



## Nelson Heads South.....

Professor Mark Nelson has been appointed as the Chair of the Discipline of General Practice at the School of Medicine, University of Tasmania.

He says the combination of lifestyle, great people in the department and a professionally tenured chair lured him to the position. For the future, he plans to build on his expertise in general practice based clinical trials to provide a vigorous academic environment for research, teaching, and debate that serves the interests of the broader general practice community.

Additionally he plans to provide a nurturing environment for novice researchers, higher degree training, undergraduate and postgraduate students and to collaborate with paramedical and non medical professionals.

## History of the Discipline of General Practice in the Tasmanian School of Medicine

General Practice teaching began in the "new" curriculum of the Tasmanian School of Medicine (TSOM) in 1979 following the appointment of Peter Mudge as Senior Lecturer. Alex Thompson was appointed as Professor of Community and Rural Health and General Practice in Launceston, after Peter Mudge moved to the Chair of General Practice at the University of Queensland in 1988.

A review of the (then) Department of General Practice was conducted by Professor John Marley in 1999. The Review committee recommended the Chair be re-named "Chair of General Practice" and be re-located to Hobart. The Dean appointed Peter Mudge to the position of Professor of General Practice and Director of the Primary

Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHC RED) strategy from 2001 to 2004, while a search was instituted to fill the position long term. During that time the teaching program was revised and a new curriculum and examination developed for students in their final year of the course. The Rural Undergraduate Support and Coordination (RUSC) and PHC RED grants were used to establish teaching and research staff and the refurbishment of premises. With the welcome arrival of Professor Mark Nelson in January 2005, General Practice has become firmly established as a respected and important specialty in the TSOM curriculum.

- Prof Peter Mudge  
University of Tasmania

## Welcome from our President

Welcome to the re-vitalised AAAGP Newsletter. Since taking on the Presidential role late in 2004 I have been busy coming to grips with many of the hidden sides of AAAGP life. The executive and State representatives have met around every six weeks to progress the work of the Association on your behalf. There is much news to share and I hope that you find this newsletter interesting and informative.

Our new Secretariat, Mrs Debbie

Mutton, located at Newcastle University has achieved a tremendous amount. She has overhauled our systems and shown so much initiative and commitment to the association – thank-you Debbie!

Special thanks to Dr Grant Blashki from Monash University for taking on the role of editor of the Newsletter. It is very fitting that this role returns to the birthplace of AAAGP. Please support the newsletter by bombarding

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us with your articles and ideas.

On behalf of all members I thank the Departments that have made a substantial large financial contribution to the Association. Because of these generous donations we have been able to maintain our membership fees at a low level for 2005.

The Australian Association of Academic General Practice (AAAGP) has had a very busy time over the past nine months. Our website has been updated, our membership has flourished and we have numerous members representing AAAGP on key committees. This year our research meeting is integrated with the GP and PHC Research Conference. I will be keen to hear your feedback about this following the conference.

Professor Dimity Pond is leading the AAAGP review of undergraduate medical curricula and

I know that many of you are actively involved in that important process.

For the first time ever there is a NHMRC General Practice & Health Sciences grant review panel and I am honoured to chair this panel, supported by three other GP members (Prof Jon Emery, Prof Deborah Saltman and Dr Nigel Stocks) and a number of allied health colleagues. We have waited a long time for formal recognition of general practice research as a unique entity at NHMRC level and I thank past Presidents of AAAGP and all other academics that have contributed to this achievement. There is a bright future for AAAGP members and I hope that you will join with me in growing our Association.

- A/Prof Jane Gunn  
University of Melbourne

## Members in Action

As the company that oversees vocational training for general practice education and training (GPET) is entering an interesting stage of its development. Having supported the establishment of 22 regional training providers (RTPs) across Australia - which are now providing the full extent of the Australian General Practice Training Program - opportunities are now presenting themselves for GPET to encourage the RTPs to become involved in a wider range of academic activities. For those working within RTPs, this in turn represents an opportunity to become more involved in academic activities beyond the constraints of vocational training.

Undergraduate education, research, curriculum development, assessment and remediation, program evaluation, and educational resource design are

all activities that could be undertaken in partnership with local university groups. Examples of these will be prominent at the National GP Education Convention in Bondi on August 24 & 25, 2005.

Many AAAGP members are already involved with their local RTPs. These linkages are invaluable for the future development of general practice.

**Dr Steve Trumble is the inaugural AAAGP nominee to the ministerially appointed board of General Practice Education and Training Limited, the commonwealth company that administers the Australian General Practice Training Program.**

**"Primary Health Care, Changing Systems and New Models"**

NSW GP Council Issues Final Paper Jan'05. A short report.....

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## Letter from the Editor

"AAAGPRACGPACCRMAPHRIGPETN HMR"...sorry, don't you speak academic general practese? Well, don't worry- soon you will be fluent! The newly launched AAAGP newsletter to be published three times a year will keep you up to date with the Academic General Practice world.

Our regular segments will let you know who's who in our *Introducing* segment, and each edition we visit an academic centre in our *Spotlight* section. You'll also hear how your AAAGP colleagues around the country have been representing you in our regular *Members in Action* updates.

In this first edition, we celebrate Professor Mark Nelson's appointment as the Chair of General Practice in the Tasmanian School of Medicine, and we wish him well in his new role. Associate Professor Gunn shares her vision and excitement about AAAGP which is going from strength to strength. We spotlight Newcastle and the important work they are doing to shape general practice curricula for medical students. This edition also profiles our AAAGP secretariat, Mrs Debbie Mutton without whom this newsletter would not exist, so special thanks to Debbie for her strong commitment to AAAGP.

We take a moment to remember the late Professor Jeff Richards and his lasting contribution to Academic General Practice. His compassion and commitment to general practice research will be greatly missed by all.

Please send in your feedback and your stories. Whether you are new to the profession or have been in the game for a while, we want to hear about the people and projects that make academic general practice so exhilarating and worthwhile...so open a new word document and start typing!

*Sincerely, Grant Blashki*

*Department of General Practice*

*Monash University*

## Spotlight on Newcastle

The Discipline consists of one full time academic (Professor Dimity Pond) one full time administrative person (Carmel Northwood) and about 20 part time people, including a number of part time GP academics, part time administrative people (including our own Debbie Mutton who supports AAAGP), people employed under PHCRED funding, people employed under RUSC funding, and project officers/research assistants. We also have a number of Research Higher Degree students and Researcher Development Program GPs. This critical number of people keeps the discipline vibrant and interesting, despite the low numbers of core funded positions.

We have been busy with a recon-

struction of our GP curriculum over the past 12 months, following a restructure of the main BMed curriculum. This led us to ask “What is the optimum amount and nature of undergraduate GP teaching” and has provided the impetus for the AAAGP project exploring this question.

We are also working on a large number of projects. While many of these have arisen from researchers’ own interests, we do have some themes as a Discipline. These include issues relating to equity (encompassing equity in relation to patients, such as the unemployed, elderly and those with mental health problems) and to General Practitioners, including rural and female practitioners.

They also include GP practice in a variety of settings (including rural settings) and the GP application of common clinical problems.

- Prof Dimity Pond  
Head of Disc GP/Newcastle



Newcastle Foreshore

## Introducing Debbie Mutton

After five years in aged care administration and accounts, I began working with the Newcastle Discipline of General Practice in 2003. My main role initially was general admin support to all discipline staff and the processing of PIP payments for the GPs who gave practical placements to our medical students.

By 2004, the PIP payments moved to another department and a position was established for me as a research support officer with PHCRED here at Newcastle. This position has opened up more opportunities for me including my role with AAAGP. I now manage all research accounts, write up contracts, purchase equipment and provide admin and computer support. I recently assisted with the general organization for the PHCRED conference which was

held in November on the Newcastle foreshore.

My role with AAAGP involves all aspects of managing our membership including processing new applications, collecting subscription fees and updating the database. I also update our website, arrange regular teleconferences, take the minutes and assist with other admin tasks for our president Jane Gunn. I have also been helping to coordinate the AAAGP contribution to the GP & PHC Conference in Adelaide and our dinner at the Adelaide Wine Centre.

I have been the social convener for our discipline for a number of events such as a cruise on Lake Macquarie, birthday lunches and Christmas dinners. I also co-presented a “Coping Strategies for Stress Relief” workshop with

one of the discipline academics at our discipline planning day. At this workshop we danced, laughed, painted, glued, encouraged one another and then ended with a relaxation session.

Such diversity in a workplace! I love working at the Newcastle Discipline of General Practice. I am constantly challenged and always encouraged.



## Members in Action (con't from page 2)

What do we mean here? Henry Miller's words ring in my ears: Confusion is a word we have invented for an order that is not yet understood. The above are the buzz words that drive our desire for change? Do we really need radical change, or do we need to

foster emergence, emergence to a system that allows people to realise their dream of what it means to be healthy? Before rushing forward, I suggest, we need to explore three fundamental questions - what is the focus of medicine? what is the impact of sci-

ence and technology on medicine? and have we taken into account all conceivable factors that impact on our patients' health?

**Dr Joachim Sturmberg is the AAAGP representative on the NSW General Practice Council.**

## Academic, Clinical Psychologist, Pioneer of Internet Based Therapies.

It is with great sorrow that we mourn the loss of our dear colleague and friend Jeff Richards. Jeff died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack in his home on April 5. He was 55 years of age and at the peak of his professional career.

Jeff took up the role of Professor of Primary Care Research at Monash University in February 2003; the same year he received the Distinguished Career Award from the Australian Association for Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy (AACBT) in recognition of outstanding contribution to behaviour research and therapy and service to the association.

Jeff was best known for his pioneering research into internet-

based interventions for mental health disorders but has always maintained an active interest and involvement in health psychology, and to this end was involved in research into erectile dysfunction, cardiovascular disease, stress, depression, and tinnitus. A more recent passion of Jeff's was the improved delivery of evidence-based psychological treat-

ments in general medical practice. He saw this as a tremendous opportunity to improve people's access to quality mental health care.

In his short time at Monash, Jeff transformed a small research unit into a major national force in Primary Care Mental Health research. In the space of 2 years he was able to increase research funding to the Department of General Practice ten fold, increase research staff numbers five fold and significantly improve publications output. However it is not only for his professional achievements that Jeff will be remembered.

We will miss him for his distinct personal attributes as well as his unique professional skills and wisdom. His memory will be cherished by all who knew him.

*By Leon Piterman, David Austin, Britt Klein and Grant Blashki.*

**Prof Jeff Richards**



**1949—2005**

## Travelling Fellowship — Applications close 30 August 2005.

Through our Travelling Fellowship, we aim to:

- \*Enhance Australian academic general practice
- \*Foster collaboration between Australian general practice researchers
- \*Foster collaboration between

academic departments of general practice

- \*Provide assistance to members of AAAGP to undertake study leave within Australia.

Travelling Fellowships are offered at a maximum of \$5,000 for a study trip of not less than 2

weeks duration. The funds are available to cover costs of travel to and from the host institution and to contribute towards accommodation costs. Airfares will be re-imbursed for the cost of an advance purchase economy airfare. **For more information visit our website [www.aaagp.org](http://www.aaagp.org).**

**Thank you to these Departments for their financial contribution to AAAGP:**

Dept of GP, University of Adelaide

Dept of GP, University of Melbourne

GP & Rural Medicine, School of Medicine, James Cook University

Dept of GP, University of WA

Mt Isa Centre for Rural & Remote Health James Cook University

Graduate School of Medicine University of Qld

Academic Unit of GP & Community Health Australian National University

Discipline of GP, Newcastle University

Dept GP, University of Tasmania

Discipline of GP, Central Clinical School, University of Sydney

### Mission & Goals

Formed in 1983, AAAGP aims to promote & develop the discipline of general practice through:

Encouraging originality, questioning & exploration of ideas within teaching & research environment.

Providing a forum for exchange of information & ideas.

Encouraging shared academic activities.

Fostering & supporting career development in academic general practice.

Supporting the continuing development of academic general practice

**The AAAGP newsletter is to be published in Mar, July & Nov each year and welcomes letters to the editor and also articles about issues of general interest to the membership.**

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