

Newsletter: Issue 5, March 2009

University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ

A Message from the Director:



Professor Kurt Krause
Webster Centre Director

Hello and welcome to the March edition of the Webster Centre newsletter. This month the newsletter features an update on our upcoming symposia including a description of the exciting venue for Dr. Clifton Barry's keynote address at Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens on the evening of 23 April. The entire event is complementary, and transportation will be provided, so be sure not to miss this key element of the program. On page 2, please have a look at what drives Otago's newest Professor, Gregory Cook, from the Department of Microbiology. Finally there is still room to register to attend next month's symposia, but space is getting tight, so please click on our link now at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/webstercentre> and pop your rego to us in an e-mail. We look forward to seeing new next month in Dunedin. Cheers!

Webster Centre for Infectious Diseases Symposium: Updates Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens chosen as dinner venue



Glenfalloch Chalet

Glenfalloch Woodland Gardens, a picturesque site on the Otago peninsula has been chosen to host the evening keynote address and conference dinner at next month's upcoming Symposium.

Located about a 15 minute drive from the University of Otago, Glenfalloch Gardens and Restaurants was once an estate, established on the peninsula in 1871. It subsequently fell into disrepair and now is owned by the Otago Peninsula trust. It now serves as a multifunctional event centre that, in addition to the restaurant and bistro, contains thirty acres of woodland gardens with walking tracks throughout.

In addition to providing the dinner service, Woodland Gardens/Restaurants will serve as the venue for the evening keynote speaker, Dr. Clifton E. Barry, III.

Transportation will be provided to the venue from campus by bus for those who desire it.

Individuals with special dietary requirements are still encouraged to attend the dinner. We have spoken to the restaurant staff and they will accommodate your needs. Please inform Rebecca Psutka (Webster Centre Coordinator) by email in advance. Email: rebecca.psutka@otago.ac.nz

Symposium Registration Deadline: 3 April 2009



This could be you!

We still have limited openings for speakers wishing to present their research at the 2009 Webster Centre for Infectious Diseases Symposium. Our categories for talks are as follows:

- Tuberculosis and Mycobacterial Diseases
- Vaccine Discovery and Development
- Current Topics in Infectious Diseases

These topics are designed to be broad and inclusive as the Webster Centre is seeking to feature infectious disease research from many disciplines

Scientists researching infectious diseases in disciplines as far ranging as chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, molecular genetics, immunology, pharmacology, pharmacy and public health are members of the Webster Centre for

Infectious Diseases and are attending the 2009 Webster Centre Symposium.

The Webster Centre has sent out invitation emails to the Webster Centre email list, and to the health science departments in each university and research institute in New Zealand. Additionally there are 300+ posters disseminated at the Otago campus and through our network of researchers.

All interested researchers academics and students are encouraged to register for this free Symposium and hear the talks from our excellent keynote speakers. Please encourage individuals you know who may be interested to register for the 2009 Webster Centre Symposium if they have not already done so.

Webster Centre profiled researcher: Professor Greg Cook



Professor Greg Cook
University of Otago

Steering Committee
Member, WCID

Webster Centre Coordinator Rebecca Psutka met up recently with Professor Gregory Cook, of Department of Microbiology & Immunology at the University of Otago for a Q & A session.

Professor Cook's research targets key issues in antibiotic resistance and microbial physiology with a focus on *Mycobacteria*, *Enterococcus* and thermophiles.

RP: Can you briefly describe for me: your research interests?

GC: Broadly our research is aimed at understanding how bacteria adapt to different environments, particular at the level of the cytoplasmic membrane. The second goal is then to conduct structure-function studies on key players such as membrane proteins in this

adaptation to understand how proteins have been designed to function under different environments.

RP: Why your research is important?

GC: One of our projects focuses on how *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* adapts to changing conditions in the host macrophage and the switch to slow growth/metabolism. This is a metabolic adaptation and therefore the metabolic enzymes involved in this process may represent new targets for drug discovery. By understanding how *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* metabolizes and generates energy may also provide us with new ways to combat latency and disease.

RP: To you, what is the most frustrating aspect of ID research?

GC: At the moment, we have no PC3 facility at Otago so we can't actually do research on pathogenic species of interest: specifically on *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. There is also a lack of membrane protein crystallographers at the University, which hinders our ability to advance membrane protein structural work at Otago.

RP: You have quite a few post-grad students (seven) and post-docs (five) working under your supervision currently. What general advice do you have for somebody who is considering post-graduate study?

GC: The number 1 factor should always be the research project. If you are interested and passionate about a project you will make it your own and work day and night to see it succeed. As long you have enough to live, money will not be important. The best supervisor in the world will help, but really it comes down to the motivation of the researcher and this will be high if they like the project.

Another crucial point is to have a good game plan - be focused when you come into the lab and have a good plan of attack about what you will achieve that day. Don't plan around a 5 day week otherwise you will accomplish very little. Work in blocks and plan rest at the end of a series of experiments - this may last longer than 5 days, but plan to have a break when you are finished. Finding a balance between work and recreation is essential - so often it is the time spent out of the lab where good ideas will come to you. If you get it right, it should be fun and you won't be able to sleep because you will be anxious to get into the lab to get that next result.

I will never forget my first day at Cornell University as a postdoc, my boss told me "I expect you to be here at 8 am and I don't care what you do after 5 pm or the weekends - if you can't get your act together during this time you will be of no use to anybody". Strong words, but I will never forget how true they really are. I worked harder as a PhD student, but I was far more productive as a postdoc working less hours.

General Announcements and Upcoming Meetings



Rebecca Psutka
Coordinator,
Webster Centre for
Infectious Diseases

Please email the Webster Centre at:
webstercentre@otago.ac.nz

- if there is a **scientific meeting** you would like highlighted
- if you are not on the Webster Centre **email list**
- if your research relates to infectious diseases and would like to **join** the Webster Centre for Infectious Diseases
- if you have any comments or suggestions about this newsletter or any other Webster Centre related activity

Upcoming Meetings

2009 Webster Centre Symposium

23-24 April, 2009
St. Margaret's College
University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

An advertisement and a registration form are attached with this newsletter.

Please submit registration forms via emailing the word document ASAP.

More information can be found on our website: www.webstercentre.otago.ac.nz

The Webster Centre for Infectious Diseases can be contacted at:

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