were evaluated as part of the project, screened for their quality of information and presentation.

'We examined the sites offering information about drugs and alcohol across the board, including the advice provided to the public about drugs and alcohol, as well as treatment statistics and the availability of information,' Professor Kavanagh said.

'We found that there is a need for an accreditation process for such sites to be made available online, as well as a suite of criteria to which drug and alcohol websites should adhere.

'We also recommend the need for the development of an online 'consumer portal' for drugs and alcohol, being a central website, which can be accessed by the public to direct them where to go for further online information and advice.'

Professor Kavanagh said few sites examined provided online treatment or resilience advice.

He said while the quality of most sites was acceptable, many did not make use of technological advances currently available for use within website development and creation.

As part of the research, an online survey was developed with 3000 participants, with people in communities, practitioners and health professionals interviewed. Nine focus groups were also conducted across Brisbane and Roma to gather information from urban, rural, Indigenous Australians and ethnic groups.

Professor Kavanagh said the outcomes of the report would shape the future of online drug and alcohol information.

'We expect the Department of Health and Ageing will base future decision making about drug and alcohol websites on the recommendations within our report,' Professor Kavanagh said.



Self-management of chronic disease

The Faculty of Health has recently received funding from the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) for four projects focusing on self-management of chronic disease in Australia.

The Faculty's School of Nursing and Midwifery and the School of Public Health will undertake three projects, which will focus on both self-management for those with a chronic disease, and education and training to improve the capacity of the primary healthcare workforce to support chronic disease self-management.

The School of Human Movement Studies will undertake a project on remote monitoring led by Dr Charles Worringham.

The Head of the School of Public Health, Associate Professor MaryLou Fleming, said the projects supported existing Australian health schemes, including the National Chronic Disease Strategy and the Australian Better Health Initiative.

'The growing burden of chronic disease in Australia has driven a shift in health service delivery from acute care, to a proactive, multidisciplinary care system, with an increased focus on prevention and managing chronic disease,' Professor Fleming said.

The capabilities needed are described in the framework: *Capabilities for Supporting Prevention and Chronic Condition Self-Management: A Resource for Educators of Primary Health Care Professionals*.

The first project will review the Faculty's undergraduate and postgraduate health curriculum to map the competencies against the '19 core capabilities' of the framework.

Professor Fleming said the review would develop and deliver knowledge enhancement and skills training for prevention and chronic condition self-management support in current and

future course curriculum. The health disciplines to benefit include Human Movement Studies, Nursing, Nutrition and Dietetics, Optometry, Paramedics, Podiatry, Psychology, Public Health and Social Work.

'After reviewing existing courses, programs and processes will be developed and implemented to ensure the Faculty of Health is at the forefront of teaching Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSM) knowledge, skills and practices to students,' Professor Fleming said.

'The CDSM needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from rural and remote areas will be given particular attention.'

The School of Nursing and Midwifery will undertake two projects, which focus on the development of self-management programs for those diagnosed with cancer or cardiac disease and type 2 diabetes.

The Development of Cancer Survivorship Self-Management Plans project seeks to develop, implement and evaluate interventions that will promote sustained improvements in patient self-management abilities following completion of active cancer treatment.

Structured self-directed management plans, developed in accordance with principles outlined in the capabilities framework, will be created to assist cancer patients in the transition from completion of treatment to self-management of the short and longer term health conditions of cancer diagnosis.

Acting Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery Professor Patsy Yates said with continued improvements in cancer treatment and extended survival from cancer, a growing body of research was emerging that cancer survivors have a unique set of health needs following completion of treatment.

'These health concerns include the need to minimise the risks of re-occurrence of cancer or other chronic conditions, as well as reduce the burden of common physical and psychological sequelae that result from the cancer treatment itself,' Professor Yates said.

'The promising results from our internationally recognised work in this field need to be extended to enable further understanding of interventions to promote sustained improvements in patient self-management abilities following completion of active cancer treatment, thereby improving health outcomes for this growing population.'

The third project aims to fill a current gap in self-management programs and directly targets those with cardiac disease and type 2 diabetes. This *Peer Support Based Cardiac-Diabetes Self-Management Program* is led by Dr Chiung-Jung (Jo) Wu, a nurse academic and Clinical Research Fellow with Mater Health Services.

To extend a peer support based approach, the project will include creation of a DVD and a program through which peers provide telephone support following a patient's discharge from hospital to improve their self-management. The DVD will include case studies which provide information on aspects of self-care such as diet, foot care, exercise and how to recognise signs and symptoms requiring immediate medical attention.

'Although self-management is an effective approach to improve quality of life, there are no such programs specifically designed for patients with these dual conditions,' Dr Wu said.

'Furthermore, such programs need to be enhanced by user-friendly current technology and supported by patient peers.'

'The growing burden of chronic disease in Australia has driven a shift in health service delivery from acute care, to a proactive, multidisciplinary care system.'

Aged care partnership attracts \$900 000 grant

QUT's School of Nursing and Midwifery is leading a national project to promote evidence-based practice in wound management in residential aged care thanks to an Australian Government grant.

The Department of Health and Ageing's Encouraging Best Practice in Residential Aged Care (EBPRAC) program awarded the School almost \$900 000 in grant funding to undertake the project: the only EBPRAC project in Australia focused on wound management.

The two-year *Creating Champions for Skin Integrity* project will promote the implementation of evidence-based practice in prevention, assessment and management of wounds for residents in aged-care facilities.

The project team includes a consortium of seven residential aged-care facilities across Queensland and New South Wales, and QUT's School of Nursing and Midwifery and the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation.

Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Professor Helen Edwards, said evidence-based practice encompassed consideration of the best available research evidence, clinical expertise, context and patient preferences when making decisions on the provision of care.

'The project aims to provide pathways to assist staff of residential aged-care facilities gain awareness of evidence and evidence-based guidelines, and how to implement this evidence into practice,' Professor Edwards said.

'Today many factors have pushed the need for evidence-based practice to the fore, including rising costs of health care and the need to improve the quality of health care outcomes for patients and communities.

'It is difficult for both health professionals and consumers to keep up to date with the latest evidence on best wound treatments. In addition, it is difficult to obtain the skills to be able to sift through all the information



available and identify that which is based on valid and reliable evidence.'

Project Manager Kathleen Finlayson said the project was important to the health of residents within aged care facilities due to the prevalence of skin conditions within this age group.

'The incidence of skin tears, pressure ulcers, chronic leg ulcers and diabetic foot ulcers increases with age and is a serious issue in residential aged care,' she said.

'Residents are at high risk of suffering skin tears and chronic wounds and are thus in need of best practice with regard to assessment, prevention and management strategies.'

The project team includes seven residential aged-care facilities in Queensland and Northern New South Wales: Masonic Care Cairns, Blue Care Avalon Aged Care Emerald, Masonic Care Cooloola Hostel in Tin Can Bay, Masonic Care Sandgate, Blue Care Yurana Hostel in Springwood, Jeta Gardens in Bethania and Crowley Nursing Home and Hostel in Ballina.

Project phases will include investigation into current assessment, management and treatment of wounds within residential aged-care facilities, followed

by development and evaluation of a Wound Management Self-Education Resource package. The *Creating Champions for Skin Integrity* model of best practice will then be developed and trialled to promote effective implementation of evidence-based practice within aged-care facilities.

Professor Edwards said the project aimed to improve the skin integrity of residents in aged-care facilities, as well as enhance the knowledge and skills of care staff towards skin integrity.

'Project activities are expected to include identification of 'champions' in each facility to become key contacts for staff and residents with skin integrity issues, the development of educational materials and skills development workshops, and support systems and tools for clinical decision making,' she said.

'In the longer term, we also anticipate information and resources to be available to enable evidence-based wound management to be embedded as daily practice within all aged care facilities across the country.'

The project is one of eight national projects funded by EBPRAC in the current round which focuses on identified areas of importance within residential aged care.

Text messaging supports breastfeeding mothers

Mothers with babies may benefit from new modes of breastfeeding support following a study being supported by the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

A new project led by QUT's Schools of Public Health and Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations will investigate mobile phone messaging as a way to communicate with breastfeeding mothers.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association, in conjunction with the Gambling Community Benefits Fund, has awarded \$28 000 to Dr Danielle Gallegos and Mrs Jan Payne from QUT's School of Public Health for the project, in a collaborative study with QUT's Associate Professor Rebekah Russell-Bennett from the School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations and Dr Josephine Previte from The University of Queensland's School of Business.

Dr Gallegos said the project would examine the possibility of increasing the length of time children are breastfed through the use of mobile phone messaging as a means of direct communication with the mothers.

She said while the project is a pilot program, it promised to provide insight into an innovative way of sending targeted messages.

'We believe this mode of communication with mothers will be well received, as mobile phone usage is relatively common practice in our society now,' she said.

'Mobile phone messaging has been used successfully in other areas such as physical activity but is an option that is to date unexplored for breastfeeding.'

Dr Gallegos said it was expected the research would recommend mothers receive information via sms to communicate the benefits of breastfeeding, as well as ascertain how the mother was feeling and whether she required support.

'For example, if they were to indicate they might be experiencing some issues we would put them in touch with



'It's about having a personal approach – rather than just telling women they should keep breastfeeding.'

someone with whom they could speak,' Dr Gallegos said.

'It's about having a personal approach – rather than just telling women they should keep breastfeeding.'

The World Health Organisation recommends babies are exclusively breastfed (breastmilk only) until six months of age, with the appropriate introduction of solid foods coupled with breastfeeding until children are aged two years.

Dr Gallegos said a Queensland infant nutrition survey completed in 2003 found just over half of the infants aged six months were being breastfed and very few were exclusively breastfed.

She said studies indicated for infants aged six months, the rate of breastfeeding in Queensland had fallen to 57 per cent, which was below the National Health and Medical Research Council's objective of 80 per cent of infants breastfeeding at this age.

'Most women breastfeed their infants to three months and then stop, perhaps due to work commitments, issues with their breasts or they believe they are not producing enough milk for the baby,' she said.

'Studies indicate the longer a mother breastfeeds her child, the less likely the infant will be prone to infectious disease and the less likely they are to develop immunological diseases. The longer a child is breastfed the less likely it will be obese or develop chronic disease such as diabetes.

'The benefits to the mother are also substantial, including increasing evidence for reduced breast and ovarian cancer rates among women who have breastfed.'

Dr Gallegos said it was hoped the project would be a launching pad for more funding to research breastfeeding and the universal delivery of messages about breastfeeding.

Vice-Chancellor welcomes Minister to Dementia Collaborative Research Centre

QUT's Dementia Collaborative Research Centre opened its doors to some important guests earlier this year, with Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Coaldrake hosting a visit by the Hon. Justine Elliot MP, Federal Minister for Ageing.

Ms Elliot joined Professor Coaldrake, Centre Director Professor Elizabeth Beattie and Griffith University's Professor Wendy Moyle (representing collaborative partners) on Tuesday, 28 April, for a tour of the facility located at QUT's Kelvin Grove campus.

In a competitive tender process in 2006, QUT secured \$2.2 million for the leadership of the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre – Consumers and Carers (DCRC–CC), which is one of three dementia research centres funded as a collaboration by the Department of Health and Ageing. The other two centres are the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre – Assessment and Better Care Outcomes, at the University of NSW, and the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre – Prevention, Early Intervention and Risk Reduction, located at the Australian National University.

The centres are an Australian Government initiative under the Dementia: A National Health Priority initiative, an innovative plan to enhance the assessment and care of people with dementia and their families. Together, the centres aim to translate research into care and clinical practice. Research across the centres is broad and includes pre-clinical diagnosis, palliative care and social issues for people with dementia and their carers.

The three centres each have multiple collaborators comprising many of the top researchers in Australia, community groups and service providers.

For example, the Queensland Dementia Collaborative Research Centre at QUT is supported by partners who are industry experts from across Australia. These partners are Mr Glenn Rees, National Executive Director of Alzheimers Australia;



Left to right: Professor Wendy Moyle of Griffith University, Justine Elliot, Professor Elizabeth Beattie, Professor Peter Coaldrake

Professor Rhonda Nay of the Australian Centre for Evidence Based Aged Care, LaTrobe University; Professor Barbara Horner, Director of Curtin University of Technology's Centre for Research on Ageing; Professor Wendy Moyle of Griffith University; and Mr Richard Fleming, Director, Dementia Services Development Care, Hammond Care.

Professor Beattie said research undertaken at the QUT centre focused on carers, providers and the social aspects of dementia, with the key objective of promoting increased dementia research and improving services for people with dementia, their carers and family. She said this research encompassed three main domains, being Quality of Care, Technological Support to Improve Dementia Care and Models of Dementia Care.

Research of this type is as critical as research focused on prevention and finding a cure because approximately 200 000 Australians are currently diagnosed with dementia and will require ongoing care of various types for long periods of time, both in their homes and in residential aged care. These numbers are predicted to rise exponentially in the absence of a cure, making responsive interventions a priority, she said.

Current projects within the Quality of Care domain include a study into the

experience of loneliness associated with dementia and the stigma associated with the diagnosis for persons with dementia and carers. Planned projects include improving the hospital experience and nursing management of those with dementia within acute care and studies into the non-pharmacological management of behavioural symptoms associated with dementia using complementary and alternative medicines and therapies.

Studies into attitudes towards, and acceptance of, technologies to manage dementia-related behaviours are currently being undertaken within the Technological Support to Improve Dementia Care Domain. Planned projects for this area of research include pilot intervention studies to evaluate the use of Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID) within the home environment. The feasibility of remote observation of in-home behaviour of people with dementia will be trialled to facilitate early warning of critical changes in behaviour patterns.

The Models of Dementia Care domain is currently conducting a survey of the experience of respite care consumers and providers, while planned projects include investigating evaluation of emerging models of consumer-driven care for persons with dementia.

Higher degree highlights

TRACEY DI SIPIO

PhD (Public Health)

Thesis title

Health-related quality of life among breast cancer survivors: Town and country experience

As women with breast cancer comprise one of the largest groups of cancer survivors, interest in health-related quality of life (HRQoL) following treatment is increasing. However, little is known about the HRQoL among survivors in non-urban areas, despite 45 per cent of breast cancer survivors in Queensland living outside major metropolitan areas. This study examined the HRQoL among urban and non-urban breast cancer survivors 12 months following diagnosis, and further compared them with the general female population in Queensland. Dr Di Sipio found that while some findings may be generalised to all breast cancer survivors, non-urban breast cancer survivors also had distinct experiences which influence their HRQoL. Furthermore, although HRQoL among breast cancer survivors 12 months following diagnosis was comparable to the general population, the study found there is room for improvement among certain subgroups and for specific areas of HRQoL.

SHAUN LARKIN

PhD (Public Health)

Thesis title

The impact of a benefit design change on the utilisation of oral health services by members of a private health insurance fund in regional and rural New South Wales, Australia

This thesis examined utilisation of dental services following the introduction of a participating provider scheme (Regional and Rural Oral Health Program) for dentists who receive higher third party payments from a private health insurance fund. The dentists receive these higher payments for delivering an agreed range of preventative and diagnostic benefits at no out-of-pocket cost to patients who are members of the third party. The study was undertaken into the dental claims received by the Hospitals Contribution Fund (HCF) of Australia by residents of New South Wales from 1998–2004. The results found that the utilisation rate of dental services by regional and rural residents of NSW who were members of HCF grew substantially compared to HCF members who were Sydney residents. Dr Larkin concluded

changes to dental schemes that involved removal of co-payments on a defined range of preventative and diagnostic dental services, combined with the establishment of a network of dentists as a participating provider scheme, had a marked impact on uptake of dental services for HCF members living in regional and rural NSW.

CATHRYNE LANG

PhD (Psychology and Counselling)

Thesis title

Examining the transition from acute pain to chronic pain disability in benign pain conditions: Critiquing a current conceptual model of transition and examining predictors of transition

This thesis examined the experience of chronic pain across the total spectrum of pain conditions (including acute and episodic) and during the early course of chronic pain in a community sample. Information about these aspects of pain is important as effective, early intervention for chronic pain relies on identification of people who are likely to progress to chronicity post-injury. The research aimed to describe the experience of pain in a community sample to obtain specific data about pain in Queensland, and to explore the usefulness of Gatchel's Model (1991) which modelled the transition from acute to chronic pain. The results indicate chronic pain is associated with high levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms. However, the levels of disability reported by this Queensland sample were generally lower than those reported with clinical samples, and consistent with disability data reported in another New South Wales study. Dr Lang found passive coping strategies, catastrophising, self efficacy, optimism, social support, active strategies and the belief that emotions affect pain, may be useful additions to Gatchel's Model and understanding the transition process from acute to chronic pain.

PAUL HIGGINS

PhD (Psychology and Counselling)

Thesis title

Reducing uncertainty in new product development

Dr Higgins' project emanates from the recognised high failure rate of new product development projects and inadequacies in current literature relating to the engineering design phase of this process. Dr Higgins found literature relating to this subject was widely descriptive yet lacked explanation

of a definitive process outlining how to achieve a successful outcome. While market leading projects are considered unique, it is recognised that the actual process to achieve these products is essentially the same; beginning with an idea, then processing through stages of development and concluding with an outcome. To investigate this theory, Dr Higgins created a SME (small to medium-sized enterprise) focused engineering development technique to produce a successful new product outcome that begins with a 'fuzzy' idea in the mind of the inventor. The study had two core activities – to ensure the 'fuzzy' idea is qualified as a potential tangible outcome that allowed the organisation to create an engineering plan to achieve this new product outcome. Secondly, a simple technique which couples the forward engineering plan with the engineering development to facilitate responsive action to variation, embody a methodology to improve the process in sustained use, and qualify a successful outcome. Dr Higgins found these techniques apply equally to SMEs and start-up ventures.

While the process is suited to SME's and startup ventures it is generic in nature and has been applied to the development of Intelligent Transport System products including the image based vehicle recognition detector which formed the case study in this research, AVL technology utilized in Brisbane's RAPID public transport management system and the animated school zone safety system currently being installed by Ipswich City Council. Other products patented by Dr Higgins have been developed utilizing this process, including the Pelvic Floor Muscle Analyzer (PFMAT) which aides in the treatment of female incontinency through assisting the user to re-acquire control of and train specific muscles utilized in bladder control. Dr Higgins is currently distilling this research into a simple guide which will assist inventors in articulating their ideas into a successful outcome.

YI-CHEN LEE

PhD (Public Health)

Thesis title

Trends in demographic and health behaviour factors influencing obesity in Australia from 1995 to 2005

Obesity is a serious health issue and has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as a worldwide epidemic. Currently, about 60% of Australian adults are overweight. Dr Lee's research

examined the association between factors such as overweight/obesity, self-perception of overweight and the discrepancy between the actual weight and self-perceived weight status of the subject. The research revealed a number of factors relate to the discrepancies found between actual weight status and self-perception of weight status. The study also found factors affecting obesity were also seen to affect self-perception of overweight, such as age, language spoken at home, household structure and exercise. Dr Lee concluded further research is required into the unknown factors, which can affect underestimation of an individual's weight status.

KATE MULGREW

PhD (Psychology and Counselling)

Thesis title

Attention and memory bias for body image and health related information using an Emotional Stroop task in a non-clinical sample

Dr Mulgrew's thesis aimed to expand the literature regarding cognitive processing biases in non-clinical males and females regarding body image. The research consisted of three phases, the first being a qualitative exploration of body image concerns amongst males and females. The importance of self esteem, mood, health and fitness, and recognition of the social ideal, were identified as key themes and included as measures in subsequent phases of the research. Phase two involved the selection and testing of stimuli identified for use in the Emotional Stroop task. Six categories of words were developed that reflected a broad range of health and body image concerns for males and females. The final phase of the project examined cognitive biases for body image information in empirically defined sub-groups. A national sample of males and females completed an Emotional Stroop task, incidental memory test and some psycho-social questionnaires. The research found no differences between the group in selective attention, with memory bias found across the whole sample for negative emotion and low calorie food. Negative appearance words were interpreted as reflective of the current focus on health and stigma against being unattractive. Dr Mulgrew found the results demonstrate processing biases are found within non-clinical samples and not all processing biases are associated with negative functionality.

CONTACT US

The Faculty of Health is committed to providing innovative courses, significant research and innovation, and improving the quality of life for all Australians. Contact us for more information on the Faculty's research programs, course developments and community initiatives; or to become involved in supporting the Faculty's future projects.

RESEARCH

Information about the Faculty's research facilities, current projects, and postgraduate research courses can be found at www.hlth.qut.edu.au/research

COURSES

Information on course developments including new degrees, course structures, undergraduate and postgraduate offerings can be found at www.hlth.qut.edu.au

CLINICS

Information on the services provided by the QUT Health Clinics can be found at www.hlth.qut.edu.au/clinics

YOUR SUPPORT

Donations from QUT staff and alumni as well as charitable gifts from other members of the community are making a real difference to students and researchers in the Faculty of Health. Our Health friends and donors often choose to support a cause close to their hearts. Research on vision problems such as myopia, skin cancer prevention and awareness programs, mental health studies and nursing education have all received philanthropic gifts over the past years.

These gifts make a real difference and an example of this is one charitable foundation which has been especially generous to the Wound Healing Community Outreach Service now located in the QUT Health Clinics (see page 1). In 2008, Nurse Practitioner Michelle Gibb was able to share her specialised skills after receiving a grant from the Cecilia Kilkeary Foundation. Wound treatments and bandages were provided to clients at a minimal cost and the patients' testimonials told a moving story of healing, relief from pain and often years-long suffering. A subsequent grant from the Kilkeary Foundation supported a series of educational seminars designed to bring advanced and cutting-edge wound healing education into the broader health care community.

For further information about opportunities to support the Faculty of Health and its important programs please contact Sheila Colwell, Acting Fundraising Manager on phone 07 3138 7162.



writers

Loretta Porche
Mechelle McMahon
Niki Widdowson
Sharon Thompson

photographers

Tony Phillips
Erika Fish

design

QUT Publications

contact

editorial enquiries 07 3138 5775
fax 07 3138 5662
email healthenquiries@qut.edu.au
international +61 7 3138 2000

CRICOS No. 00213J

**If you have changed your address,
please contact QUT Alumni
on 07 3138 5356
or email alumni@qut.edu.au**