



DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2020

Welcome

Dear Colleagues

What a 6 months it has been since our last newsletter! We hope you are all keeping well and managing the enormous changes that have been required of all of us at this time of COVID-19. As I write, we are all watching the numbers in Melbourne and realising that in spite of all the good work to date, we are a long way from being past this pandemic. In the midst of all the challenges and difficulties, it has been an honour and privilege to receive so many messages of support for our student teaching.

We are enormously grateful for the many colleagues who have been with us on all the twists and turns of this journey to maintain student teaching in general practice. We are also inspired by our year 5 students in their great enthusiasm to take up hospital roles and also in their commitment to completing their GP learning alongside this major new responsibility. We will bring you more news about the outcomes of this experience in our summer newsletter.

Speaking of inspiration – we were thrilled to see acknowledgement of the enormous contribution of our colleague Dr Thava Seelan, in the Queen's Birthday honours list this year. In this issue of the newsletter you will also read of some of our alumni who have been inspired by GPs such as Thava and Ross Wilson and many of you reading this newsletter. They are now working in locations where their training and experience will make a difference. Well done Mitchell, Shakif, Dana, Dean and Kate!

In spite of recent challenges, our research continues apace. Much of this is supported through partnerships with Primary Health Networks and for our clinical trials, with urban Aboriginal medical services. We are always amazed at how much can be achieved in such partnerships and how much more enjoyable the experience is! We learn from each and every organisation with which we work. You will also read of research being conducted with one of our GP supervisors.



Student research is a key priority with our students at Western Sydney University now enrolled in an MD qualification. We welcome potential research ideas especially those that involve a learning role for our students.

If there is a theme to this newsletter it is "transformation". Thank you again to those who in the midst of transforming their own services, have seen the potential for student learning and have enabled this and inspired our learners. We know over time, our alumni will be in the forefront of transforming Australian general practice and we are all therefore a part of that journey!

Stay safe and well at this challenging time!

Warm Regards

Jenny

Professor Jenny Reath
Peter Brennan Chair of General Practice

GP Conjoint

Thank you to all our GP Conjoint. We greatly value your commitment and contribution to our teaching and research activities here at Western Sydney University. If your name is not on this list your conjoint status may have expired. Please contact Vicki Bradley v.bradley@westernsydney.edu.au and she will assist you!

Dr Ali Alsamail, Dr Aline Smith, Dr Alison Lyon, Dr Andrew Knight, Dr Angela Kwok, Dr Anna Pham, Dr Aziz Zaman, Dr Benjamin Tooma, Dr Channappa Jayadev, Dr Christine Ahern, Dr Dana Slape, Dr David Cosgriff, Dr David Le, Dr Derek Tang, Prof Diana O'Halloran, Dr Fatemeh (Mehrnoosh) Abdolalian, Dr Fiona MacKintosh, Dr Hani Bittar, Dr Hien T Tran, Dr Ivan Parise, Dr Jane Burges (Leete), Dr Jenny James, Dr Jo Marie Languido, Dr Joseph Lombardo, Dr Jurriaan Beek, Dr Kam Cheung Glen Au-Yeung, Dr Kenneth McCroary, Dr Kun Yun Kelvin Hon, Ms Letitia Campbell, Dr Liliane Carchedi, Dr Linda Brown, Dr Louise McDonnell, Dr Magdy Girgis, Dr Marietta Languido, Dr Mary Girgis, Dr Matthew Gray, Dr Mazen Khan, Dr Michael Burke, Dr Michael Phipps, Dr Michael Tran, Dr Natalie Lindsay, Dr Olataga Alofiva-Doorbinnia, Dr Pat Romeo, Dr Paul Fishburn, Dr Penny Burns, Dr Philippa (Billie) Glass (Whiteson), Dr Rajkumar Rajalingam, Dr Raymond Seeto, Dr Ronald Yoon-King Chin, Dr Rosemary Isaacs, Dr Sithamparapillai Thava Seelan, Dr Susan Sunwoo, Dr Tim Senior, Dr Tuan Bui, Dr Walid Jammal, A/Prof Walter Kmet and Dr Yasin Shahab

Update from the Department of General Practice

COVID-19 IMPACT ON GP LEARNING

As most of you will be aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant huge changes for universities in delivery of our programs. In the Department of GP, we continue to work from home with most of our previously campus-based teaching and even examinations, conducted on-line. With similar seismic changes for our teaching practices, initially student placements in GP were greatly at risk. However, thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of our GP supervisors, and a re-focus on placements in the later years of our course, we have been able to continue the GP placement experience for Year 3-5 students. Hospital placements also have been challenging, so the learning opportunity in GP has been greatly valued by our School of Medicine.

In our rural clinical schools, the impact on student GP placements was negligible. As always our thanks and appreciation for their ongoing support for our rural program, goes out to each and every one of our practices in Western and Northern NSW.

We have recently had a small "opinion piece" accepted in the Australian Journal of General Practice describing the changes we made and acknowledging the contributions of our GP supervisors – see <https://www1.racgp.org.au/ajgp/coronavirus/one-medical-schools-experience-of-sustaining-general-practice>

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

In spite of COVID-19 Jenny was able to present our work on "Quality Equity and systems Transformation in Primary Health Care – defining high quality" at the 5th International Health Care Reform Conference - convened on line in March. This research, supported by WentWest and by the Ainsworth Foundation, aims to develop a suite of indicators and measures for high quality in Australian General Practice. We have worked with staff and general practice teams from WentWest as well as South West Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains PHNs. Dr Christine Metusela, the QUEST PHC project lead, is finalising a report on this important research.

WELCOMES AND FAREWELLS

Thus far 2020 has been more marked by farewells than welcomes. Dr Jessica Armstrong-Kearns has moved on from our WATCH/ INFLATE team to another university position. After a lengthy COVID-delayed journey home, Dr Maithri Rupasinghe returned to his family and practice in Sri Lanka where he is also taking up a new academic position. We look forward to future collaborations with Dr Rupasinghe and also with Dr Elizabeth Walton who spent a brief but valuable sabbatical with us in January.

In the early part of the year, we were very grateful for the assistance provided to Sharon by Coral Dillon who joined our team whilst Vicki Bradley was taking some leave. We couldn't have done it without you Coral!



Farewell to Maithri and Liz



Coral cooking up a storm with Shakif

Student News

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY ASSISTANTS IN MEDICINE

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Western Sydney University School of Medicine was approached by our partner LHDs. They were seeking medical student support in hospitals experiencing major staff absences at a time of increased and transformative activity. Our Dean played a leading role in developing a cross-university response in NSW. Currently along with smaller numbers from other Schools of Medicine, our year 5 students are entering the hospital work-force as Assistants in Medicine. Approximately 90 of our 130 final year students are taking up these positions.

You can see their enthusiasm reflected in the ABC report describing this initiative at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-26/western-sydney-university-fast-tracks-medical-exams-coronavirus/12177008>

In our rural clinical schools at Bathurst and Lismore, AiMs are accommodated and supported in specialty areas such as Ambulatory Care and reaching into the community through programs such as hospital in the home. This is equipping them with insights and learning opportunities in health beyond the hospital environment with extremely positive and enthusiastic feedback so far.

In addition to supporting the recent arrival of the next cohort of rural medical students our local GPs and clinicians are also delivering education sessions to the AiMs through both face to face and remote teaching.

GPSN ACTIVITIES

While it's been challenging to hold face to face events this year, GPSN has managed to run a few activities promoting general practice to the student body. We started the year off at Orientation Week where a quick survey showed 40% of first year students had general practice as either their top or one of their top preferences. In April, in collaboration with other GPSN clubs, we held a COVID-19 webinar to shine a light on how GPs were dealing with the pandemic. This was a successful event attended by over 140 participants. Our Careers Night with GP Synergy will be held on 14th July to explore different career avenues within general practice that students may be interested in. We're thankful to the university's GP Department for their ongoing support.

Precy Zea, GPSN chair

GP Supervisor/ Practice Manager News

AIMS PLACEMENTS

We are keen to hear from practices who are willing to provide after-hours placements for Year 5 students working on their hospital Assistants in Medicine (AiMs) placements (see Student News).

Please contact Sharon at **GPDept@westernsydney.edu.au** if you are interested in supervising these students!

GP SUPERVISOR WORKSHOP

Please watch out for notice of a ZOOM GP Supervisor Workshop later this year! We plan to include our GP alumni in this event so you may be able to catch up on what your student from 201... has been up to!

If you have any topics you would like discussed, please let us know. We are thinking in the current setting, of considering how to best support student and supervisor well-being.

Send your ideas to Lawrence at **l.tan@westernsydney.edu.au**

CASES CONFERENCES FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CLINICAL OBESITY SERVICES

NACOS are holding the third of their monthly case conferencing events from 7-8pm on 3 August via Zoom. Please contact Dr Evan Atlantis at **E.Atlantis@westernsydney.edu.au** if you wish to attend and send a concise case summary (including medical history, current medications, treatment history) if you have a case you wish to discuss. For further information please see **www.nacos.org.au** or contact Dr Atlantis.

NEW PIP DATES

Medicare Payment Schedule 2020

Cut-off dates for submitting claim forms	Quarterly Payment Month
24 July 2020	August
24 October 2020	November

2020 Metro Placement Dates (Semester 2)

Year 3 MiC Students: Metro	Year 5 GP Students: Metro
MiC 5: 20 July – 21 August 2020	Metro 5: 22 June – 7 August 2020
MiC 6: 24 August – 26 August 2020	Metro 6: 17 August – 2 October 2020
MiC 7: 28 September – 30 October 2020	Metro 7: 12 October – 27 November 2020

GP SUPERVISOR AWARDS

DR THAVA SEELAN OAM

In the Queen's Birthday Honours list this year Dr Thava Seelan, one of our longstanding GP supervisors, was honoured with an OAM for "service to medicine and service to professional colleges".

Dr Seelan has made an outstanding contribution, providing holistic health care and supporting migrants and refugees in western Sydney. Dr Seelan's response to the award was typically humble:

"I am so very humbled to see how far my own life has come since I was a teenager facing the horror of war and near-miss experiences, then disruption of studies in Sri-Lanka, then the challenges I faced in Australia as a new migrant to where I am now."

Dr Seelan also acknowledged his "brilliant team" at Bridgeview Medical Practice and said how proud he was of his work with training the next generation of doctors at the University of Western Sydney.

Congratulations Thava, from your colleagues at Western Sydney University. We are proud to have you as a teacher and role models!



GP Supervisor/ Practice Manager News

OUT WITH CANCER STUDY: LGBTQI+ experiences of cancer and cancer care

The Out with Cancer study is examining LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex) experiences of cancer and cancer care, from the perspective of cancer survivors, their carers and healthcare professionals.

LGBTQI+ communities represent an “ignored epidemic” and a “growing and medically underserved population” in cancer care. Professor Jane Ussher from Western Sydney University’s Translational Health Research Institute says outcomes of the Out with Cancer study will be critical in improving the health and wellbeing of sexual and gender minorities as well as intersex people.

“According to international literature, this vulnerable population reports higher rates of cancer related distress and dissatisfaction with care than the general population. Their unique experiences and needs have been largely overlooked by Australian cancer researchers, policy makers, and service providers. This study will help will help address insufficient knowledge about health care needs, outcomes, lived experiences and effective interventions for LGBTQI+ populations.”



GP SURVEY

**Are you a GP working with
patients with cancer?**

**Can you spare 10 minutes to take
the Out with Cancer survey?**

The survey examines:

Do healthcare professionals understand the needs of LGBTQI+ patients? How can we improve LGBTQI+ cancer care?

TAKE PART IN OUR GP SURVEY

We would also value your support in sharing information about the study with LGBTQI+ patients with cancer and their partners or other carers.

The Out with Cancer study would like to hear from LGBTQI+, 15y+ who have ever had cancer or medical intervention for cancer risk. We’d also like to hear from their partners, family members, friends and other carers.

**Help recruit LGBTQI+ patients with cancer
and their partners or other carers**

More information

Funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant, the study is based at Western Sydney University, in partnership with the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, Cancer Council NSW, National LGBTI Health Alliance, ACON, Breast Cancer Network Australia, CanTeen, UTS, Melbourne, La Trobe, New South Wales and Monash universities. Please visit: westernsydney.edu.au/outwithcancer

Alumni News

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We are planning a new survey to catch up on what our alumni are doing and are keen to update our alumni contact details before we circulate the survey later this year. **Please pass this newsletter onto GP alumni you know and ask them please to drop Jenny a quick email at j.reath@westernsydney.edu.au so we can add them to our contact list!**

UPDATE FROM MITCHELL



Dr Mitchell Purser

Dr Mitchell Purser, a WSU graduate from 2015, is now a GP in the regional town of Nowra, living in nearby Gerringong. Mitchell did internship and residency at Liverpool hospital before moving to the south coast of NSW for GP training.

Mitchell reflects fondly on his general practice experience in medical school. "I was very fortunate to have wonderful general practice placements at Picton Family Medical Practice, Camden Family Practice and Oberon Medical Centre. I found the breadth of general practice to be intellectually stimulating and challenging. I was very fortunate to see examples of quality primary care and the real benefits it can bring to patients. Nothing in hospital practice came close!"

Mitchell credits the year he spent at Bathurst clinical school for his choice of rural practice. "Ross Wilson taught me you can get decent coffee outside Sydney. On the serious side I was inspired by the rural generalism I saw in Bathurst and Oberon, but also really enjoyed the lifestyle of living in a regional area."

Mitchell has settled well into general practice. "I couldn't be happier with my decision to choose general practice, the work is stressful but equally rewarding and intellectually stimulating. I am very fortunate to work with a great group of colleagues." He also enjoys the south coast lifestyle "I have taken up surfing and find it a really useful way to clear the head. I have also joined the Gerringong surf club and started patrolling which has been a great way to meet people."



Mitchell third from the left in the front row

UPDATE FROM SHAKIF



Dr Shakif Shakur

Shakif, a WSU alumnus, is our new Academic Registrar at the Department of General Practice. He'll be completing a research project under the supervision of Associate Professor Penny Abbott, exploring the barriers and facilitators for conducting research with migrant and refugee men in Australia, as well as assisting with our teaching activities.

Shakif graduated with the Class of 2015 before completing his junior years at Campbelltown and Bankstown Hospitals. As a 'Westpac Future Leader Scholar', he took some time away from clinical training for his MPH / MIPH at UNSW, and interned with the 'Global Influenza Programme' at the WHO Headquarters (Switzerland), where he reviewed the 2018 influenza season in the southern hemisphere.

Shakif has been involved with the SOM over the years as a 'PBL' and 'Communication Skills' facilitator. In late 2019, with a team led by Professor John Whitehall, he conducted some fieldwork in Bangladesh to inform the work of local charity groups seeking to improve child and maternal health outcomes.

Outside of medicine, Shakif enjoys travelling and playing soccer. He was recently selected to represent Australia at the World Medical Football Championships in Argentina, but this has unfortunately been put on hold given the current COVID pandemic!

Shakif will continue to practice clinically whilst he is with us at the Department of General Practice. He is very excited to be with WSU, where his medical career began almost 10 years ago!

ALUMNUS BABY



Otilie enjoying a babychino

Only one baby photo this issue – though I know we have more babies! Lovely to see Elise Buisson's little Otilie growing up – now two years old!

NEWS FROM DEAN AND KATE



Dean, Kate and Rambo

Dean Zinghini and Kate Sandy have sent word that they have moved to the mid North coast this year to practice in Kempsey. Dean has just finished his FRACGP/ FARGP and works in Kempsey as a GP Anaesthetist. Kate is working towards her FRACGP/ FARGP and working as a GP Obstetrician. Great to hear about our graduates making a difference!

ANOTHER ALUMNUS OF WHOM WE ARE JUSTIFIABLY PROUD

Our first alumnus Dermatologist, Dr Dana Slape (FACD) is putting into practice her learning about working in areas of inequity! Dana has joined other Dermatologists working with South West Sydney LHD at Liverpool and Campbelltown Hospitals and is working from private rooms. She has also started as a visiting dermatologist in the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network. Dana says:

"I've pretty much ended up working in lots of places that WSU put me as a student!"

As an Aboriginal doctor, Dana will be especially valued in these settings!

Research Updates

GP SUPERVISOR RESEARCH

Dr Ivan Parise from the Blue Mountains is working with A/Professor Penny Abbott and Dr Steve Trankle on his research project investigating the associations of distance from employment and obesity. He is currently collecting data from patients in GP practices in the Blue Mountains and Penrith.

STUDENT RESEARCH

Our two GP Synergy supported students are engaged in their research projects. Thomas Nguyen is examining year 5 student data (from pre/post surveys) to address the question "How does clinical placement affect student confidence with illness/disease management"? Emma Gregory is reviewing articles targeting Australian GPs to identify "How many times do different health practitioners recommend GPs play a 'key role' in managing various health issues".

We will also be supervising a group of year 4 students in their 2020 MBBS Community Research Project towards the end of the year. Their project involves a re-analysis of 125 patient, carer and provider interviews exploring "How does an integrated care approach impact patient self-management of chronic disease"?

WATCH AND INFLATE UPDATE

These NHMRC funded clinical trials aim to provide evidence to inform best management of ear disease with urban Aboriginal communities.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, our ethics committees suspended recruitment to both the WATCH and INFLATE trials from 26/03/20 - 1/07/20.

The WATCH/INFLATE team used the 'downtime' to catch-up of much needed data cleaning, consolidation of administrative files, data analysis and publication writing.

One of our trial sites in Queensland has recently closed down due to other service priorities, however we are excited to be working with a new site in Victoria.

We have recruited 239 children (of a planned 500) to WATCH and are hoping to see INFLATE zoom ahead from the current 79 recruitments (out of the planned 400).

Our Communities

In 2020 all community events have so far been postponed due to COVID, however we are excited to be partnering with Community Migrant Resource Centre www.cmrc.com.au to plan for ongoing student service learning projects that will commence next year with a focus on women's health literacy. Also from 2021 onwards, the GP department will be supervising student service learning projects in Justice Health settings around Western Sydney, facilitating health literacy discussion with people in prison. These projects reflect the GP department's commitment to promoting health equity and social justice in our communities.

New Publications

- Metusela, C;** Usherwood, T; Lawson, K; Angus, L; Kmet, W; Ferdousi, S; **Reath, J.** Patient Centred Medical Home (PCMH) transitions in western Sydney, Australia: a qualitative study, BMC Health Services Research; 2020, 20:285. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-05123-7>
- Lauraine MHV, Hunter C, **Tan L**, Comititis G, Neveling G, Lawrenson J. Found in translation: navigating uncertainty to save a child's heart. Paediatric cardiac surgery in Cape Town, South Africa. Med Humanit; 2020, 0:1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2019-011650>
- Lewis ET, Harrison R, Nicholson M, Hillman K, **Trankle SA**, Rangel S, Stokes C, Cardona M. Clinicians' and public acceptability of universal risk-of-death screening for older people in routine clinical practice in Australia: cross-sectional surveys. Aging Clinical and Experimental Research; 2020, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40520-020-01598-w>
- Green A, **Abbott P**, Luckett T, Davidson PM, Delaney J, Delaney P, Gunasekera H, DiGiacomo M. 'It's quite a complex trail for families now' - Provider understanding of access to services for Aboriginal children with a disability. Journal of Child Health Care; 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367493520919305>
- Abbott P**, Brooker R, Hu W, Hampton S, **Reath J.** "I just had no idea what it was like to be in prison and what might be helpful": educator and learner views on clinical placements in correctional health. Teaching and Learning in Medicine; 2020, Feb 17:1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2020.1715804>
- Ndwiga DW, MacMillan F, McBride KA, Thompson R, **Reath J**, Alofi-vae-Doorbinia O, **Abbott P**, McCafferty C, Aghajani M, Rush E, Simmons D. Outcomes of a church-based life-style intervention among Australian Samoans in Sydney - Le Taeao Afua diabetes prevention program. Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice; 2020, 160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.diabres.2020.108000>
- Ee C, Templeman K, Grant S, Avarid N, **Reath J**, Hunter J. Informing the model of care for an academic integrative healthcare centre: a qualitative study of primary care stakeholder views. The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine; 2020, 26(4):300-315. <https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2019.0321>
- Green A, **Abbott P**, Luckett T, Davidson PM, Delaney J, Delaney P, Gunasekera H, DiGiacomo M. Collaborating across sectors to provide early intervention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability and their families: a qualitative study of provider perspectives. Journal of Interprofessional Care, 2020, 34(3): 388-399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2019.1692798>
- Reath J, Tan L, Brooks M, Burges J, Lindsay N, Lo W, Shakur S, Trankle S, Wong K.** One medical school's experience of sustaining General Practice teaching in the time of COVID-19. AJGP; 2020 (In press)

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