



MONASH University

 GROUP OF EIGHT

Faculty of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Alchemy

Issue 24/Summer 2013

**A new
chapter begins**

**Chasing the
research dollar**

**Unravelling
the mysteries
of pain**



Australia ■ China ■ India ■ Italy ■ Malaysia ■ South Africa

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From the Editor

It has been our pleasure to bring you the latest Faculty news and to profile some of the staff, students and alumni who have been at the forefront of the action during 2013.

The Summer edition of *Alchemy* has much in store for readers. We highlight alumni and friends of the Faculty who have been giving generously of their time, talent and funds to ensure we can continually add to the number of scholarships we have available for students who possess the desire and will to succeed, but perhaps not always the finances. Michael Halprin and Dr Kersti Nogesti explain why they are happy to support the Faculty.

In addition, we profile two of our researchers – Professor Nigel Bunnnett, who is doing groundbreaking work in identifying ways to improve the treatment of pain and inflammation, and Professor Susan Charman, whose Drug Candidate Optimisation Centre celebrates its 10th anniversary. We also highlight the funding challenges our researchers face as they seek support for their projects by looking at Dr Michelle McIntosh's oxytocin re-design project funding journey.

I would also like to thank those who took the time to give us feedback on the changes we made to *Alchemy* this year. Such a wonderfully positive response! And PhD student Ed Tan was thrilled to have his cartoon so well received. His work appears again in this edition.

With the end of the year firmly in sight I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone Season's Greetings and happy holiday reading.

Margot Burke,
Managing Editor

Alchemy

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A lasting gift



> DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT MARGOT BURKE AND BEQUESTOR DR KERSTI NOGESTE

For alumni whose preferred method of supporting the Faculty is via a gift in their Will, membership of a very special club awaits.

The Cossar Club was established several years ago to acknowledge the contribution of the Cossar family and to provide a supporters club for those who are planning to support the Faculty with a bequest.

When the (then-named) Victorian College of Pharmacy moved to Parkville with the philanthropic assistance of many alumni and the pharmaceutical industry, the Cossar family was the largest individual donor to the appeal. Cossar Hall was named in recognition of their generosity.

Brian Cossar, has worked tirelessly to build club membership and the 'future fund.' He and colleague Alistair Lloyd remain keen promoters of making a gift in this way.

"The average charitable bequest in Australia is \$30,000 so encouraging alumni to consider making a gift in their Wills is a key feature of the fundraising program of the Foundation," said Alistair.

"Many alumni would love to be able to support worthy causes during their lifetime but need to attend to the day to day."

"Making a provision in your Will is a way to make a meaningful contribution without compromising your current lifestyle," he said.

Bequests can take many forms including shares, superannuation funds, insurance policies, property, jewellery, annuities and other items such as works of art.

However, graduates are not the only ones who are choosing to support the Faculty with a gift in their Will.

In 2011 Dr Kersti Nogeste established the annual Thea Pärnamäe Rural Pharmacy Bursary in memory of her late aunt, a step which recently prompted members of Kersti's family to make provisions in their Wills to ensure that the bursary continues to be awarded in perpetuity.

While not a pharmacy graduate herself, Kersti established the bursary as a way of acknowledging her pharmacist aunt's dedication to her profession and commitment to ensuring the health and wellbeing of her clients in Sweden.

"Although Thea lived in Sweden, I shared a close bond with her and fondly remember her commitment to her profession. She was keenly interested in the pursuit of education, and since she had grown up in rural Estonia before and during World War II, Thea experienced firsthand the particular difficulties rural students faced in furthering their education." ●



Alumnus dispenses a hearty dose of generosity

> PROFESSOR BILL CHARMAN THANKS MICHAEL HALPRIN FOR HIS GIFT

A very generous gift made by 1967 pharmacy alumnus Michael Halprin will ensure academically talented students wishing to study pharmacy, but without the financial means to do so, will be able to pursue their dreams.

Michael has established the Michael Keith Halprin scholarship fund that will finance a \$5000 annual scholarship for at least the next 10 years.

Michael said he hoped to be able to fund the Halprin scholarship in perpetuity and he has made provision in his Will to accomplish this. An initial gift of \$60,000 has set the fund up, with the first scholarship to be awarded in 2014. The scholarship will be awarded to a Year 12 Australian citizen on the basis of ATAR score and demonstrated financial need and be administered through the Monash Scholarships Office.

In addition to the scholarship, Michael is also supporting a prize to recognise and encourage excellence in pharmacy study for a graduating student each year.

A modest man, he only agreed to share his story to encourage others to consider supporting a similar scholarship.

Michael comes from a family of pharmacists. His father and two of his uncles were pharmacists and Michael did his traineeship under his father, Harry.

He initially owned a pharmacy in East Brunswick before joining forces with fellow Monash graduates Didimo Tonelli and Luigi Pierri to purchase pharmacies in Broadmeadows, Essendon and Ripponlea.

Now semi-retired, Michael helps his former partners out on occasion, but also pursues a long held interest in travel that has seen him make more than 80 trips to interesting and sometimes challenging destinations around the world.

He recently returned from an epic train trip from Moscow to Vladivostok, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

Dean of the Faculty, Professor Bill Charman, said "Michael's generosity is an outstanding example of how one individual can make a major difference and on behalf of the students who will benefit from his philanthropy I say a heartfelt thank you." ●

Chasing the research dollar

Shake hands, nod, smile and passionately explain your research. Repeat. And repeat. And repeat. That's been the life of researcher Dr Michelle McIntosh for the past six years. Dr McIntosh has been – and remains – on a crusade to raise millions of dollars to fund an innovation that could save an extraordinary number of lives.

Every year, more than 100,000 women around the world die from blood loss after childbirth. A simple injection of oxytocin can prevent or treat postpartum bleeding. But the drug is not available in developing countries, as it needs cold storage and must be administered by doctors or nurses.

Dr McIntosh and her team at the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS) are working on developing a device from which women can inhale an oxytocin aerosol immediately after delivery.

“An inhaled product would negate the need for cold chain storage, remove the risk of needle stick injuries and potentially be delivered at home births,” she says. “This could be life saving for vast numbers of women. It is very exciting, but also very daunting to have this responsibility.”

The project has an unorthodox origin. A student from Botswana with an AusAID scholarship wanted to learn about pharmacokinetics, bioequivalence and analytical techniques.

While trying to find a suitable project for the scholar, Dr McIntosh realised the potential of an inhaled delivery of oxytocin. Her team has since visited communities and hospitals in India and Tanzania and seen firsthand the need for such a product.

Dr McIntosh also realised that it would cost more than \$2 million for activities leading to the first human trials – and so began her long journey to raise the money.

In 2007, the Helen McPherson Trust kick started the research with a \$50,000 grant to test feasibility. The Faculty matched this, which allowed the purchase of a mass spectrometer to conduct analytic work and the establishment of a research team. The ANZ Trustees threw \$19,000 into the mix the following year.

Then in 2010, Dr McIntosh responded to a call for proposals for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges Exploration.

Using preliminary data in a two-page application, Dr McIntosh applied for – and won – a Phase I \$100,000 grant.

“That money went straight into formulating and optimising a dry powder,” she says. “We had the first proof of concept. We delivered the dry powder into the lungs of a sheep and that caused a smooth uterine contraction. It looked like it was going to work.”



Things were getting serious. The next funding step was the 2011 'Saving Lives at Birth' challenge from an international partnership that included the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank.

"Our project was shortlisted from over 600 submissions from all around the world – and then shortlisted in the top 75," Dr McIntosh says.

Dr McIntosh went to Washington DC, where she was interviewed by judges and had just 60 seconds to pitch the project.

"I felt like a fish out of water. I think I was the only pharmaceutical scientist there," she says.

A stunned Dr McIntosh was one of 19 finalists to receive a seed grant of US\$250,000, and was personally congratulated by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"It was a massive buzz – it hadn't even crossed my mind that we could get funded," she says. "And we were awarded the Peer Choice Award by the 75 finalists.

"It was then that I really understood the enormity of what we were doing. The people in the field could see what this research could do. It was incredible to have those people stand in front of me and say it's exactly what they need."

Then last year, Dr McIntosh applied for Phase II funding to the Gates Foundation, outlining just what could be achieved with US\$1 million. The Foundation again awarded her the funds.

“

Saving so many women's lives would help whole communities, as it means that children are growing up with a mother's love, protection and guidance.”

"The entire project has required a lot of travel and a lot of work to establish relationships – and I've met some amazing and inspirational people," she says. "However, at times it can seem that I'm so busy chasing funding that it's hard to focus on the science."

The journey is far from over. The team now needs money for human clinical trials.

In September this year, the international philanthropic organisation McCall MacBain Foundation provided a \$500,000 gift following an approach to the Foundation by the Dean of the Faculty. And it issued a challenge.

"The Foundation will gift an additional \$1 million in research funding if we can raise a further \$2 million from other sources," Dr McIntosh says. "It's a wonderful opportunity as \$3 million will mean we can take the product through the difficult transition into human clinical trials required to test product safety."

The fervent hope is that the product is widely available in developing countries within the next two to three years.

"Saving so many women's lives would help whole communities, as it means that children are growing up with a mother's love, protection and guidance," Dr McIntosh says. "This is what I want our research to be able to do."

For more information about the project, or to donate, visit <http://monash.edu/pharm/research/iop/> ●

Deputy Dean Professor Peter Stewart could have spent the past 21 years enjoying the Queensland sun, but fortunately for Victoria he chose to bring his talents in drug delivery, particularly respiratory drug delivery, down south.

It was Barry Reed's phone call that initiated my interest in Melbourne in the first place," said Professor Stewart, who retires from his Faculty role at the end of the year. (Emeritus Professor Reed retired in 2006 after 43 years of service at the Faculty.)

In the early 1990s, Professor Stewart was set on a career at the University of Queensland.

"I was very content and had decided my future lay there," he recalls. "However, I had several phone calls from the very persistent Barry Reed about the position as Head of Department at VCP, so finally decided to have a closer look. The rest is history."

Professor Stewart decided on pharmacy as a career very early in life, an interest sparked during long conversations with a friendly local pharmacist.

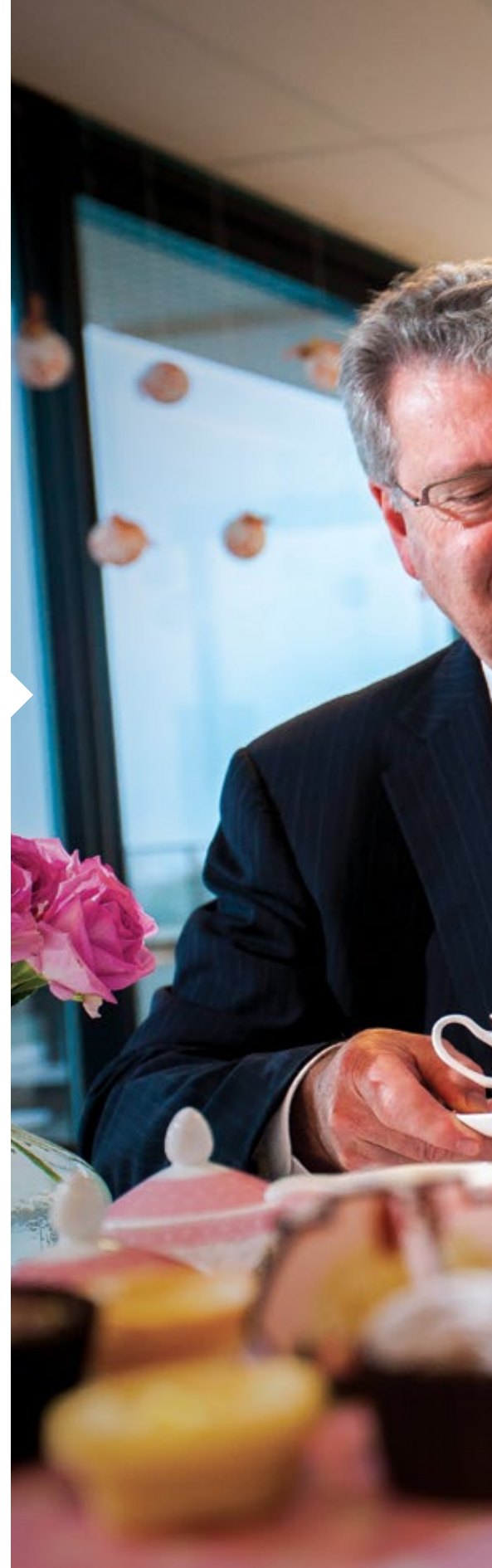
"I liked chemistry and this seemed the ideal career," he says. "I studied at the University of Queensland and planned to undertake my internship in a community pharmacy servicing one of Brisbane's private hospitals.

"After I received my final exam results though, I was invited to undertake an Honours year. I became hooked on research and went on to achieve my PhD. I spent 23 years at the University of Queensland before coming to Melbourne to be part of the Victorian College of Pharmacy at Monash University in 1992."

In his first year in Melbourne, Professor Stewart was heavily involved in the amalgamation of the college with Monash.

"There has been great change in the Faculty over the past 20 years," he says. "It really took over 10 years for the highly regarded college to be fully integrated into the Monash way."

He considers the review and development of the four-year Bachelor of Pharmacy course (with all the fantastic innovation that came from it) and the development of non-pharmacy courses such as Formulation Science and Medicinal Chemistry to be two of the most significant educational changes.





**A new
chapter
begins**



“

Professor Stewart decided on pharmacy as a career very early in life, an interest sparked during long conversations with a friendly local pharmacist.

The restructuring of the college to a Faculty and the development of MIPS and the Centre for Medicine Use and Safety (CMUS) set the foundation for the great increase in research productivity in recent years.

“We have also focused on more collaborative approaches to research, and we continue to attract new staff who have new ideas,” he says. “These have helped the Faculty become and stay a world leader in research and education.”

Professor Stewart, who has more than 100 publications to his name, has a sense of satisfaction from seeing the remarkable development of the Faculty to be a world leader in education and research under the direction of Bill Charman as Dean.

“I’ve had 25 PhD students go on to achieve interesting and important things, and I’ve enjoyed contributing to the new direction of the Faculty,” he says.

Professor Stewart’s wife, Kay, an Associate Professor with interests in pharmacy services, medication use and adherence, and women’s health, retired from the Faculty in July after 20 years. Together they made a formidable team.

Kay, of course, moved to Melbourne with Peter in 1992 and initially worked with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) as the chief researcher on the development of competency standards for the pharmacy profession before being appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Pharmacy Practice. This was her first academic appointment, having been awarded her PhD in 1989.

Since then, she progressed to Associate Professor and has been co-investigator on research projects totalling around \$12 million, had more than 100 publications in peer-reviewed journals and supervised 20 PhD students.

Married for 44 years after meeting as undergraduates at the University of Queensland, the couple count their rewarding and happy family life with their two daughters, Kristin and Susan (and six grandchildren), as their greatest personal achievement.

While Professor Stewart is retiring from Monash, the book is not completely closed on research.

“I’ll continue with some research work with collaborators in the Netherlands, the UK, the USA and Sydney, but I’m also branching into a new field of research,” he says.

Kay will maintain links with CMUS and will also be involved in providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for pharmacists and other health professionals. And that new research?

“We live in a 110-year-old house in Kew and I’m planning to learn as much as I can about its previous owners and tenants. I’m looking forward to learning a lot.” Kay is also planning to do some family history research. ●

Advances in male contraception

A male contraceptive pill could be available within 10 years after Melbourne scientists discovered a way to make male mice temporarily infertile. The breakthrough brings the quest for a male pill to reduce millions of unintended pregnancies a step closer.

Attempts to create a contraceptive for men have been hampered by concerns over its impact on sexual function, reversibility and the health of future offspring.

Monash University researchers say their technique-like a temporary chemical vasectomy – avoided these pitfalls by simply stopping the sperm in its tracks.

In genetically-modified mice they deleted two proteins that were essential for sperm transport.

Now they are trialling drugs to block the proteins.

Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences senior lecturer Dr Sab Ventura said the ultimate aim was a daily pill for men to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

His research, published in the journal PNAS this morning found that the male mice were 100 per cent infertile after the proteins were deleted.

The proteins stop the transport of sperm from the epididymis to the urethra, without affecting sexual behaviour or function.

Dr Ventura said the mice had sex normally to the point of ejaculation, but no sperm was ejaculated.

Importantly it also did not damage the sperm, which was later used in IVF to produce healthy babies.

He said attitudes towards contraception had changed.

“A lot of young males have been shown in surveys to be just as worried about making females pregnant as females are about getting pregnant,” Dr Ventura said.

He said previous attempts at a male pill had focused either on making the sperm dysfunctional or using hormonal targets.

“Our technique is good because it’s not hormonal so males won’t be afraid to take it, it’s easily reversible; so young people could take it and still have viable sperm, and it’s not going to have any future effects on offspring.”

Dr Ventura said there was already a drug that targets one of the two proteins, but they would have to find a chemical and develop a drug to block the second one.

If it worked, there could be a viable contraceptive pill within 5-10 years.

Marie Stopes International Australia spokeswoman Nicole Ekert said there were around 222 million women in the developing world who wanted to use, but could not access contraception.

“Every year there are an estimated 63 million unintended pregnancies that result from a lack of contraception, and 19 million women resort to unsafe abortions to end their pregnancies,” she said.

More than 80,000 women die from pregnancies they did not wish to have.

She said the value of a male contraceptive was that it added another option for family planning and given the increasing popularity of vasectomy there could be strong interest.

Former male contraception clinical investigator Professor Gordon Baker said the research results were promising, but there were several barriers, including gaining industry backing, undetected impact on sexual function and translating the findings from mice to humans. ●

Reprinted with permission from the Herald-Sun newspaper.

CDCO Celebrating a decade of discovery

Professor Susan Charman has seen firsthand the heartbreak of malaria. She has seen children and pregnant women suffering the fevers, chills, nausea and other effects of the disease that claims nearly a million lives a year. Leading the team at the Centre for Drug Candidate Optimisation (CDCO) Professor Charman is striving to find new drugs that could help to put the parasite out of business for good.

“The parasite that causes malaria is a clever little beast,” she says. “It continually reinvents itself and develops resistance to everything that is thrown at it.

“We must keep working hard to discover, develop and deliver new drugs to fight this terrible disease.”

The CDCO has a longstanding association with the not-for-profit Medicines for Malaria Venture based in Geneva. Last year, one of the CDCO’s projects won the coveted Drug Discovery Project of the Year award, representing the fifth such award for the Centre since 2001.

The 2012 award was presented to the project team for delivering a promising compound that has the potential to be a single-dose cure for malaria. Scientists at the Centre are also working with Geneva-based Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) to discover new drugs for other neglected diseases including Chagas disease, African sleeping sickness and leishmania, all of which represent significant disease burdens in poverty-stricken regions of the world.

Chagas disease is endemic across Latin America and kills more people in that region than malaria. The CDCO and collaborators in Perth received the DNDi Partnership of the Year award for identifying a late lead compound that is highly potent against the parasite.

These awards are extraordinary achievements for the Centre, and demonstrate that cutting-edge drug discovery aimed at providing cures for terrible human diseases can be effectively conducted within an academic environment.

Established with a \$4 million grant from the Victorian Government in 2003, the CDCO began by acquiring vital infrastructure, developing and validating testing platforms and appointing scientific staff. By 2005, the Centre was fully self-funded through grants and research contracts.

What is CDCO?

The Centre for Drug Candidate Optimisation is an innovative collaborative research centre that works with researchers, biotechnology companies and international not-for-profit organisations to identify drug candidates suitable for future clinical development.



> FRONT ROW: PROFESSOR SUSAN CHARMAN
BACK ROW (L-R): FRANCIS CHIU, DAVID SHACKLEFORD,
MICHAEL CAMPBELL, KAREN WHITE, ANDREW POWELL

Over the past 10 years, work has contributed to drug discovery programs that have progressed more than 18 new drug candidates into clinical development in a range of areas including infectious diseases, central nervous system disorders and cancer.

In the area of cancer, the Centre is a partner in the Cooperative Research Centre for Cancer Therapeutics, translating innovative cancer biology research into lead and preclinical-stage drug candidates.

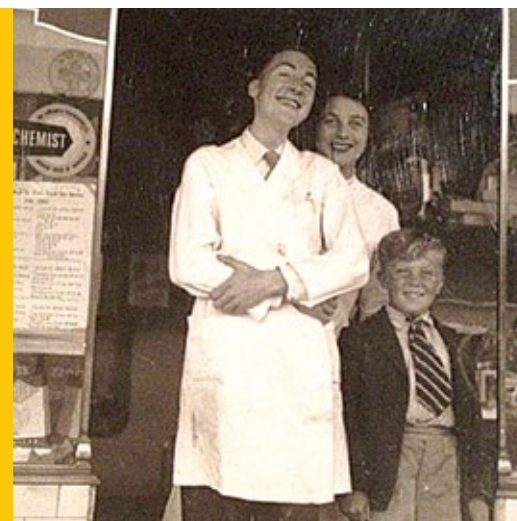
The CDCO scientists work collaboratively with academic and commercial drug discovery chemists and biologists to optimise drug candidates to improve their safety and effectiveness.

“Chemists design and synthesise new drugs, biologists look at what the drug does to the body, and we focus on how the body handles the drug. This involves looking at drug absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion to find out which drug molecules have the right profile to be effective and safe,” Professor Charman says.

Professor Charman believes the future is bright for the CDCO. “The key will be to remain adaptable and flexible to meet the changing demands of the groups we work with, yet still continue to develop innovative and creative approaches to enhance drug discovery.”

For more information on the Centre, visit www.cdco.monash.org ●

A mixed career



> SIMON APPEL WITH HIS MOTHER AND PHARMACIST FATHER

In the 1950s, Simon Appel diligently mixed syrup in the dispensary of his father's Melbourne pharmacy. In the 1970s, as a young Victorian College of Pharmacy graduate, he pioneered 9am to 9pm opening hours in Melbourne.

And today, at 72, Simon is managing the world's first National Return and Disposal of Unwanted Medicines project, with golf, grandchildren and travel thrown into the mix.

Even as a boarder at Geelong Grammar in his teens, Simon knew that pharmacy would be his career.

"It was always assumed I'd take over my father's Ripponlea business," he says. "I thought he would give it to me when he retired – so it was a shock when I was told I'd have to buy the pharmacy."

Simon borrowed money for the purchase, relocated the Ripponlea store, bought two more Melbourne pharmacies and took the bold step to open all of them 12 hours a day.

"It was becoming clear that people visited doctors and needed medication outside business hours and meeting our customers' needs was the key to success," he says. "We were soon flooded with customers at all hours."

Simon, who holds a Medal of the Order of Australia for services to pharmacy and the community, has seen extraordinary changes in the industry over the years but is adamant customer service must remain the focus.

"When I started, we mixed and made everything and dispensed perhaps 12 prescriptions daily," he says.

"Now pharmacies dispense hundreds of prescriptions every day and are under constant pressure from competitors and government interests."

Simon believes pharmacists are unique and trusted community members. He encourages new students to take up the profession, providing they have the right communication skills and are willing to continue regular professional development.

"Community pharmacy is extremely rewarding," he says. "A local pharmacy is one of the few places somebody can walk into, without an appointment, and speak to a professional about a health or wellbeing problem. We can make such a difference to people's lives."

"Increasingly, pharmacies are becoming community healthcare centres, where people can have blood pressure and glucose level checks. Many pharmacists are valuing the opportunity to provide that broad value healthcare."

Just as important is the pharmacist's role in medication management.

"In our ageing society, many people are on multiple medications," Simon says. "This can be difficult for them to manage, so consultant pharmacists are taking up the challenge, checking people's various medications (prescription and off the shelf), talking to their doctors, then visiting their homes for a discussion and advice."

"This role is going to grow, and government and private insurers need to be involved to ensure consultant pharmacists have the support they need."●

Learning to lead

Bright blue jumpers and big smiles make them easy to spot on Open Day. These are our Student Ambassadors – a diverse group of 30 undergraduate pharmacy and pharmaceutical science students who undergo a competitive selection process to secure a place in a comprehensive training program designed to develop their leadership skills.

“The Student Ambassador program draws together exceptionally talented students with a demonstrated ability for leadership. It is wonderful to see these students taking such a keen interest in the Faculty’s role in education, research and community service. We expect to see many of the program’s participants develop into community and professional leaders over the coming years,” says Professor Bill Charman.

The program has been running since 2006. Ambassadors, appointed yearly, are trained in leadership skill development and project management. They are also given the opportunity to have an industry mentor working in their area of professional interest.

Jeffrey Davies, a senior pharmacist at Southern Health, described his mentoring experience with 2012 Student Ambassador Jessica Rhodes as tremendous.

“

“The Student Ambassador program draws together exceptionally talented students with a demonstrated ability for leadership.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed sharing my knowledge and experience and showing Jessica aspects of hospital pharmacy practice she wasn’t aware of. We were all very impressed with her enthusiasm and knowledge,” said Jeffrey.

For Jessica, the experience was an invaluable opportunity to learn from both Jeffrey and his team.

“I’ve gained two things – a better sense of which direction I want to take my career and a great friend and role model, and I look forward to keeping in contact over the coming months and years!”

As part of the program, Student Ambassadors are also required to undertake a community focused group project, designed to enhance the student-student, student-Faculty or Faculty-community experience.

Throughout the year the Student Ambassadors represent the Faculty at a variety of events – from school visits to information evenings, fundraising events, careers fairs and, of course, Open Day.

They share their knowledge of the Faculty’s undergraduate degrees, but more importantly their own personal experiences of being a student, warts and all.

This year they took on a new role as annual appeal champions, telephoning alumni to update their details and give them the opportunity to make a gift to support and assure a bright future for the Faculty.

And if ten months of being an Ambassador aren’t enough, there is the opportunity to become a Senior Ambassador. Christine Wun and Shin Liao both completed their second year of the program in 2012 and hung up their blue sweatshirts in early March 2013.

When asked if she’d recommend being a Senior Ambassador to others, Shin replied with a resounding yes! “My two years with this program have been one of my most valuable university experiences. I would definitely do it all again if I could.” ●

Unravelling the mysteries of pain and inflammation

Professor Nigel Bunnett came to Australia in 2011 to take up an National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australia Fellowship and further his research into the mechanics of pain and inflammation, both normal physiological protective processes essential for survival. Two years on, although he's struggling to find a way to sneak a dog into the office, he's finding life at Monash and in Melbourne agreeably collegial and convivial.

"Pain provides awareness of potential danger or harm. Inflammation helps detect potentially invasive organisms, protecting against infection," he said. These processes are generally short-lived and tightly regulated to ensure that responses are appropriate to the stimulus, according to Professor Bunnett. But when these processes go awry, serious and complicated problems can take hold. Chronic pain and inflammation are key features of many diseases, and major causes of human suffering.

"In many diseases, these normal protective mechanisms become dysregulated," explains Professor Bunnett. "That can induce chronic pain, which is poorly understood and a major burden on healthcare systems worldwide. The same goes for chronic inflammation, which underlies many diseases."

And not just the obvious ones, like arthritis, pancreatitis and inflammatory bowel disease, but also diseases like atherosclerosis, diabetes and obesity.

By studying the receptors and channels that mediate pain and inflammation, Professor Bunnett and his team at MIPS hope to identify new strategies for diagnosis and therapy.

"What we're trying to do is understand the fundamental mechanisms of pain and inflammation – how they're normally signalled, and how dysregulation results in disease.

"If we can understand that then we can develop targets and drugs for treatment, along with tools to diagnose these disorders much earlier."

Collaborating with clinical scientists at The Alfred, where he holds an appointment in medicine, ensures the research remains clinically relevant.

"In anaesthesiology, we're trying to identify mediators in the central nervous system of patients with chronic pain. In gastroenterology, we're looking at chronic itch, which is related to pain, and another protective mechanism. Several diseases can produce chronic itch. The one we're studying is cholestatic pruritus, where there's a defect in bile secretion. Patients present with jaundice and a severe itch—so severe, some sufferers contemplate suicide."

Although a complicated process, Professor Bunnett says his team has made a breakthrough.

"Cholestatic pruritus is poorly understood and difficult to treat.



“

I've tried to adopt that philosophy: surround yourself with smart people and give them the support and freedom to succeed. If they do well, we all do well."

But, working with gastroenterologists at The Alfred, we believe we have identified the mechanism behind the condition, which means we can design treatments.”

Professor Bunnett obtained his PhD from Cambridge and spent the next 30 years in the US, commencing as a postdoctoral fellow at UCLA, then moving to the University of Washington in Seattle as an Assistant Professor before joining the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and filling the roles of Professor of Surgery and Physiology, Vice Chair of Surgery, and Director of Neurobiology of Digestive Diseases.

Professor Bunnett’s work has been reported in 300 papers, and funded by the NHMRC, Australian Research Council (ARC) and National Institute of Health (NIH). He has received numerous awards, including a MERIT Award, Novartis Neurogastroenterology Award, Jansen Gastroenterology Research Award, Victor Mutt Award for Research in Regulatory Peptides, and now an NHMRC Australia Fellowship.

Relocating to Australia and Monash in 2011 to take up his Australia Fellowship and join MIPS as Professor of Pharmacology and Medicine, and Deputy Director was prompted by the desire to focus more on his research.

The opportunity to work with a diverse range of scientists was a big drawcard for Professor Bunnett.



“Monash is enormously collegial,” he happily reports. “I work with some incredibly smart people who are very open to collaboration. I interact with medicinal chemists and experts in drug design and delivery—opportunities I haven’t had before. This is very beneficial in trying to translate research findings into experimental tools and even drugs. It’s given me new insights and opportunities.

While research activities occupy most of his schedule, Professor Bunnett maintains a keen commitment to teaching and mentoring. “For me, a key reason for working in a university is to teach,” Professor Bunnett says.

“I teach undergraduates and graduates. As a scientist, you’re judged by what you publish, but it’s the people you train and what they accomplish that makes a lasting impact. My mentor at UCLA was tremendously supportive and gave me enormous freedom.

“I’ve tried to adopt that philosophy: surround yourself with smart people and give them the support and freedom to succeed. If they do well, we all do well.”

Professor Bunnett says relocating life and work to Melbourne was a big move, but a good move. “Melbourne is a delightful city,” he declares. “A good place to live and raise children. And a great place for science. I think it’s the best Australian city for science. Parkville is fantastic for its proximity to research institutes and hospitals.”

Professor Bunnett’s wife, Hearan, is a physician who also works with Monash, at The Alfred.

The family includes three young children—twin girls, Sabrina and Seraphina, and a boy, Lucian – and a couple of very active dogs – Taffy, a Welsh Springer Spaniel and Bronte, a Labrador.

“We brought our dogs with us from San Francisco as they are very much a part of both family and work life.

“Taffy could be found regularly in my office at UCSF, but unfortunately this doesn’t appear possible at MIPS.”

For Professor Bunnett, that is the only disappointing aspect of his new life in Australia! ●



SHPA's new president to champion excellence in medicines management

At a recent meeting of the Federal Council of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA), Professor Michael Dooley, Director of Pharmacy at Alfred Health and Professor of Clinical Pharmacy, CMUS was elected as the new President of SHPA.

In his first time on the Federal Council, Professor Dooley brings many skills and much relevant experience to SHPA – his lengthy involvement in hospital pharmacy as a clinician, manager and researcher in medicine use and safety.

Professor Dooley has been particularly involved at SHPA as a member and former Chair of the Committee of Specialty Practice in Clinical Pharmacy and an investigator on the Clinical Pharmacy Intervention Study, which contributed significantly to the advancement of clinical pharmacy within Australia.

Professor Dooley is a Fellow of SHPA, the International Society of Oncology Pharmacy Practitioners and the Australasian Association for Quality in Health Care.

His work and achievements have been recognised by SHPA as the recipient of the Australian Clinical Pharmacy Award in 2004 and the GlaxoSmithKline Medal of Merit in 2003; and by others – he received the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards Gold Medal in 2005.

Professor Dooley explained, “There are significant challenges faced in providing quality healthcare to Australians. The pharmacy profession, partnering with patients and other health professions, is integral to the quality use of medicines. Improving health outcomes must be the key focus with continued emphasis on developing and integrating strategies that improve medication use.

“I look forward to contributing to this important work and am honoured to have this leadership role.”

On taking up this new appointment, Professor Dooley paid tribute to the immediate past President, Sue Kirsas.

“Sue’s leadership in her time as President of SHPA has been remarkable. She has led the organisation through a period of great change and challenges in the Australian healthcare sector. Her commitment to SHPA is commendable, having served on Federal Council twice and on the Victorian Branch. I wish Sue well for the future and thank her for contribution to SHPA, to the pharmacy profession and to healthcare in Australia.”

Professor Dooley will be supported by incoming SHPA Executive members:

- Vice-President – Associate Professor Ian Coombes, Qld
- 4th executive member – Karen Kaye, NSW.

Sasha Bennett will continue in her role as Treasurer. ●

Tributes for pharmacy legend

More than 250 guests attended a dinner at the RACV Club in July to honour the retiring Chairman of the Victorian College of Pharmacy Foundation, Alistair Lloyd AO RFD ED, and launch a scholarship in his name.

Alistair is frequently referred to as the ‘Don Bradman of pharmacy’ by Professor Bill Charman, who said “the scholarship is a tangible way to show our respect for the major contribution Alistair has made to the pharmacy community and Monash University over the past 50 years.”

“

Alistair Lloyd’s influence and involvement in Australian pharmacy is legend.



> ALISTAIR LLOYD UNVEILS HIS PORTRAIT TO HANG IN COSSAR HALL

At 80 and having served as Chair of the Foundation since its inception in 2001, Alistair recently passed the baton to Stephen Marty, currently Chair of the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

Stephen and Dr Geoffrey Vaughan, a former Dean of the Faculty paid tribute to Alistair at the dinner where a portrait of Alistair was unveiled. The portrait will hang in Cossar Hall at the Parkville campus.

Under Alistair’s leadership, the Victorian College of Pharmacy Foundation has been a fundraising powerhouse for Monash University delivering more than \$10,000,000 in funds to support scholarships, professorial chairs and infrastructure. Alistair graduated from the Victorian College of Pharmacy in 1956 and has served in numerous state and national capacities within the pharmacy profession. His influence and involvement in Australian pharmacy is legend.

Alistair said that he was proud to have played a part in the continuous growth of the profession over what has been a long and rewarding career spanning more than five decades.

The Alistair Lloyd Scholarship for Excellence and Leadership is valued at \$10,000 and will be available for the first time in 2014 to a high achieving Year 12 student enrolling in pharmacy at Monash University who can demonstrate both academic merit and leadership potential. ●

Where are they now?

**What are you doing now?
We'd love to hear your story.
If you would like to be featured here, email
vcp.foundation@monash.edu with your
name and a short description of what
you've done since graduation.**

Ingrid Sand

Senior Clinical Research Associate & Project Lead GlaxoSmithKline

For Ingrid Sand (BPharm, Grad Dip Epidem) working across three different fields of pharmacy has brought valuable professional interactions, experiences and challenges.

Graduating from the Victorian College of Pharmacy in 1983, Ingrid completed her traineeship at The Alfred, where she began work as a hospital pharmacist. Halfway through her 10 years at The Alfred Ingrid developed an interest in clinical trials, and completed a Graduate Diploma in Epidemiology and Medical Biostatistics at the University of Melbourne. She subsequently become Senior Pharmacist in charge of Drug Information and Clinical Trials at The Alfred, and an active committee member of the SHPA.

In 1994, Ingrid moved to industry, joining Glaxo—now GSK—where she continues to work as Senior Clinical Research Associate and Project Lead. Ingrid has managed trials across a range of therapy areas, including oncology, HIV/AIDs and respiratory disease. She has also worked in GSK Medical Affairs as a scientific advisor and trainer and continues to work part time in community pharmacy.

As a parent of two teenagers, she plays an active role in her children's schools and local community. Spare time is scarce, but classical music, walking and reading are at the top of her list.

Rory Thompson

With a strong respect for community connection and the trust placed in the pharmacist, Rory Thompson (BPharm) has always been interested in community pharmacy—and running his own. Today, with two quite distinct pharmacies, he plays an active role in patient care and the community.

Rory's role at both pharmacies has always been to work as a pharmacist. "I am actively involved in patient care, prescription dispensing and patient counselling," he says. "I have a strong interest in aged care, Parkinson's disease and pharmacotherapy."

Rory is on advisory committees at two aged care facilities, and gives regular lectures on caring for patients with Parkinson's disease. One of his pharmacies operates a pharmacotherapy program—an area where Rory says community pharmacists play a vital role. "We treat these patients daily," he explains. "We've designed our treatment area to be discreet and private. It's rewarding to see patients successfully complete the program."

Having graduated from Monash with a Bachelor of Pharmacy in 1995, Rory worked in community pharmacies for several years before he felt ready to take on his own operation. "I've always had a strong sense of the sort of pharmacy I wanted to operate," he says. "It's been exciting and challenging. Over time, I've found my groove, made strong connections and shaped the pharmacies I envisioned."

Dr Mohamed Azmi Ahmad Hassali

Monash alumnus Dr Mohamed Azmi Ahmad Hassali has been awarded the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society's Outstanding Pharmacist of the Year Award 2013 for Excellence in Academia.

Dr Hassali was chosen for his significant contributions to pharmacy practice research, as well as involvement in community activities that 'uphold the profession of pharmacist,' both inside and outside the country.

Dr Hassali is widely regarded as a pioneer in social pharmacy education and research in Malaysia, building an extensive research network with pharmacy schools in the Asia Pacific and West Asia regions. His studies have helped shape pharmaceutical policy in Malaysia.

The Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society—Persatuan Farmasi Malaysia—is the national association for pharmacists in Malaysia. The award was presented to Azmi at the Society's annual dinner in September.

Dr Hassali completed his PhD in pharmacy practice with Monash in 2006. He is currently Associate Professor and Deputy Dean (Student Affairs & Networking) of the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the Universiti Sains Malaysia.



Sarah Kouw

Sarah Kouw (BPharm 2008) is a Clinical Pharmacist at the Children's Cancer Centre Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne where she works across a wide range of areas. "I've been lucky to work in almost all areas of the pharmacy department and become an integral member of the pharmacy team," says Sarah. "My experience includes roles as a clinical pharmacist, rotating through surgical, neurological, cardiac, respiratory and general medical wards, as well as neonatal and paediatric intensive cares."

Sarah has recently taken up a position as an oncology pharmacist in the Children's Cancer Centre. "The role is challenging and has presented a steep learning curve," Sarah admits. "But I love the fact that I learn new things every day, and am constantly faced with new challenges that push me out of my comfort zone."

Sarah is relishing the diversity and importance of her work today. "Working in a multidisciplinary environment across such an array of positions is a privilege. It has allowed me to develop my skills and knowledge, and achieve a lot in my short career."

"While working at a paediatric hospital can be confronting, it is very rewarding. If I can make a difference in at least one family's life each day, then I am satisfied with my work."

Mounir Mina

For Mounir Mina (BPharm (Hons), MSRA) the knowledge and skills acquired through his studies are working to shape medicine regulation and best practice in Australia.

As a Director and Principal Evaluator in Pharmaceutical Chemistry with the TGA, Mounir manages a team of regulatory scientists in delivering timely and rigorous reviews of cardiovascular and analgesic medicines.

Mounir says his role with the TGA offers great diversity and professional development opportunities—a dynamic work culture and constantly evolving regulatory environment. "The constantly changing nature of regulations adds to the excitement of the job. My role demands that I keep up to date with global changes in science, research and regulation."

Mounir's career began with a short tenure at the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority in Canberra. This placement provided a valuable starting point for pursuing his interests in regulatory affairs.

Mounir subsequently completed a Masters in Bioscience Regulatory Affairs as an external student with Johns Hopkins University. In 2010 he secured his current position with the TGA.

Mounir's other passion is travel and has his sightseeing ambitions set on Europe next.

In brief

New discovery in quest for better drugs

Scientists from MIPS have combined cutting-edge computer modelling with pharmacology and medicinal chemistry to reveal new insights into how the body interacts with novel drug treatments, in research that could lead to the creation of more targeted drugs with fewer side effects.

In a paper published by *Nature*, the researchers investigated alternative drug recognition sites on G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) – the largest and most important family of receptor proteins in the human body.

GPCRs play a role in virtually every biological process and most diseases, including neuropsychiatric disorders, cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes, inflammation and cancer.

Almost half of all current medications available use GPCRs to achieve their therapeutic effect.

The new research into how GPCRs work at the molecular level has unlocked insights into how drugs interact with this therapeutically relevant receptor family. It is hoped the research will lead to the creation of drugs that are more targeted and with fewer side effects.

The research was conducted by the teams of Professors Arthur Christopoulos and Patrick Sexton, leaders of the Drug Discovery Biology program; Professor Jonathan Baell from the Medicinal Chemistry program; and international collaborators from D.E. Shaw Research and Columbia University, New York.

Jenny Gowan named as PSA Pharmacist of the Year



Victorian pharmacist Dr Jenny Gowan has been named the PSA Pharmacist of the Year for 2013 for her work in advancing pharmacy practice and for a wide-ranging scope of work to which she constantly brings innovation and new ideas.

Her tireless work with pharmacy has made her one of the best-known pharmacists in Australia and this reputation has extended to other health professionals through her involvement in leadership roles in Divisions of GPs and Medicare Locals.

She is widely regarded as a national leader in driving CPD for pharmacists and has conducted countless CPD events including lectures, seminars, workshops and training sessions.

Dr Gowan said pharmacy had been good to her and “one of my main enjoyments is inspiring and mentoring pharmacists, young and old, to optimise their potential.”

“I have been very fortunate to have worked in many different areas of pharmacy, community and hospital pharmacy, education of interns and CPD at PSA and Monash University, as well as promoting consultant pharmacy.”

Dr Gowan said funding models needed to be expanded so payment is available for primary healthcare, preventative medicine, specialty practice, hospital community continuum of care, community education, working with chronic disease groups, working in general practice clinics, and educating other health professionals.

“I have a determination to expand the role of the pharmacist from supply of product to supply of services, but this must be integrated with general practice using a team based approach.

“The aim must be to optimise patient care and practise at a high professional level for pharmacists to be a recognised member of the healthcare team,” she said.

Patrick Davies, CEO of Symbion, sponsors of the awards for the ninth consecutive year, said Dr Gowan exemplifies the attributes that the pharmacy profession holds so dear.

“She is driven, committed and innovative and her leadership has helped countless pharmacists expand their knowledge and skills, and through this improve the health outcomes of members of the community.

“Dr Gowan has helped to shape pharmacy practice and the careers of numerous pharmacists via her teaching, publications and sheer determination to see that pharmacy practice in Australia is second to none.”



Congratulations to national teaching award winners

Both academic and professional staff were recognised for excellence in teaching and learning in the 2013 national awards program run by the Australian Government's Office for Teaching and Learning (OLT).

Susan Caliph was recognised for her Outstanding Contribution to Student

Learning with an individual OLT Citation, while the Pharmville team of Jennifer Marriott, Jenny McDowell, Kim Styles, Deb Horne and Marian Costelloe were awarded a team-based Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning.

This national recognition was well deserved and we extend our heartiest congratulations to the awardees.



Recognition for pharmacist leading the fight against superbugs

Faculty pharmacy lecturer and leading superbug researcher, Dr David Kong, has been awarded the coveted GlaxoSmithKline Medal of Merit. Awarded annually by SHPA, and sponsored by major pharmaceutical manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline, the Medal of Merit is considered by hospital pharmacists as one of the most prestigious awards recognising outstanding contributions to the practice of hospital pharmacy.



Dr Kong, from CMUS, received the award for his significant contribution in the fields of antimicrobial stewardship and infectious diseases, where his work has impacted both hospital and pharmacy practice. "This award recognises the collective work of a team of individuals and organisations in improving antimicrobial use in Australia over last few years, trying to make a difference for the community. At a personal level, it certainly was a nice recognition of my contributions to the field," Dr Kong said. Dr Kong's award builds on a distinguished research career over more than two decades. His contribution to hospital pharmacy has spanned academia, research, pharmacy practice, leadership and advocacy, and his work is recognised internationally.



New graduate entry option to pharmacy degree

The Faculty will launch a new pharmacy program in 2014 for top performing science, pharmacology, biomedical science and pharmaceutical science graduates considering a career change. The accelerated program will allow graduates to enter the Bachelor of Pharmacy at third-year level and complete their degree in two years.

Successful applicants will represent some of the highest achieving graduates in science-based degrees with selection based on outstanding academic achievement.

Students will undertake an intensive summer school program to develop their pharmacy practice skills before joining third-year students when first semester begins in March. This program is an alternative to traditional graduate pharmacy programs, which have become increasingly popular in Australia and overseas. The program delivers a Bachelor of Pharmacy.

More details about the program and information on how to apply are available online.

www.monash.edu/pharm/future/courses/grad-pharmacy/index.html



Nicole Eise Faculty 3 minute thesis winner

Nicole Eise beat a record number of entrants from the Faculty to secure the title of Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences winner of the 3 Minute Thesis Challenge. Second in the competition was Stephen Drane, who also won the People's Choice Award.

Nicole ably explained her topic of the effect of phytotherapeutics on the contractility of the prostate gland under the competition rules of one slide and three minutes of speaking.

Nicole joined 11 other finalists who battled for the honour of representing Monash at the national final.

ARC Linkage Grant success



Project: Controlling spatial distribution of targeting ligands on dendrimer surfaces as a means of dictating cellular recognition and fate

Researchers: Chris Porter, Lisa Kaminskis, Ben Boyd, Nigel Bunnett, Erica Sloan, David Owen

Partner organisation: Starpharma Holdings Limited.

Value: \$547,863

Project: Structure-based design of inhibitors of HIV-1 integrase

Researchers: Martin Scanlon, David Chalmers, Jamie Simpson, Andrew Wilks, Michael Parker, Gilda Tachedjian, Paul Brough, James Murray

Partner organisation: Synthesis Research Pty Ltd, Vernalis (R&D) Ltd.

Value: \$787,500

Project: Nanoassembling agrochemicals – a new paradigm in delivery for enviro-friendly crop treatment

Researchers: Ben Boyd, Bim Graham, Charlie Dong, Phillip Haym, David Cahill

Partner organisation: Nufarm Australia Limited.

Value: \$415,440

Project: Powder blending for dry powder inhalers: a new approach to direct control of powder structure

Researchers: Karen Hapgood, David Morton, Peter Stewart, Stephanie Parker

Partner organisation: GlaxoSmithKline Australia Pty Ltd.

Value: \$400,000

Project: The development of tunable materials to allow the three dimensional printing of cells

Researchers: Justin Gooding, Tom Davis, Julio Robeiro, Maria Kavallaris

Partner organisation: Inventia Pty Ltd.

Value: \$495,000

It's back to school for the class of 1983



Pharmacy graduates from the class of 1983 reunited to celebrate their achievements, rekindle friendships and reminisce about their student days at the Victorian College of Pharmacy recently.

A group of 35 alumni and friends attended the reunion to mark 30 years since completing their pharmacy degree. A buffet dinner was held in the student cafeteria in October to celebrate this momentous occasion. Kay Dunkley (Robinson) welcomed the guests before Professor Geoff Vaughan recounted a few amusing anecdotes as Dean from their college days.



> THE CLASS OF 1983 GETS BACK TO SCHOOL

A DVD of photos taken during student days was played throughout the event and brought back vivid memories for many guests.

After dinner, Steve Marty, Chair of the Victorian College of Pharmacy Foundation, addressed the group and took them on a guided tour of the new facilities. They visited the virtual practice environments, professional practice suites, and saw students using the 24 hour computer laboratories – on a Saturday night! They were amazed at the changes in teaching since their time at the college.

Brendan Sullivan said “The tour was great to see – for someone who hasn’t been there since the tour a decade ago, the changes in teaching and learning are obviously enormous.”

Interested in organising a class reunion?

Contact Angela Maplestone,

E: Angela.Maplestone@monash.edu or

T: +61 3 9903 9087.

A life of passion



Established by the Cohen family, the award honours Victorian pharmacist Rodney Cohen's lifelong commitment, service and dedication to the pharmacy profession. The prize pays \$500 to an outstanding Bachelor of Pharmacy student and will be awarded annually at the Faculty Prize Giving Ceremony.

"My family and I are proud to establish this prize at the place that helped launch dad's lifelong commitment to pharmacy. We hope that this prize will help foster the same commitment and dedication in the next generation of pharmacists," said Rodney's son Tim.

Rodney graduated from the college in 1964. His passion for community pharmacy saw him purchase his first pharmacy in St Kilda the same year and continue to practise pharmacy in the area until his retirement in 2003. During his career as a community pharmacist Rodney developed a reputation as a leader in liaising with other healthcare professionals to ensure his clients received the best care and support.

He was well known for his friendly, approachable manner and genuine interest in the welfare of his customers, many of whom knew him by name. Throughout his career, Rodney was an active member of a number of professional organisations and governing bodies.

He joined the Pharmacy Guild of Victoria in 1972 as a member of the branch committee and became vice president in 1978. As Chair of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's National Health Economics Committee, Rodney made a major contribution to public health and the pharmacy profession through his negotiations with the Commonwealth Department of Health. This culminated in the partnership with government in the two Pharmacy Guild Government Agreements in 1990 and 1995. They are now up to the fifth agreement, of which Rodney set the precedent.

Rodney was influential in establishing Pharmacy Computers Australia, a key step in bringing affordable, user-friendly computer technology to pharmacy and enhancing pharmacy dispensing procedures, a move that facilitated the rapid development of patient counselling services and relevant drug information in the Australian community.

Honour board of donors

On behalf of the students and staff of the Faculty we would like to acknowledge those friends, businesses and alumni who have generously donated to the Faculty since the last edition of *Alchemy* was published. Your gifts and bequests are greatly valued and will be used wisely to support future students and research. You have joined an ever growing list of valued supporters of the Faculty. We would also like to record our thanks to those who have chosen to gift anonymously.

A full list of donors will be published in the Winter edition of *Alchemy* each year.

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Pharmacy Education Symposium hailed 'magnifico'

As the heat of one of the warmest Italian summers on record baked the cobblestones outside the Monash Prato Conference Centre, the Faculty hosted the seventh Pharmacy Education Symposium, themed 'Teaching for Learning', 8-10 July 2013.

Delegates from 14 countries joined a large contingent of staff from the Faculty. Professor Darrell Evans, Monash's Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) opened the conference with a stimulating session on ways to invigorate teaching. Professor Andrew McLachlan (University of Sydney and practitioner at Concord Hospital) followed with insights into the educational needs of graduates, drawing from his work with practitioners.

Sharing and Building Education Resources (SABER)'s collaborate arm was formally launched and generated much interest.

Other speakers included Emeritus Professor P.K. Rangachari (McMaster University), Tina Brock (University of California) and Neil Cottrell (University of Queensland).

The Faculty's Kirstie Galbraith, Dr Ian Larson and Dr Paul White also presented at the conference.

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), virtual learning environments, curriculum creep and the demise of didactic teaching were all explored and debated during the conference.

As favourites of past Symposiums, Associate Professor Zubin Austin (University of Toronto) and Professor Ian Bates (University of London) presented a creative and stimulating session on the experience of today's student, leaving delegates with the challenge of really seeking to understand what the students of 2013 care about.

Eight interactive workshops, concurrent paper sessions and a poster display rounded off the symposium proceedings, ensuring delegates left the conference up to date with the ever-changing face of pharmacy education. ●

Edwin Tan's view



The last word



The success of our staff, both academic and professional, in securing highly prized national teaching awards is also something in which we take great pride.

This dedicated column allows me to not only reflect on some of the terrific outcomes the Faculty has achieved in the latter half of 2013, but also provides the opportunity to say a sincere thank you to our students, staff, alumni, supporters and partners for their outstanding contributions.

One of the exciting education initiatives in 2013 was the decision to introduce a new graduate entry option for the BPharm, with the first intake of students planned for 2014. This accelerated program will allow science, pharmacology, biomedical science and pharmaceutical science graduates to enter at third-year level and complete the degree in two years.

This program is an alternative to traditional graduate pharmacy programs that have become increasingly popular in Australia and overseas.

The success of our staff, both academic and professional, in securing highly prized national teaching awards is also cause for celebration. Congratulations to Suzanne Caliph for being recognised with an individual citation for outstanding contributions to student learning and the Pharmville team of Jennifer Marriott, Jenny McDowell, Kim Styles, Deb Horne and Marian Costelloe for their team-based citation in the same category.

In addition, MIPS researchers had an excellent outcome in the most recent round of ARC Linkage Grants with a success rate of 60 per cent in securing funds as the lead organization, well above the national average. Our researchers are involved in new research projects that were awarded more than \$2.5 million.

We have also secured new scholarships funded by a generous alumnus and another by industry partner Pharmore Pharmacies. And the combined support from many of our alumni, staff and friends has ensured the Alistair Lloyd Scholarship in Leadership and Excellence can be awarded for the first time in 2014.

We were also thrilled to receive a \$500,000 gift to support the oxytocin project from philanthropists Marcy and John McCall MacBain.

I would especially like to thank the nine Student Ambassadors who gave up two weeks in August to telephone alumni to update graduate contact details and seek donations to fund our growing suite of scholarships. This year's annual appeal saw a 25 per cent increase in the amount donated and 30 new donors come on board because of their efforts.

In closing, I extend the compliments of the season to our staff, students, alumni and stakeholders and look forward to an exciting 2014. ●

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