

## YOUTH DEPRESSION AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

Throughout 2005 one of the important projects for the Canterbury Medical Research Foundation (CMRF) will be raising funds for 'youth depression and bipolar disorder'.

Leading up to the CMRF wine auction on Friday 18th March there will be four public mental health lectures at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, with the first on youth depression (Wednesday 23rd February), and the fourth on youth bipolar disorder (16th March). The second and third mental health lectures will be on alcohol and drug problems in young people, and eating disorders.

These lectures will be followed by other free public lectures on arthritis, the liver and its disorders, prostate cancer, and diabetes as part of the annual Health Lecture Series in the Rolleston Lecture Theatre every Wednesday at 7.30pm (programme below).

In the WHO Global Burden of Disease report depression was the leading cause of disability in the world, and bipolar disorder the sixth leading cause. Usually these disorders start early in life, from late childhood through to the teens and twenties.

Often young people and their families do not understand the nature of what is going on, and the disorders can interfere with healthy adolescent and early adulthood development. Treatments for young people with depression and bipolar disorder work well for some young people, when the disorders are recognised and treated. However there is still a need to improve early recognition and diagnosis and treatments.

The funds raised by CMRF will go towards the creation of Clinical Training Fellowships so that young researchers with backgrounds in psychiatry, medicine, clinical psychology, mental health nursing or other mental health disciplines can obtain research training which to assist young people with depression or bipolar disorder.

The CMRF wine auction will take place at Christchurch Boys' High School on Friday 18 March at 6.30 pm. At the Auction a three course dinner is served. Tickets are available through the CMRF, phone (03) 378 6052

## HEALTH LECTURE SERIES 2005

CHRISTCHURCH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Rolleston Lecture Theatre

February 23 - April 13

Chaired by the Dean, Professor Ian Town

February 23. 7.30pm

YOUTH DEPRESSION

Professor Peter Joyce. Department of Psychological Medicine

March 2. 7.30pm

ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROBLEMS IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Assoc. Professor Doug Sellman. National Addiction Centre

March 9. 7.30pm

EATING DISORDERS IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Dr Jan McKenzie. Department of Psychological Medicine

March 16. 7.30pm

BIPOLAR DISORDER IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Dr Richard Porter. Department of Psychological Medicine

March 23. 7.30pm

ARTHRITIS: ANCIENT HISTORY TO THE PRESENT DAY

Dr John O'Donnell. Clinical Immunologist/Rheumatologist

March 30. 7.30pm

LOOK AFTER YOUR LIVER. THE GLORIOUS LIVER SIEVE!

Emeritus Professor Robin Fraser. Department of Pathology

April 5. 7.30pm

EARLY PROSTATE CANCER DETECTION. BIG BROTHER VS INDIVIDUAL CHOICE.

Dr Peter Davidson. Urologist

April 12. 7.30pm

DIABETES.....CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Dr Peter Moore. Diabetes Centre

Free entry. Discussion and questions. Displays and information from support groups. The School of Medicine and Health Sciences is at the front of Christchurch Hospital. Parking available hospital car park, corner Tuam and Antigua Streets. Closes 8.45pm

Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Otago.

2 Riccarton Avenue Christchurch. Ph: (03) 364 0530. Fax: (03) 364 0525. www.chmeds.ac.nz

Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences

February 2005



## Connecting with the Community

2004 was an extremely busy year for the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences as we underwent a formal review of the undergraduate medical programme by the Australian Medical Council. We now have their detailed report, which is very complimentary about undergraduate teaching and notes the excellent standard of the core programme. The AMC recognises the considerable progress that has been made in areas such as Maori Health, and identifies a number of areas where further work and improvement is expected over the next three to four years. The team has accredited the Medical Programme for a four-year period and anticipates a return visit at that stage.

The University has appointed a new Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Skegg, who took office on 1 August 2004. Professor Skegg has now met with senior staff at the School on a number of occasions and is working with the senior management team to ensure that these changes to the curriculum are made without incurring additional costs. Like many Vice-Chancellors, Professor Skegg is concerned about the continued fall in the nett Government funding for high cost courses such as Medicine, and will be working with Government Ministers to achieve higher funding for such programmes.

One of the consequences of our current circumstances is that the Graduate Entry option for Medicine, which was being actively pursued, has had to be put on hold for the moment. This is a disappointment to many staff, and will be disappointing for members of our wider community in Christchurch who have advocated for that option.

In February the promotion of a number of senior staff will take effect. We are particularly delighted at the number of staff who have been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, including staff from the Department of Medicine, Public Health and General Practice, and Psychological Medicine.

The School's Inaugural Ceremony will be held on Friday 18 February. We look forward to welcoming many of you to join us for that very pleasant ceremonial occasion.

Professor Ian Town  
Dean.





## NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT VIRUS RISK AND BREAST CANCER

Associate Professor Ann Richardson, an epidemiologist, in the Department of Public Health and General Practice, has uncovered intriguing new links between a common virus and breast cancer.

Her research, published in the British Journal of Cancer, indicates that women who developed breast cancer when aged under 40 years have higher antibody levels to the common cytomegalovirus (CMV) than women without breast cancer.

“In countries with the lowest incidence of breast cancer, nearly everyone is exposed to CMV in early childhood, whereas in countries such as NZ where the incidence of breast cancer is high, many women are not exposed to CMV until adulthood.”



Associate Professor Ann Richardson, Epidemiologist, Department of Public Health and General Practice

The research in collaboration with Associate Professors Brian Cox and Margaret McCredie at the Dunedin School of Medicine, and researchers at the University of Melbourne, shows that the higher the antibody level, the more recent the infection by a virus. In this research there is an association between higher levels of CMV antibodies and younger women with breast cancer.

“The higher cytomegalovirus antibodies measured in young women with breast cancer could be the result of more recent viral infection, which would be consistent with the hypothesis that late exposure is a risk factor for breast cancer. This might also be because CMV is a surrogate for late infection by another agent.

Associate Professor Richardson’s research raises a number of important issues regarding the role played by viruses, the development of breast cancer in women under 40, and the need for more investigation in this area.

Around 2000 women develop breast cancer in New Zealand every year, making it the most common cancer in women, but most are over the age of 40. This study was supported by the Cancer Society of New Zealand.

## FUNDING BOOST FROM CANTERBURY MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION



**The Canterbury Medical Research Foundation has increased its funding for medical research at the School for 2005.**

The Foundation, which funds health research only in Canterbury, has approved seven significant research projects worth \$370,000. This is a substantial increase from last year’s funding round at \$275,000.

All these studies rely on the generous contributions from the Foundation and its members who have been supporting health research in Canterbury for over 40 years.

A team in the Department of Pathology led by Associate Professor Bridget Robinson and Sarah Gunningham has been granted \$62,075 to investigate the development of a test to screen for early signs of bowel cancer. Colo-rectal cancer affects 3000 people a year in New Zealand.

Drs Sarah Rothwell and Chris Pemberton from Endolab, Department of Medicine, have been granted \$53,722 to research hormonal links between obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Tim Prickett, Department of Medicine, and Professor Brian Darlow Department of Paediatrics, have received \$74,932 to investigate the use of the hormone CNP to monitor bone development and cartilage growth in infants.

Dr Michael Epton and the Canterbury Respiratory Research Group have received \$53,398 to determine whether wheezy smokers are suffering from either asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Other research at the School funded by this grant round involves MR imaging after mild closed head injury, gene environment interactions in the development of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (Crohn’s), and investigating the effectiveness of nicotine replacement therapy in heavy smokers.

## EYE MOVEMENTS HELP UNDERSTANDING OF BRAIN INJURY

The patient sits in a small, dimly lit room with equipment strapped to her head that measures saccades or eye movements while tracking a series of flashing lights. In the control room scientists and clinicians record the speed and number of eye movements on sophisticated computerised equipment.

This is the world of the Eye Movement Research Group, based at the Van der Veer Institute which is revealing new information about brain injuries such as concussion, and common but only partly understood neurological disorders like Parkinson’s Disease.

One area the research team is investigating is concussive brain injuries. Typically these are bangs on the head which often happen around the home or while playing sport. Most people recover quite quickly, but up to 20% can have ongoing health problems; headaches, dizziness and fatigue, often for months afterwards.

“We’ve been able to show that those people who’re likely to have longer term problems do have abnormal eye movements. These movements are slower and not as accurate as they should be,” explains Professor Anderson. “ This discovery is going to be very useful for neurologists and others as we’ll be able to predict patients who need extra care.”

The Group is also engaged in innovative research in rehabilitation for Parkinson’s Disease and other movement disorders.

“One of the frustrations for those with Parkinson’s is that their movements are slower and smaller in scope because of neurological damage to the basal ganglia, that part of the brain which controls voluntary movements at a subconscious level. Our Virtual Environment Lab is training Parkinson’s patients to make larger spontaneous movements, almost like a reflex, so they can then transfer those skills to real life situations”.

Following this research Professor Anderson, Dr Michael MacAskill and the team at the Van der Veer Institute are now looking at extending this lab training to walking, a skill Parkinson’s patients often have the most difficulty with. Eye Movement Research is funded by the Canterbury Medical Research Foundation and New Zealand Neurological Foundation.



Professor Tim Anderson researching eye movements at the Van der Veer Institute.

