

Academic Freedom and 'Second-class Citizenship'

I am sure that all our members have been following this controversy in the general press.

We reproduce following the letter we sent to Australian Doctor defending your rights.

One of our members participated in an interview conducted with Paul Barclay on the 'Perspective' program on Radio National. The events following this interview have serious ramifications for all your readers who teach in an honorary capacity for Universities and think they have retain the libertarian principles that go with the title.

Our member, Dr Andrew Gunn, was censored by the University of Queensland (UQ) for his failure to disassociate himself from UQ on the program. This had been prompted by a letter from Dr Rachel David, Director of Public Affairs at CSL, with whom UQ has a commercial relationship for Gardasil, the subject of the interview. UQ went further in their communication asking Dr Gunn to provide a written apology to CSL with whom they had "an excellent working relationship".

The contents of these communications were circulated to the executive of the Australian Association for Academic General Practice, the body that represents people who teach and research in the general practice environment. They were unanimous in their alarm at

the University of Queensland's actions subsequent to receiving the letter from CSL.

Our concern was not with the veracity of the interviewee's comments or the right of CSL to complain to a business partner about them. Our concern was that the UQ was censoring our member's right to free speech by insisting that he apologise to CSL. We communicated to UQ that perhaps the appropriate action would be that if the University of Queensland thought that an apology was in order, that it provide one to CSL, while also defending the academic freedom of its employees to comment on matters of public interest.

The reply from UQ rather than appeasing our concerns raised them anew. To quote "Dr Gunn is not an academic, nor is he an employee of The University of Queensland. The University's Enterprise agreement which embodies our continuing commitment to academic freedom does not apply to Dr Gunn" (our emphasis). For clarification Dr Gunn is a Senior Lecturer in General Practice who teaches and researches at Inala Primary Care, a practice associated with UQ. UQ's statement seems to suggest that there are two levels of association with UQ, and GP honorary appointees belong to the lower level and are not entitled to benefits of this association.

Honorary lecturers carry a heavy load of clinical teaching and are likely to do proportionally more with the increase in medical undergraduate numbers. They are also valuable partners in the capacity building of research conducted in primary care. We suggest that all groups associated with undergraduate teaching, especially the Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand, express their concerns to their Vice-Chancellors on this matter.

Prof Mark Nelson
President AAAGP

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President's Message

The GP&PHC Research Conference was successfully held in Hobart in June. The fears of a whiteout in Hobart in winter did not eventuate (as can be seen in the photograph below). As always the social highlight of the conference was the AAAGP dinner. Our host Susan and her chef, a former pastry chef at Gordon Ramsey's New York restaurant, gave us a meal to remember, and the unexpected high attendance a cosy venue. The highlight of course was the award of the inaugural Bridges-Webb Medal. This award is to recognise members who have made and will continue to make international standard teaching or research contributions to academic activities in the general practice environment. We were honoured by the presence of life member Charles Bridges-Webb who announced our winner, immediate past President Jane Gunn. Jane made a great acceptance speech setting a standard for whomever follows her next year.

The Saturday following the conference allowed us to schedule a heads of department meeting. Issues covered included Community Clinical Schools, the outcomes from the GP Summit, AAAGP Wonca connections, the perennial GP Research Networks, the future of APHCRI, the Research Quality Framework and how translational research groups such as primary care are disadvantaged by the metrics, the GP Superclinics, the future of PHCRED and the review process, implications of the change of Federal Government on

From the Editor

In the past few months AAAGP has been hard at work looking after the interests of its members as several articles in this newsletter reveal.

The AAAGP events at the GP & PHC Research conference were among the highlights of this successful meeting. We congratulate our award winners and hear about the AAAGP dinner at which it was wonderful to see the inaugural Bridges-Webb medal presented to Jane Gunn by Charles. Rumour has it that following Jane's speech next year's dinner will be themed superhero event but you didn't hear that from me.

Also from the conference, Parker Magin and John Furler outline important points about sustainable research collaborations discussed at the post doctorate breakfast and Marie Pirotta kindly passes some key tricks of the trade for those with the inclination or need to acquire skills in political lobbying. These include grabbing the politician's

GP/primary care policy, political lobbying and other activities of HOD group and its relationship to AAAGP, Department / Discipline contributions to AAAGP, and academic freedom, honorary GP lecturers and their relationship to Universities.

I had organised for a bushwalk on the Sunday and we had a party of 7. Despite the winter, it was 13 degrees, clear, sunny and still and so we could do the walk in shirtsleeves. 5½ hours later we all arrived tired (some) and elated (all) back to our vehicles.

Photograph below shows the scenery from our bushwalk near Cape Raoul (about 230m below).

Prof Mark Nelson
President AAAGP



attention in the first 30 seconds; strangely enough, about the same time it takes to read this editorial.

Lucio Naccarella tells us about an exciting initiative to promote a generalist primary health care workforce which includes opportunities for developing a research practice in this area. We are inspired by Deb Askew's time as a travelling fellow and we are very pleased to welcome and learn about new member Sarah Larkins.

And lastly, a reminder that wherever you find yourselves, be it GPET, WONCA or the apparent safety of your own workspace, be ever on the lookout for future newsletter articles.

Sincerely
Dr Graeme Horton
Disc GP
Newcastle University

Joint Venture Addresses Health Workforce Crisis.

The Australian Health Workforce Institute was established in December 2007 by the University of Melbourne and the University of Queensland to address and find innovative solutions to the serious shortage of health workers both in Australia and worldwide.

The core goal of AHWI is to deliver Australia health workforce sustainability by 2020. AHWI will:

- Ensure maintenance of health workforce data and statistics;
- Map future health systems;
- Develop innovative and flexible education models for the future health workforce; and
- Work with jurisdictions to develop and implement health workforce policy.

AHWI plans to carry out and support research on workforce issues and redesign, and to provide leadership in policy development.

A systematic literature review commissioned by APHCRI¹ in 2007 concluded that "Health care systems based upon a generalist primary care workforce underpinned by generalism will be well equipped to deliver cost-effective, equitable and accessible health care."

AHWI aims to strengthen a Generalist Primary Care Workforce by:

- Increasing the importance and status of generalists;
- Enhancing the educational content and settings that strengthen a generalist primary care workforce; and
- Building and transferring evidence about strategies that strengthen generalism in the 2020 primary care team.

¹ (http://www.anu.edu.au/aphcri/Domain/Workforce/Gunn_25_approved.pdf)

What is GenPCW about?

Dr Lucio Naccarella, a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, a leading primary health care services researcher and evaluator, has received

a two-year research fellowship to develop an agreed upon National Operational Action Plan to strengthen a generalist primary care workforce, using the policy options from the generalism review.

Lucio's research interests include:

- Strengthening a generalist primary care workforce
- System change within the general practice setting,
- Optimising models of multidisciplinary primary care delivery
- Facilitating evidence-based primary care policy and practice change.

How to become involved in GenPCW

Dr Lucio Naccarella is keen to hear from individuals and organisations interested in finding out more about AHWI and becoming involved in the GenPCW research program of work

AHWI and GenPCW can provide the opportunity for students to undertake research at undergraduate (placements) or at postgraduate level (Ma, PhD) on the topic of health workforce generally or on the topic of strengthening a generalist primary care workforce

Contact details:

Dr Lucio Naccarella, The University of Melbourne,
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GP & PHC Research Conference Review

Lobbying Lunch

'Everything you ever wanted to know about political lobbying but were afraid to ask!'

This informal session over lunch on the first day of the conference was extremely informative and great fun due to the performances by Nick Glasgow, Bob Wells and Grant Blashki.

Grant played two roles - Dr White the naïve primary care researcher and Dr Black the savvy researcher - having a brief meeting with the minister responsible for health. Bob Wells played the minister (almost too well!) and Nick his able advisor.

Some of the take-home lessons for A3GP members looking to exert influence on government policy or funding decisions were:

Before any meeting, work with the advisor as much as possible to prepare the way; however, be aware that

any reports/written information are likely to receive scant if any attention

One must grab their attention in the first 30 seconds
Ask yourself the following questions to help with preparation:

what is the minister's problem that I can help solve?
what advantage is in this proposal for the minister?
The answers to these questions may lead you to 'tweak' your proposal to make it attractive to the minister. But this compromise may pay off for future requests.

Timing is everything - budget papers are prepared by October, so lobbying needs to be started in May to June to be able to get onto the agenda

Think carefully before involving the media to gain a groundswell of public opinion - may be effective or not.

Dr Marie Pirotta

Dept General Practice
Melbourne University

Post Doctorate Breakfast

With the help, support and endorsement of AAAGP, a breakfast session focusing on primary care researchers at the immediate post-doctoral (or post-research-masters) level was held at the recent GP&PHC Research Conference in Hobart. The title of the workshop was "Early post-doctoral and post-masters researchers: Opportunities to develop a peer learning set?" The idea of a peer learning set is that by bringing people together at a similar stage of a research career, common goals and issues can be addressed in an effective and productive way. Similar peer learning sets exist in the UK (for example within the National School of Primary Care), and internationally (the Brisbane International Initiative is an example).

Over 30 people attended from across Australia and heard Professor Jane Gunn speak about building sustainable research collaborations. In fact some participants were currently completing PhDs or Research Masters. A number of participants worked in settings where there was little support for research because, for example, they worked in an isolated rural setting, or because they now worked within a service or teaching organization where research was seen as a low priority. The PHCRED strategy has been very good at supporting the exposure of novice researchers to basic research skills and opportunities and has supported a small number of mid and later career researchers, but the immediate postdoc area is a

gap, needing more research support. Without support in this area, emerging research careers and capacity building efforts risk being lost, to the detriment of a sustainable and effective primary care research community.

We particularly explored opportunities to work more effectively together as a group. These included identifying people and departments to spend time with (nothing can surpass a face to face visit for getting to know a potential collaborator and their work and for being stimulated in your own research) and staying in touch through email lists, the AAAGP and continuing to meet at the GP&PHC Conference. The PHCRIS ROAR website (<http://www.phcris.org.au/roar/index.php>) is excellent for finding potential collaborators. We resolved to try as a group to have some input into the planning of the next research conference.

Arising from our discussion we developed a formal submission to the PHCRED evaluation, setting out ideas for expanding the research support initiatives of the strategy. If you would like a copy of the submission or if you are at (or soon to be at) a post-doc/research masters level and would like to join the email list please contact John Furler (j.furler@unimelb.edu.au)

Dr Parker Magin (Newcastle University)

Dr John Furler (Melbourne University)

GP & PHC Research Conference Award Winners

The Bridges-Webb medal is to recognise AAAGP members who have made and will continue to make international standard teaching and/or research contributions to academic activities in the general practice environment.

It was an amazing honour to receive the inaugural Bridges-Webb medal at the recent conference in Hobart. The news of my award had been received mid-morning during a busy consulting session on the Tuesday prior to my trip to Hobart. At first I wondered whether Dr Nelson was indeed the Leader of the Opposition wishing to make a time to see me - but no, it turned out to be Professor Mark Nelson with some surprising but very good news. Charles Bridges-Webb has touched many academic lives with his role-modelling of excellent research and research capacity building skills. My first-ever exposure to academic general practice was in Hobart at a RACGP conference in the early nineties. I still recall Charles' asking a very supportive question during my first paper presentation and his kind and encouraging words following the paper. It seemed very fitting that the award ceremony was held in Hobart with Charles' once again being the academic Statesperson that he is. Being recognized by my colleagues in such a way is a humbling and rewarding experience.

I feel that academic general practice is beginning to thrive in this country and having awards, such as the Bridges-Webb medal, is testament to the health of the academy. May we continue to strengthen and grow it.

Prof Jane Gunn
Dept of General Practice, Melbourne University



Prof Jane Gunn receiving her medal with Prof Charles Bridges-Webb & Prof Mark Nelson.



Prof Mark Nelson pictured presenting Dr Parker Magin from Disc of GP Newcastle University with his Distinguished Paper award - "Skin patients and their doctors - an uneasy relationship: results of a qualitative study". The other Distinguished paper award went to Justin Beilby (Faculty of Health Science, University of Adelaide), Mark Nelson, Chris Holton, Alan Crocket, Richard Wood-Baker, Nancy Briggs, Sue Davoren - "Spirometry training for GPs and practice nurses: is it feasible and beneficial to asthma patients?"



Prof Mark Nelson presenting Heather Hanks from Rural Health Research Unit, James Cook University with her Best First Time Presenter award and book vouchers - "Managing Colorectal Cancer: A comparison of roles of urban, rural and remote GPs".

2008 Travelling Fellowship Report

In 2008, I had the privilege of being awarded the AAAGP Travelling Fellowship. I spent a week in the Department of General Practice at the University of Melbourne. My time there reinvigorated and energised me, enabled me to find direction for my career as a General Practice researcher, and I came away with new friends and a sense of being a valued member of the Australian general practice academic environment.

The primary aim of my fellowship was to “explore opportunities for future collaborations”. Although this sounds like an euphemism for sitting around chatting over coffee (and indeed, a lot of that was done) it was extraordinarily useful to have time to talk with my colleagues about their work and explore common ground.

The fellowship was an extremely valuable and worthwhile experience. Since then, I have co-authored a paper with one member of the department and our respective departments are actively looking

at potential areas for collaboration. I learnt about the necessity of having a sense of cohesion within the department - ie. activities that bring busy people together and the importance of a catchy acronym for your research project. These lessons I have shared with my own department...



The application process is simple and is not at all onerous. I would strongly encourage all members of the academic primary care community to consider applying.

Dr Deborah Askew PhD
Senior Research Fellow
Discipline of General Practice
School of Medicine
University of Queensland

New Member

1. What do you do?

At the moment, I feel pretty much like a jack-of-all-trades (and definitely master of none) while trying to juggle 3 young boys, academic work at JCU (involving research, management, curriculum design and postgraduate and undergraduate medical student teaching) and 2-3 clinical sessions in general practice a week. My clinical background has been in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, with 10 years work at the local AICCHS, and a special interest in adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues. I've recently completed a PhD in the area. It's an exciting time to be involved in PHC research at JCU, as we set up an Institute for Health Care Research with Underserved Populations. This will undertake a program of equity-generating applied and health services research with rural, remote, Indigenous and near Pacific communities in our region.

2. What attracted you to research?

I started off doing a BMedSci in lab-based research as a medical student, but soon realised that chasing baby rat gubernaculi was not really my cup of tea. Luckily I wasn't put off research altogether and went on to do an academic GP registrar post working on a national study of personal and vocational problems experienced by GP registrars during training. I think research

provides a great balance to clinical medicine, and I enjoy being able to combine my interests in the health of populations and individuals and the determinants of these.

3. Any tips for others?

If you want to give research a go, think small and easy initially, and don't forget to ask you friendly PHCRED team for help (or do our Grad Cert PHC Research - shameless plug!). PhDs do end eventually. Oh, yes, and keep those balls in the air!



Dr Sarah Larkins
Senior Lecturer, Primary Health Care and Course Coordinator, Grad Cert Primary Health Care Research (PHCRED Program)
Rural Health Research Unit
James Cook University

Travelling Fellowship Applications Open

Travelling Fellowships are offered at a maximum of \$5000 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 reimbursed for the cost of an advance purchase economy airfare. Applicants should book the cheapest available online fare wherever possible.

Aims of the AAAGP Travelling Fellowship Program:

- To enhance Australian academic general practice

- To foster collaboration between Australian general practice researchers
- To foster collaboration between academic departments of general practice
- To provide assistance to members of AAAGP to undertake study leave within Australia.

Closing date 31 August 2008.

More details visit our website:
www.aaagp.org.

Coming Events

GPET Convention

27-28 August

Novotel Northbeach

Wollongong

Details: <http://www.abcon.biz/gpet2008.htm>

Wonca Asia Pacific Regional Conference

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

2-5 October 2008

Fri 3 Oct AAAGP AGM 5pm-6.30pm

Sat 4 Oct Heads of Dept Mtg 5pm-6.30pm

Details: <http://www.wonca2008.com/>

Mission & Goals

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

Encouraging originality, questioning & exploration of ideas within the 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 published in Apr, Jul & Nov each year and welcomes letters to the editor and also articles about issues of interest to our members.

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