



# Otago International Health Research Network

Hosted by the Centre for International Health

## News in brief...

**Deadlines for Conference:**

**Submissions due—30th September 2010 (template online)**

**Early registrations due—30th September 2010**

## WANTED

We are looking for post-graduate students interested in being a part of the conference planning committee. Please contact [cih@otago.ac.nz](mailto:cih@otago.ac.nz)

As per feedback from members, we are exploring the possibility of a column in our newsletter dedicated to possible **collaborative projects for members seeking expertise in other fields**. Would you be interested?

## Some useful info:

The Research and Enterprise Office has various research related awards up for grabs. For more information go to:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/awards/index.html>

To subscribe to the Research and Enterprise weekly Research news and funding opportunities go to: <http://lists.otago.ac.nz/listinfo/researchinfo>

**NIH Funding Opportunities, Peer Review and Grant Writing.** For more information go to: [http://ora.stanford.edu/ora/ratd/nih\\_04.asp](http://ora.stanford.edu/ora/ratd/nih_04.asp)

## Submissions & Registrations Annual Conference 8th and 9th November 2010



Our annual conference is not far away. To help with planning purposes, please note the deadlines below:

**Abstract Submissions Due—30th Sep 2010**

**Early Registrations Due—30th Sep 2010**

Check out our conference website to register and find out more details on submissions. [www.otago.ac.nz/oihrnconference](http://www.otago.ac.nz/oihrnconference)

Please onforward this to colleagues and friends who may find the conference of interest. Registration numbers are limited so please register early.

## Health Impact Assessment Conference

17-19 November, 2010.  
University of Otago,  
Dunedin, New Zealand.



### Key dates:

6 Sept.: deadline for submitting abstracts  
15 Sept.: early-bird registration closes  
Conference website: [www.iaia.org/hia2010](http://www.iaia.org/hia2010)  
Inquiries: [hia2010@otago.ac.nz](mailto:hia2010@otago.ac.nz)

## Research project update...

Member: Dr Bernard Venn, Human Nutrition

(joint project with Ms Camilla Gould, MSc Student and Dr Garry Brian and Dr Benoit Tousignant of the Fred Hollows Foundation)

### Eye health in a group of Papua New Guinean prisoners

Optic neuropathy has been reported in secondary school children in Tanzania [1] with characteristics of the disease showing similarities with an epidemic in Cuba that occurred between 1991 and 1993 [2]. Other incidences of optic neuropathies have been described on a smaller scale in prisoners of war [3] and sporadically in small groups or individuals [4-6]. The causes of the neuropathies are not known with various theories postulated including the involvement of dietary inadequacies, toxins, smoking and alcohol abuse [7, 8]. A preliminary examination of PNG prisoners implicated neuropathy as a possible contributing factor to vision impairment.



Ms Camilla Gould under site conditions processing blood from the prisoners

The Fred Hollows Foundation of New Zealand has recently completed an ophthalmic examination of prisoners in one facility in PNG with ethical approval gained from the Government of Papua New Guinea Medical Research Advisory Committee. The Department of Human Nutrition at the University of Otago has collected dietary data and blood samples from the prisoners to identify potential contributing micronutrient deficiencies. The ophthalmic, dietary and blood analysis data are currently being finalized.

1. Bowman RJM, Wedner S, Bowman R, Masanja H, Bunce C, Gilbert C. Optic neuropathy endemic in secondary school children in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. *Br J Ophthalmol* 2009.
2. CNFIT. Epidemic optic neuropathy in Cuba—clinical characterization and risk factors. The Cuba Neuropathy Field Investigation Team. *N Engl J Med* 1995;333:1176-82.
3. Reed J. G. Ocular symptoms in prisoners of war in Sumatra. *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 1947;40:411-20.
4. Golnik KC, Schaible ER. Folate-responsive optic neuropathy. *J Neuroophthalmol* 1994;14:163-9.
5. Hsu CT, Miller NR, Wray ML. Optic neuropathy from folic acid deficiency without alcohol abuse. *Ophthalmologica* 2002;216:65-7.
6. Chavala SH, Kosmorsky GS, Lee MK, Lee MS. Optic neuropathy in vitamin B12 deficiency. *Eur J Intern Med* 2005;16:447-8.
7. Bowman BA, Bern C, Philen RM. Nothing's simple about malnutrition: complexities raised by epidemic neuropathy in Cuba. *Am J Clin Nutr* 1996;64:383-4.
8. Ascherio A. Antimetabolites and an optic neuropathy epidemic in Cuba. *Am J Clin Nutr* 1997;65:1092-3.

## Member Profile—Assoc. Professor Stephen Knowles

Assoc. Prof. Stephen Knowles is a researcher with a keen interest on social capital. One of his recent projects together with Alvin Etang and David Fielding measured the level of trust in a village in rural Cameroon, with findings that there is a positive association between experimental trust and membership of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs). Their study will be published in a forthcoming edition of the *Journal of International Development*.

Amongst his various research projects, Assoc. Prof. Knowles also leads the Department of Economics as the Departmental Head. In addition, he shares his knowledge with the students through teaching the *Economics of Developing Countries* paper.

Some of Stephen's recent publications include:

1. Knowles, S and Owen, D. Which institutions are good for your health? The deep determinants of comparative cross-country health status. *Journal of Development Studies* (2010) 46: 701-723
2. Etang, A, Fielding, D and Knowles, S. Trust and ROSCA membership in rural Cameroon. *Journal of International Development*. Forthcoming
3. Knowles, S. Social capital, egalitarianism and foreign aid allocations. *Journal of International Development* (2007) 19:299-314.

