

Climate Change and GP Researchers



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Dr Grant Blashki was fortunate to recently undertake a three day training course with the Honorable Al Gore to become a "Climate Change Messenger" Following the success of Al Gore's movie Inconvenient Truth.

Mr Gore has been in Australia training up 75 individuals from multiple sectors in Australia (eg farmers, business people, media) with a view to them presenting his slide show in their communities. Grant is hoping to raise awareness about this issue in the GP and GP research communities.

Dr Blashki, a Victorian Representative of Doctors for the Environment said " I was really taken with his command of the science of climate change and also ability to communicate to a wide audience- it was good to also be able to ask questions to some of Australia's leading climate change scientists" . Dr Blashki said, " I believe that this issue of climate change is shaping up as a huge public health issue that is highly relevant to all those working in

health and health research fields- why would we as medical researchers spend all our time trying to work to prevent some diseases 50 years down the track and ignore this critical preventive issue which can have huge impacts on health?"

Grant believes that "GPs and GP researchers can take a community leadership role in this issue. We are used to engaging and communicating credible scientific information to the community in a way that they can understand so we are well placed to use our skills to start this conversation with the community".

Relevant web links

Green Clinic

http://www.acfonline.org.au/articles/news.asp?news_id=962&c=22359

Doctors for the Environment Australia <http://www.dea.org.au/>

ABC news

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200611/s1792008.htm>

From our President.....

One of the outcomes of the Heads of Department meeting at the GP&PHC Research Conference in July this year was the formation of a GP teaching workforce subcommittee. The purpose of this committee is to address the impending 'generation Y medical boomers' due to the expansion in undergraduate numbers.

The GP teaching workforce is an important resource that will need careful management at all levels of

the learning continuum. This management is particularly critical due to:

- The current workforce shortage of general practitioners.
- Increases in medical student numbers.
- Trends towards more community based teaching in recognition of both the centrality of primary care and shorter stays for patients in teaching hospitals,

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leading to acutely ill, less accessible patients.

This presents both an opportunity and a challenge for general practice. On the positive side greater student exposure to positive general practice role models augurs well for recruitment into our profession. On the other hand little has been done to prepare and resource general practitioners to take on this teaching burden.

AAAGP represents approx 150 academics with an interest in teaching and research in the general practice environment. It has a genuine concern that the current opportunity to enhance the standing of general practice will be lost if we do not re-examine the role and support of GP teachers. Teaching in general practice is one of the major interests of our organisation and it would therefore welcome:

- More efficient and effective distribution of learners throughout Australian general practice.
- Teacher training for general practitioners and other members of the primary care team.
- Support, remuneration and performance incentives for quality teaching.
- Promotion of research and evaluation activities into effective general practice education and training.

Another approach may be the development of Community Clinical Schools. These schools

aim to deliver significant elements of a medical curriculum, which have traditionally been taught in teaching hospitals, in the community. These students will see patients in general practice, primary care and in the secondary care setting aiming to follow patients through the healthcare system from presentation to hospital admission and return into the community. They will gain a broader experience of common chronic disease and mental health that will be of greater relevance to their future medical careers.

One such model that is currently being piloted is an Outer Urban Clinical School at UWA. This is being developed by Assoc Prof Alistair Vickery and Prof Jon Emery. The aim of the initial pilot is to teach the medicine and psychiatry terms in the 4th year through a combined community and outer urban hospital setting. If successful the model will be developed in other outer urban sites in Perth with the addition of other disciplines taught in general practice and other community settings. However, the long term success of this approach will of course depend heavily on creating the right infrastructure in general practice and supporting general practitioners to teach in the midst of their heavy clinical loads.

I will keep you posted on outcomes associated with this sub-committee's work.

Prof Mark Nelson
President AAAGP

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the AAAGP newsletter and thanks to all who have contributed articles.

Those who develop an interest in research from within the ranks of general practice benefit from experience with a wide range of medical science and practice. In this issue Grant Blashki invites us to broaden our horizons further as we consider the problems resulting from our impacts on the environment. The important research questions which emerge will no doubt bring new and exciting opportunities to work with disciplines outside of medicine.

The theme of cooperation is continued as our Travelling Fellowship winner Petya Fitzgerald tells us about her plans for collaboration with other universities and disciplines; and Marie Pirota, from Melbourne, shares her experience of the Brisbane Initiative in Oxford.

In the field of medical education our President, Mark Nelson outlines some key priorities and discusses new models in which general practice can engage with the challenges of increasing student numbers.

Newcomers to the field of general practice research and teaching are needed and welcome. The lessons which those more experienced have learned are of great interest to those new to the field and this newsletter is one forum where such information can be exchanged. Please keep those articles rolling in!

Finally thank you to Grant Blashki for his hard work in editing previous editions of this newsletter.

Have a great 2007.

Dr Graeme Horton
Disc General Practice
Newcastle University

What is ROAR? (Roadmap of Australian Research)

Summaries of research projects, researcher profiles, related links to research organizations across Australia and information about research funding available.

To provide a comprehensive list of information they need your details. Visit www.phcris.org.au/products/roar.php to submit a research project or your research profile.

Travelling Fellowship Awarded

Our major Travelling Fellowship for this year has been awarded to Petya Fitzgerald.

Congratulations Petya!

My current position is a researcher in primary health care in the Discipline of General Practice at the University of Tasmania. Since my appointment as a PHCRED RDP Fellow in 2004, I have been involved in a number of small inter- and intra-disciplinary research projects. This year, these have included a RACGP-funded project investigating smoking cessation in patients with acute coronary syndromes and an inter-disciplinary project investigating the effects of information and communications technologies and mentoring on chronic disease self-management. I have a particular interest in the use of qualitative research methodologies in primary health care research.

My main areas of research interest are patient explanatory models of illness and the patients' illness experience, chronic disease management, health-related behaviour change, moral dimensions of illness and power-relations in models of

health and disease.

I am an early-career researcher and am not a qualified health care professional so my aims for the Travelling Fellowship are twofold: First, to initiate collaborative relationships between my university and the two universities I visit; second, to participate in a short-term 'internship' where I will gain a better understanding of the ways in which social science research can be applied to primary health care and learn about projects that are currently underway in two major Australian research centres.

In the first week I will visit the National Centre for Epidemiology and Social Health at the Australian National University. Dr Dorothy Broom, a health sociologist with expertise in qualitative research methods will be my primary contact person. I will be involved in a research project identifying behavioural risk factors for obesity, contributing to a literature review and collaborating on a publication as a junior author.

In the second week I will visit the Centre for Health and Society in the School of Population Health, University of Melbourne.

Associate Professor Marylis Guillemin, Deputy Director of the Centre will be my primary contact person there. The interdisciplinary nature of this centre will allow me to observe collaborations between medicine and the humanities. The Fellowship will also allow me to continue my work on the paper with Dr Dorothy Broom, and meet with researchers in the Department of General Practice who employ qualitative research methods.



Petya Fitzgerald
Disc General Practice
University of Tasmania

Member in Action

Professor Liz Farmer will be representing the AAAGP on the RACGP Vocational Training Standards Reference Group which will assist in the development of the future vocational training standards of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). The standards include standards for 'Trainers and Training Posts' and 'Programs and Providers'.

The RACGP Vocational Training Subcommittee, the committee responsible for the development of the vocational training standards, has recently finalized strategies for internal and external consultation. The Vocational Training Reference Group will include

invited nominee(s) from General Practice Education and Training, General Practice Registrars Australia, General Practice Supervisors Association, Regional Training Providers, Australian Association for Academic General Practice, Consumers' Health Forum, and the Australian Department of Health and Ageing.

Liz will report back to members as this group gets underway.

Prof Liz Farmer

Director PHC RED Program

Member Contribution

The University of Melbourne was a founding member of the "Brisbane Initiative". This group of academic departments of general practice from Europe, North America and Australia aim to foster leadership in the next generation of primary care researchers.

Their first project was to bring together a cohort of 14 researchers at Oxford University in June for an initial one week live-in intensive program overseen by Professor David Mant, Prof Geert-Jan Dinant, Dr Alison Ward and Dr Philippa Major.

I was nominated to represent the Dept GP, University of Melbourne. The week was designed to help the group get to know each other and explore possible

collaborative research projects with each other or their departments.

Inspiring speakers such as Iain Chalmers, Fiona Godlee and Paul Glasziou also spent time with the group. This cohort will arrange one visit to another department for up to 12 weeks to further enhance their leadership skills and then meet again in Oxford in 2 years to evaluate their experience in the program.

Dr Marie Pirotta, PhD

Senior Lecturer

Dept of General Practice

University of Melbourne



Front row: left of screen to right: Peter Murchie - GP, Uni of Aberdeen; Sara Willems - senior researcher, Ghent Uni, Belgium; Cathy Jackson - GP, senior lecturer, Uni of Dundee; Catherine Evans UniCollege, London UK; Marie Pirotta-GP, Uni Melbourne; Alison Ward - research Support Director, Uni of Oxford; Philippa Major - Postgraduate research training facilitator, Uni of Oxford

Back /middle row: Floris van de Laar - GP, Nijmegen, Netherlands; Carl Heneghan - GP, clin research fellow, Uni of Oxford; Matthew Thompson - GP, Uni of Oxford; David Mant - Prof of GP, Uni of Oxford; Geert-Jan Dinant - Prof of GP, Maastricht Uni, Netherlands; Loes van Bokhoven GP from Maastricht Uni, Netherlands; Carrie Llewellyn - psychologist - Brighton and Sussex Medical School; Markus Themessl-huber - health psychologist, Uni of Dundee

Rear back Mark Spigt - health scientist, Maastricht Uni, Netherlands; Jean-Francois Chenot from Uni of Gottingen, Germany; Sara Shaw - social scientist, Uni College London

GP & PHC Conference

This major event in Australian general practice and health care research will be held at the Sydney Exhibition Centre 23-25 May 2007. AAAGP will again be facilitating a research session. Our committee will again award a "Best First Time Presenter". Also a "Most Distinguished Paper" will be selected and presented during our session.

We will also host our annual dinner for members while dining with a spectacular view of the Sydney Harbor Bridge and surrounding waterways. Please join us for a fantastic night of networking. Further details will be posted on our website.

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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Visit our website:

www.aaagp.org