

Hands On

In touch with Curtin Physiotherapy



Embarking on 2008

This has been another very busy and exciting year in the School of Physiotherapy. Several new staff have joined us and substantial progress to review and update all of our programs has been made. A number of important achievements and contributions to community life have been made by both students and staff of the School.

On the staff front, Peter Robinson is about to rejoin us as Director of Clinical Education. Peter was previously in this position before he left to take on roles in the public hospital system and I am very pleased to have someone of Peter's experience returning to the School to take on the leadership role in the Clinical Education team. The clinical education team has also been boosted by the appointment of Julie Bayliss as clinical coordinator and Margaret Coleman who has taken on a clinical administration role. The team has expanded significantly over the last few years and is an indication of the importance of clinical education in all of our courses. I would like to thank Amanda Bozиковic for her leadership of the team this year.



Leo Ng and Rob Waller joined us at the beginning of 2008 and they have done a great job in first year and musculoskeletal teaching respectively. We have recently appointed Michelle Brown to teach in the women's health area this semester and Liz Bell has joined our neurology team. We are also expecting Manisha Dayal to join us shortly. Manisha will be teaching anatomy and has a wealth of experience in anatomical research and dissection.

Peter Gardner has been doing an excellent job as Director of Entry Level Courses since he took over from Geoff Strauss in April. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Geoff for his tremendous contribution to the School over many years while he was Director of Entry Level Programs.

The general staff complement has been boosted by the appointment of Pippa Hendon, Lesley Watts and the return of Guy Anza. Amity Campbell has been recently recruited as a Research Officer and her expertise in motion analysis will support our research efforts with our new Vicon equipment.

There have been several important staff achievements this year. Notably, Dr Helen Slater received the 'David Lamb Memorial award' at the recent IFOMT conference in Rotterdam (see page 2). Dr Will Gibson was awarded an honourable mention in the Curtin Student Guild 'Excellence in Teaching awards' while Leo Ng received the 'Student International Travel Award' for his presentation at the International Society for Biomechanics in Sports Conference in Korea in July.

We have had many research successes again this year including three substantial grants awarded under the State Government health translation grants scheme. These were awarded to Assoc Prof Steve Edmondston, Assoc Prof Garry Allison and Dr Helen Slater in partnership with colleagues from a range of disciplines, for research in the areas of orthopaedics, neurological rehabilitation and back pain management. Congratulations to these staff members and their colleagues for their innovative research proposals.

Our students have also had a number of significant achievements this year. Harry Taylor made his debut in the very successful Geelong AFL side and so far has played in 15 games this season. Alicia Marriott was a very

popular winner of the Australian Ironwoman competition in the national championships at Scarborough while Christian Eyres achieved a fourth place finish in the recent World Rowing junior championships in Austria. Brett Sharpe's contribution to developing young sailors was recognised when he received the Coach of the Year Award from Yachting WA while Robin Fletcher was a participant in Channel Seven's Battle of the Choirs program. We indeed have a very talented group of students who make great contributions to WA outside physiotherapy.

Our School's contribution to community life continues to be very positive. As noted elsewhere in 'Hands On' we are developing a very positive link with Wheelchair Sports WA thanks to the effort of Trudi Fisher. Ten staff and forty students from the School participated in the Cancer Council's 'Relay for Life' again this year. I would like to thank Sara Carroll for organising the massage teams and everyone who participated and made such a positive contribution. 'Relay for Life' raised over \$800,000 for Cancer research and the School is very pleased to be part of such a popular community event.

The School of Physiotherapy Alumni Chapter continues to develop under the leadership of Craig Wilson and Cameron Tweedie. A 'Home Coming' reunion event is being planned for graduates from the 5, 10, 15 and 20 year groups in October. Participants will be invited to a cocktail reception in the School and each of the year groups will be encouraged to get together for dinner afterwards. More information about this event will be sent to alumni members in coming weeks.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff and students for their tremendous contributions to the School and to thank all of our partners and clinical colleagues for the support they provide to make our courses and research so successful.

Prof Tony Wright
Head, School of Physiotherapy

GEM Newsflash

We have recently received approval to offer Commonwealth supported places to students in our Graduate Entry Masters (GEM) course from the start of 2009. This means that these students will no longer be required to pay full fees but will pay a student contribution charge in the same way as current undergraduate students.

This change resulted from a decision of the previous Federal Government to allow Commonwealth supported places for Australian students completing postgraduate qualifications for entry to professional disciplines. Commonwealth supported places are partially funded by the Federal government and partially through the student contribution which can be paid in advance or deferred through the HECS-HELP scheme and paid through the taxation system once graduates are in employment. The change will apply to both new and existing students from the start of 2009. This provision will undoubtedly make it easier for many more students to complete the GEM course. The Master of Physiotherapy has been a very successful course and graduates are sought after by physiotherapy employers. The opportunity is still available for people who have completed a previous degree to apply for a place in the GEM course in 2009.

Staff Spotlight



**Coordinator of Higher Degrees by Research,
A/Prof Garry Allison**

Dr Garry T Allison, recently appointed Associate Professor of Neuroscience and Trauma Physiotherapy is working jointly with Royal Perth Hospital Physiotherapy Department to undertake clinical research and also coordinate

higher degrees by research within the School.

Since returning to Curtin 9 months ago, Dr Allison has contributed to growth in the neuroscience research activities with a series of successful grants. He is the chief investigator of a successful State Health Advisory Research Council Grant which is investigating neurological rehabilitation systems at Royal Perth Hospital.

He has also been recently recruited as Chief Investigator on the Move Again Program (MAP), headed by Prof Sarah Dunlop (UWA) which examines the role of exercise in the rehabilitation of Spinal Cord Injury.

Dr Allison is also undertaking research on changes attributable to muscle fatigue on ankle stiffness, in collaboration with Dr Will Gibson and postgraduate manipulative

therapy and sports physiotherapy students.

Dr Allison also holds a Research Fellowship with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) to continue his research examining central factors in the presence of lower limb pathologies including tendonopathy.

Dr Allison will be presenting some of this work and motor control aspects of core stability training at the 44th conference of the Japanese Physical Therapy Association. To add to the neuroscience activities within the school he has been asked to present a review of virtual exercise programs in the management of neuropathic pain in spinal cord injury in China later in the year.

This work stems from projects he is conducting with Honours student Melita Morriss and co-supervisor Ms Trudi Fischer.



NHRMC postdoctoral research fellow, Dr Andrew Briggs at work



Photo credit: www.scienceinpublic.com/sciencenow/2008/andrew_briggs.htm

Dr Andrew Briggs, 2001 honours graduate, returned to Curtin in October 2007 from Monash University, Victoria, where he was the senior research fellow for the Australian Rheumatology Association's biologics database. He is currently an NHMRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School, an Honorary Fellow in The University of Melbourne Department of Medicine, Royal Melbourne Hospital and also clinician in private practice. Dr Briggs was recently selected to participate in Fresh Science 2008. Fresh Science is a national competition

that identifies new and interesting research being done by early-career scientists around the country. The competition is open to any field of science. Sixteen scientists are selected from more than 80 nominations across Australia.

Andrew's work investigating intra-vertebral bone mass profiles in the context of osteoporosis was nominated for the national competition. This work was performed between 2003-2006 in collaboration

with The University of Melbourne Department of Medicine, Royal Melbourne Hospital; Institute for Medical and Veterinary Sciences, South Australia; and the Centre for Health Exercise and Sports Medicine, School of Physiotherapy, The University of Melbourne. The work forms part of a line of research examining bone health across the lifespan in both health and disease. It is very pleasing that clinical science from a physiotherapist was selected.



Photo credit: © Danny van der Meulen

Dr Helen Slater has received international recognition by winning the prestigious "David Lamb Memorial Award" for an outstanding research paper on the mechanisms underlying chronic tennis elbow pain. Also a Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist, Dr Slater presented her research in a keynote address at the 9th International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative therapists (IFOMT) Congress in Rotterdam in June this year.

Dr Slater was principle researcher of a team that published a research paper entitled "Sensory and motor effects of experimental muscle pain in

patients with lateral epicondylagia and controls with delayed onset muscle soreness."

This publication was chosen over 12 other outstanding submissions from around the world. Dr Slater's findings have helped explain why patients with tennis elbow pain can experience chronic pain that is non-responsive to treatments. Dr Slater said the award was a great honour for her and her research collaborators.

Dr Helen Slater at the 9th International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Therapists (Left)

Students Spotlight



Emidio Paceeca, performing a knee treatment on Perth Demons player, Ryan Smith

Emidio Paceeca graduated with a B.Sc (Physio) from Curtin in 2002. He started working in several hospital and private practice settings in Perth before he worked in London. In 2005, Emidio returned to Perth and worked at East Vic Park Physiotherapy where

he now works as principal practitioner and is a part owner. Over the past 3 seasons, he has also worked with Perth Demons Football Club as the head physiotherapist. Vice-Chair for the SPA (WA Branch), Emidio is also involved with Sports Medicine Australia. During his

Robin Fletcher completed year 12 music studies in 2006, with voice as his instrument. Now a second year physiotherapy student, he is a member of the choir, "New I Voci Singers". Together with the choir, Robin participates in two major concerts each year at the Perth concert hall – the Best of British Concert (in May) and the Vienna Pops concert (New Year's Eve). In January 2008, Robin and the choir toured Germany. On their return, the choir was greeted with the news that they were

selected to participate in Channel Seven's "Battle of the choirs."

Speaking on the link between singing and Physiotherapy, Robin said that he finds subjects like anatomy has given him a greater insight into things such as breathing control and muscular recruitment in breathing. Robin added, "This helps particularly in the ever so long phrases that some of the music I sing require."

years of being a Curtin physio undergraduate, Emidio played and was a sports trainer for Scarborough and Trinity-Aquinas football clubs and was a sports trainer for the Perth Bullets netball and SMA.

When asked about professional development, Emidio said, "Continuing education has always played a large role in furthering my skills as a physiotherapist. Working alongside 3 other physiotherapists at the clinic, being involved with the APA has given me the opportunity to both teach and learn from my colleagues. In order to continue my learning, I decided to commence my Master of Sports Physiotherapy part-time over 2 years."

Emidio said the decision to undertake further studies was largely based on the fact that he wanted to advance his career by becoming a titled APA Sports Physiotherapist. It has been a challenge juggling university with a job, business, football club, committee meetings, whilst maintaining a social life with friends and family. Now approaching the end of his postgraduate studies at Curtin, Emidio feels he has benefited greatly from the postgraduate course, having been equipped with advanced skills in diagnosis, treatment and clinical reasoning.



Robin at the Sydney Opera House

Curtin physio girls learn wheelchair basketball

In late June, 17 of our female physiotherapy students spent an afternoon at the Herb Graham Recreation Centre in Mirrabooka learning the skills required to play wheelchair basketball. The Recreation Centre is home to the Wheelchair Sports WA Association. With two Paralympians, Clare Burzynski and Cobi Crispin to assist and instruct them, the girls were in capable hands.

After gaining their "wheelchair legs" and learning the basic skills associated with the game, the girls split into two teams and Clare led them in a scratch match against one another. Jess Maguire, a GEM 6 participant, summed up the experience as, "What a wonderful, positive experience it was to play for an afternoon. Nearly all the girls were disappointed



when we had to stop. Many thanks to Clare for sharing her skills with us and introducing us to a sport that we have a whole new respect for."

The participants look forward to Curtin School of Physiotherapy continuing this association with Wheelchair Sports WA. Good luck to Clare and Cobi who are representing Australia in Beijing in wheelchair basketball.

International Spotlight



Kauthar and other International PhD students having a discussion

PhD student, Kauthar Al Busaidy is a senior physiotherapist from Oman who is currently undertaking research in women's health at Curtin University. Kauthar's project focuses on postnatal urinary incontinence in Omani women, a topic that has not been previously investigated in any detail.

Although very busy with her data analysis, Kauthar celebrated her recent upgrade from masters to PhD candidacy, by preparing a sumptuous three course Omani lunch for staff and fellow postgraduate students. On completion of her PhD studies, Kauthar hopes to establish a community service and rehabilitation centre for the treatment of and research into urinary incontinence throughout Oman.



Our Curtin team goes international



In June, 2008 staff and students from the School of Physiotherapy travelled to Phnom Penh, Cambodia as part of the School's PT Abroad program. The School sent two groups of students, GEM6 students (Crystal McKenzie, Fiona Samuel, Sophie Sleight and Theruni Wijewardene) and fourth year students (Amy Caruana, Adam Patton, Dave Kelly) along with lecturers, Michelle Kendell and Dr Will Gibson.

This is the fourth year the School has been involved in training programs to upgrade the skills of Cambodian Physiotherapists.

This year the first part of the trip involved Michelle and the GEM6 students, who acted as teaching assistants, working with lecturers from Singapore, to teach 16 participants in the Peripheral Musculoskeletal Assessment and Treatment module as part of a 4 module

Physiotherapy Upgrade Training Program. The week ended with the additional challenge of setting both practical and written exams that would be fair without language (majority of the participants spoke little to no English) being a barrier to success.

The second project this year involved Will and Michelle with the 4th year students acting as teaching assistants, conducting a three day Lower Limb Fracture Workshop to 30 Physiotherapists and Prosthetists & Orthotists, organised and funded through a local Non-Government Organisation (NGO).

The chaos on the roads of Phnom Penh explains why Cambodia has such a high rate of road traffic accidents, especially motor bike accidents. Due to this, lower limb fractures, particularly of the femur, are common. The inadequate medical system means that

often the physiotherapists and prosthetists & orthotists make decisions about fracture management that would otherwise be left to doctors in Australia.

The trip served as the Self-directed placement for the Gem 6 students and as the International clinical placement for the fourth year students. Although teaching in Cambodia has many challenges - from being an effective teacher via a translator to the heat and humidity (not all rooms were air conditioned), it is also very rewarding. The Curtin team is proud to assist in improving the skills of these allied health professionals who can then assist in educating their colleagues and ultimately improve the health and well being of the Cambodian people.

For further information on these stories or to submit any future stories, please email Suhaila: s.abdulmalik@curtin.edu.au