



CHRISTCHURCH
WINTER 2015

University of Otago, Christchurch **Newsletter**

NURSING SPECIAL

Dean's welcome



Although the University of Otago, Christchurch is best known as a medical school and centre for health research, for the past 15 years we have offered postgraduate courses to nurses. We are now developing the next step in nursing education. Subject to Nursing Council (NZ) approval, we will begin New Zealand's first graduate entry nursing Masters course in 2016. This will allow graduates from any discipline to study towards registration as a nurse in two years. For more details on the course visit otago.ac.nz/nursingmasters

Nurses make up our biggest group of postgraduate students. There are now 300 students at the Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies. Most combine part-time study with work and family life. This edition of the University of Otago, Christchurch newsletter showcases some of our nursing education and research projects.

Doing world-class health research is as important for us as teaching future health professionals. The Health Research Council recently awarded Professor

Tony Kettle and his Centre for Free Radical Research team almost \$5 million to search for alternatives to antibiotics, which are rapidly losing effectiveness. An article in this newsletter explains his work.

Some promising Christchurch-based researchers had their potential recognised by the University of Otago recently. Drs Logan Walker and Anitra Carr received the University's Early Career Awards for Distinction in Research. Dr Walker specialises in genetic factors underlying cancer and Dr Carr in the role of micronutrients in human health and diseases such as cancer and sepsis. Associate Professor Suetonia Palmer was awarded the Carl Smith Medal for her outstanding work using meta-analysis, or the mathematics of combining research studies together, to test the effectiveness of medical treatments.

Regards,
Peter Joyce

Christchurch researchers take on global antibiotic-resistance threat



Professor Tony Kettle.

Finding new ways to diagnose and treat bacterial infections is the focus of new Health Research Council (HRC) funding awarded to Christchurch scientist Professor Tony Kettle.

Worldwide, it has been widely acknowledged that as bacteria becomes more immune to antibiotics, the medication will become useless. Some health organisations estimate there is as little as 10 years left of antibiotic immunity. After that, health officials speculate people will die from infections treated by simple antibiotics.

Professor Kettle says one way our body fights infection is through white blood cells called neutrophils who hunt out and kill bacteria. In some mysterious cases, bacteria overwhelm neutrophils or evade them. Understanding how bacteria escape the neutrophils could be critical to combating antibiotic resistance, and the development of new drugs.

Professor Kettle is a director of the Centre for Free Radical Research. The HRC programme team includes scientists and clinicians from The Infection Group, which is also based at the University of Otago, Christchurch.

**Considered a
career in nursing?
Have a degree
already?**

Find out about the two-year Master of Nursing Science course we are planning for 2016, subject to Nursing Council (NZ) approval.

**[otago.ac.nz/
nursingmasters](http://otago.ac.nz/nursingmasters)**

Nursing

Nurse studying health professionals' quake experiences

Nursing researcher and senior lecturer at the Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies, Dr Sandy Richardson is studying the effects of Canterbury quakes on health professionals. Dr Richardson is part of the Research Into Health Impacts of Seismic Events (RHISE) group, and an emergency department (ED) nurse who worked the day of the February 2011 quake.

Dr Richardson says the study "highlights the experiences of individual healthcare workers during the Canterbury earthquakes, acknowledging the difficulties that many had to overcome while continuing to work to provide the highest quality of service."

In the study of ED nurses' experiences of the quakes, published in the International Nursing Review journal, Dr Richardson highlighted some challenges facing ED nurses working on February 22:

'I'm not going to cope coming in to work... I don't want to leave my husband at home by himself... I think the fear that I had just before stepping into the building (the hospital)... I thought that was the worst fear imaginable... but then when I saw ED in the state that it was. I really started sweating.' (Emergency department nurse)



"The patients were all dusty... they all looked the same.... (There were) significant orthopaedic injuries. Lots of major wounds, you know, like head wounds... I figured that the best thing to use on those was staple guns." (Casual ED nurse)

Dr Richardson says that "despite the difficulties experienced, the ED continued to function and to manage the increase in workload, generating a sense of community and resilience."

RHISE has been funded by the Emergency Care Foundation, Canterbury District Health Board, Health Research Council and Canterbury Medical Research Foundation.

Empowering sick children by asking their opinion



From left, Associate Professor Lisa Whitehead, Dr Mandie Foster and Victoria Cullens.

Seriously ill children in Canterbury are being asked what they need from the health system, in what could be a world first.

Paediatric nurse, Dr Mandie Foster and Associate Professor Lisa Whitehead of the Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies have developed a questionnaire to explore the needs of school-aged patients. It is possibly the only one of its kind, and is already attracting international attention with other hospitals wanting to adapt and adopt it.

Associate Professor Whitehead says the questionnaire has so far been given to seriously unwell children in Christchurch Hospital's high dependency unit. This was co-ordinated by nurse Victoria Cullens. It contains a series of questions about what things young people consider to be important in hospital and whether these needs are being met.

"What we have found is that young people generally want things such as internet access, for their parents to be able to stay overnight with them and remain involved in their care, and to feel understood by staff. An important outcome of the questionnaire is the feedback that young people are excited to be asked about their needs instead of questions always being directed at their parents or caregivers."

The research team have validated the questionnaire for use in the hospital setting and are looking to develop a version for the community setting. There is a high level of interest from collaborators in Australia, Iceland and the USA to use the questionnaire as it is the first to explore the child's perspective.

Nursing

Nurse helps families with disabled members look to the future

Ageing is inevitable, but not a subject often discussed within families. Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies PhD student Henrietta Trip is changing that for families with a member with an intellectual disability. Her PhD project explores what ageing means to them and how they expect ageing will affect the future.

Trip, who is a registered nurse, says the population is ageing and so are those with an intellectual disability. Many people with an intellectual disability live with elderly parents and so their ageing could dramatically change things.

Trip used innovative techniques to help participants to express their opinions and feelings. In particular, she asked participants to bring objects reflecting their ideas about ageing to study interviews. Some brought photos of dead relatives, one a picture of their ageing dog and another drew a picture of what they might look like as an older person.

Trip says interviews provided families with the opportunity to discuss the difficult topics of 'what happens when....?' So far she has found families accept ageing will change dynamics and possibly living situations but must continue to 'get on with life' rather than focusing continuously on what lies ahead.



Henrietta Trip.

Award-winning Māori curriculum adapted for nurses

A course to teach medical students the best ways to engage with Māori patients will be adapted for nursing.

Christchurch's Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies is developing a two-year Masters programme for people who already have a degree. At the end of two years, successful students can apply for registration as a nurse in New Zealand. The programme is pending Nursing Council (NZ) approval.

The Christchurch campus is home to Australasia's best indigenous health education course, as judged by international leaders in the field. The course was developed by the Māori/Indigenous Health Institute (MIHI) and has been taught to medical student for more than a decade.

MIHI lecturer Tania Huria says its course has already been adapted for practicing clinicians, such as psychologists and Plunket nurses. "Teaching nursing students will be really exciting as nurses are the health professionals who have perhaps the most contact with Māori patients and whanau. The feedback from those who have done our course is that it provides a very practical way to improve daily clinical interactions with Māori and whanau."



Tania Huria.

Helping people live better with chronic diseases

People living with chronic medical conditions can become depressed or anxious and feel hopeless in the face of their ongoing health struggles. New research by the Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies aims to address this.

The 'Life Balance' study will involve people with two or more chronic health conditions. Participants will attend a two-hour session weekly, with the first hour being a health education session, and the second hour focussed on mindfulness and coping strategies. The first hour helps people to manage their condition and is run by nurses. The mindfulness and coping sessions are run by psychologists and help

people to improve their outlook by, for example, considering their values and setting goals, learning mindfulness and learning not to worry overly about their condition.

Lead researcher Dr Beverly Burrell says a trial of the programme with 10 patients last year had positive results. The Canterbury Medical Research Foundation (CMRF) has now funded a study involving 60 people.

If you or someone you know is aged over 55, with two or more chronic conditions, contact Dr Burrell on Beverly.burrell@otago.ac.nz to find out about taking part.

Professor retiring from Christchurch Health and Development Study



From left: Associate Professor Joe Boden, Professor David Fergusson and Associate Professor John Horwood.

Professor David Fergusson is retiring at the end of August after almost 40 years leading the influential Christchurch Health and Development Study (CHDS).

The longitudinal study is widely acknowledged as one of the best and most productive in the world. Professor Fergusson and his team have tracked the health and psychosocial development of more than 1000 children born in Christchurch in 1977. Evidence from the study has contributed to significant changes such as the removal of lead from petrol, laws requiring the fencing of residential swimming pools, and has enlightened debate by providing an evidence base on key social issues such as suicide, abortion and child sexual abuse.

Long-standing CHDS colleagues Associate Professors John Horwood and Joe Boden will lead the study after Professor Fergusson's retirement.

Professor Fergusson says he has always asked questions of participants that are relevant to policy makers. He is a staunch believer that health and social policy should be evidenced-based and subject to rigorous evaluation.

Professor Fergusson is particularly proud of being part of the development of the successful early intervention programme for at-risk children, Early Start, and implementation of the Incredible Years parent and teacher programmes aimed at reducing childhood behaviour problems.

Professor Fergusson says one of the key tasks of Associate Professors Horwood and Boden will be to extend a Health Research Council-funded study into the effects of the Canterbury earthquakes. The Health Research Council and its predecessor the Medical Research Council have been almost the sole source of funding for the study since its inception.

University of Otago, Christchurch will host a day of free lectures relating to Professor Fergusson's work on Friday, 21 August from 10am to 3pm.

Details of public lecture day

otago.ac.nz/christchurch/news/community-events

Watch our public health lectures online

otago.ac.nz/christchurch/news/podcasts

- Gut health
- New medical imaging
- Ebola
- Māori health
- Are medicines safe?
- Quakes' psychological effects