Boost for public health

BY DAVID BRUCE

A core group of leading Victorian public health research organisations is harnessing the power of its combined skills in research, education and policy to drive the development of health care in Australia.

The new Monash Institute of Public Health and Health Services Research, jointly established by Monash University and the Southern Health Care Network, will draw together five major hospitals, six community health centres, numerous general practices as well as Monash over an area populated by more than one million people.

The institute, which will be located at the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton, aims to link a number of organisations with complementary strengths, skills and expertise to create an environment where leading public health researchers can exchange ideas and share facilities.

"I hope we can drive the agenda on public health, and health services research, in Australia well into the 21st century."

One of Australia’s leading public health researchers, Professor Christopher Silaghi, has been appointed director of the new institute. Formerly head of the Department of Evidence-Based Care and General Practice at Fliinders Medical Centre in South Australia, he took up his appointment at the institute this month.

According to Professor Silaghi, the organisation and delivery of public health care both in Australia and internationally is undergoing rapid change.

"Increasingly, we are being made aware that we live in an environment where both the demands for health care and the costs of health care are increasing. More and more, the emphasis is being placed on keeping the population healthy and minimising the risk and harm caused by illness, accidents or lifestyle," he said.

"In addition, our large hospitals are being seen as shrinking high-technology facilities, where patients spend the minimum time before having the remainder of their care delivered in general practices or community health centres. We need to develop effective and efficient ways of providing high-quality services in such an environment.

"There is a great need for national debate and creative solutions to these issues. The establishment of the institute will create a critical mass of intellect and expertise from a broad range of public health and health services researchers. I hope we can drive the agenda on public health, and health services research, in Australia well into the 21st century."

As well, the institute will play a key role in the development of undergraduate and postgraduate medical programs at Monash University and internationally. It will also provide advice to governments on public health and health services policy.

The core groups of the institute:

Monash University
- Centre for Population Health Research, led by Professor Kerrie O’Dea
- Centre for Medical Informatics, led by Associate Professor Eranko Cokic
- The Health Economics Unit, led by Professor Jeff Richardson
- Centre for Graduate Studies in Clinical Nursing, led by Ms Annie Nolan
- Southern Health Care Network
- Centre for Clinical Effectiveness, led by Associate Professor Jeremy Anderson

Other participants:
- Monash University’s Institute of Reproduction and Development
- Monash University Accident Research Centre

Music has no borders

BY COREY NASSAIU

While English is sometimes referred to as the global language, it appears the language of music is more than qualified to join its ranks.

Monash University senior lecturer Andre de Quadros recently had the honour of conducting the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra as part of its 'Music has no borders' series.

The overnight performance, which was broadcast internationally by Radio Rusia, is likely to be followed by a CD release jointly sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Monash University.

Mr de Quadros said few academicians had the opportunity to work with a major European orchestra of this calibre.

"One of the most exciting things about conducting overseas is getting the chance to work with an orchestra where a communication barrier exists with the spoken word but not with the music," he said.

Mr de Quadros has also conducted chamber, string and symphony orchestras and choirs in India, Belgium, the UK, Scandinavia, Canada, the US, Germany and Indonesia.
Teaching values - what makes an outstanding teacher?

**Computer science lecturer at Monash University**

Professor Angela Carbone is the recent winner of the Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year Award. Here she explains why good teaching is much more than simply imparting facts.

**OPINION**

More than 3000 students entered a national competition in which they had to write in 25 words or less: "What makes a good university teacher?"

According to the winner, Tan Harrington, "A good university teacher includes who, after decades of teaching, education and years of experience, knows more than ever that they are still a student". Although this coincides with my own teaching values, I would go a step further and say that an effective teacher must always improve their craft.

Good teaching involves making links between areas of knowledge and the real world, and making multiple links between different aspects of the course. Good university teachers assist students in their learning by creating an environment of trust, where students can interact with their peers so that their misconceptions can be addressed as early as possible.

Good teachers ensure that students of all abilities are stimulated to learn and that their learning goes beyond memorising. They help students construct their understanding by building on the knowledge they bring into learning situations. And they work at enhancing understanding by actively engaging students in many forms of development in each student a sense of responsibility for their learning.

Good teaching requires an awareness, and a sensitivity, to the needs of all students. This awareness is usually achieved through good questions in lectures, active participation of students, and actively involving them. Good teaching involves understanding the concerns beyond the classroom, initiating improvements to the broader curriculum, with a constant review and evaluation of the effectiveness of their methods, products and schemes.

For me, this has led to carrying research, investigation of sensitive issues, and a continual engagement in scholarly activities to disseminate innovations and insights that will promote quality learning outcomes.

How do teachers search for ideas and inspiration? A good starting point for new teachers might include a graduate certificate in higher education. This type of course has been found by the Centre for Higher Education Development at Monash and is designed to assist university teachers to develop their understandings of teaching and learning, and to acquire knowledge and skills to advance their professional teaching practice.

Another way is to stay in touch with the students. Apart from the informal discussions I have with my students about the course and my teaching, I use the Monash Questionnaire Series on Teaching to look for ideas to improve my teaching.

Collaboration is also very useful. Academics often collaborate with colleagues and experts in their field of research, and teaching should not be different. In 1986, academics in Monash's Faculty of Information Technology collaborated with academics in the Faculty of Education to improve the quality of teaching and student learning in introductory programming. This collaboration, which involved working closely with the students, the tutors and the lecturers, led to a number of initiatives.

"The biggest challenge ... is to produce quality teaching while maintaining high-quality research."

Joining professional educational organisations in their teaching disciplines is another way to keep the ideas flowing. Last year, Monash's School of Computer Science and Software Engineering established the Computing Education Research Group. This group is working towards producing a set of teaching resources for Java programming to be used across many subjects, independent of delivery mode. Most members belong to professional educational organisations in IT, such as the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, Australian Computer Science Education and the Association for the Advancement of Computer Education.

Participating in conferences and workshops that discuss ways and implement plans to improve student learning is also helpful. Monash University has developed a five-year plan titled Leading the Way. Part of the plan includes the Learning and Teaching Operational Plan, in which many academics are active members in various working parties. One of the working parties involves building a database of new educational technologies that are being applied in tertiary teaching. I hope many academics tap into the database to explore if possible educational technologies available to them, and that these technologies inspire their teaching.

With the increasing responsibilities expected from academics, the biggest challenge facing university academics is to produce quality teaching while maintaining high-quality research. Producing quality research usually takes priority because that is where the academic's interests lie. As well, promotion has usually been based on research output, even though this may go against the university's policy.

Achieving quality teaching will be particularly challenging for many university teachers as we step into an era in which academics are encouraged to use innovative approaches to teaching, and are rewarded on using new educational technologies to create a student-centred flexible learning environment.

**Agfa-Monash in new partnership**

Monash University has signed an agreement with Agfa-Gevaert which will see the university become an international training centre for radiographers.

Under a deal signed last month, the company will provide state-of-the-art equipment, including Agfa-developed technology, to Monash's Radiography and Medical Imaging department to equip it as a training and evaluation centre.

The agreement also involves the joint creation of a training course to be delivered by Monash.

As well, Agfa will offer scholarships and take part in joint marketing activities to promote the Monash programs in Australia and internationally.

The Belgian-based Agfa-Gevaert Group is a major manufacturer of imaging products and systems with annual sales of 8 billion.

Monash wins Telstra training deal

Monash University has won a tender to provide short courses for Telstra staff this year.

The Centre for Telecommunication and Information Engineering, in the Engineering Faculty, will run the courses in Sydney and Melbourne.

They will cover subjects ranging from data communications to Internet technology.

**Get ready to take the plunge**

Sink or swim - that's the message of the State Government around water this summer.

You've never too young to take the plunge, as this little swimmer, caught on camera recently at the Doug Ellis pool, is happy to demonstrate.

And tying in with the government's water safety campaign, the Monash University Sports and Recreation Association is continuing its successful Learn to Swim program over the summer months.

Swimming lessons are being held at the Doug Ellis Swimming Pool at the Clayton campus for children and adults of all ages.

For more information contact the service pool on (03) 9905 4113 or check the website at www.monash.edu/au/usa/melong/conferences.htm
Most students who enrol for women’s studies courses see them as having a direct link to their career plans, according to a new Monash University research.

And most of those questioned indicated that they would prefer mainstream employment to jobs in areas such as women’s organisations.

The pilot survey of students enrolling in women’s studies programs at Monash, Deakin and Grange universities was conducted by Dr Derrine Caldbert and Dr Maryanne Devor from Monash’s Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research.

According to Dr Devor, the survey findings help dispel some of the myths about women’s studies and perceptions of employability.

“We wanted to learn what students viewed their environment in vocational terms and how directly they perceived the skills and knowledge gained in their courses relating to their career plans,” she said.

The survey found that while most students viewed the first three months of a pilot program as being of great interest and an interest in women’s studies, pointing to its role in developing personal qualities such as self-confidence.

For Dr Caldbert and Dr Devor, this was one of the survey’s most interesting findings.

The researchers confirmed that women’s studies helps students develop those all-important transferable skills like confidence, communication and interpersonal skills, they said. “Research in Australia and overseas suggest that these skills often play a bigger role in determining graduates’ employment success than the knowledge gained through their majors.”

The survey is the first phase of a longer-term project looking at women’s careers, study plans and aspirations.

The next stage involves surveying employers and interviewing career counselors, personnel managers and recruitment officers to determine levels of awareness and acceptance of women’s studies.

Most students indicated that they expected to meet varying degrees of interest and buzz in the recruitment process,” Dr Caldbert and Dr Devor said. “So we need to find out more about what happens to our students when they reach the process.”

The project has sparked interest internationally. The researchers have already contributed to journals and books in Canada and the US and this semester will present papers in Europe and Hong Kong.

“The international interest is very interesting because we’re adding an important comparative strand to the research in 2000,” she said.

The researchers have been able to draw conclusions from the pilot program and the need for follow-up research and further evaluation of the pilot program to a steering committee, appointed by the Victorian Health Minister, Mr Bob Katter, to oversee the project.

Professor John McNeil, of the Epidemiology department, said fire-fighters trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), oxygen therapy and defibrillation were being trained to deal with cardiac arrests in patients who suffer cardiac arrest.

“Firefighters were first on the scene in 53 per cent (79) of the cases, with ambulance paramedics arriving first or simultaneously in 38 cases. Professor McNeil said the two organisations were working well together.

"In the first three months, fire-fighters were not required to deliver CPR to a patient; however, they provided oxygen therapy to 39 per cent of the patients, and in 71 per cent of cases they provided oxygen therapy and CPR, plus cardiac monitoring with the defibrillator,” he said.

As a result, the condition of a number of patients improved, and follow-up is progressing to determine whether there has been any resulting improvement in health outcome.

Early results of the study have revealed that delays in summoning emergency services to collapsed patients are relatively common. "This emphasizes the importance of the first steps in the Chain of Survival (early access to ambulance via 000 and early CPR) to give patients the best chance of survival from cardiac arrest," Professor McNeil said.

He said it was too early and the numbers were too small to draw any significant conclusions. However, the interim results suggest people are not identifying the heart attack quickly enough and are not accessing CPR quickly enough for the medical help to arrive in time to be effective. "The survey was also significantly directed at large projects between the FPNI members, with each doing a portion of the work simultaneously. "We also wanted to push the technology forward, and to do this we needed a place where academics, industry and postgraduate students could link together. "The virtual laboratory can be found at http://fluid.power.net

The project’s victory was double sweet for Dr O’Sullivan, who had never entered competitively before and had only taken up debating three years ago when she began her studies at Monash. "Before the final we were both really nervous, but it was an amazing sense of calm that descended on us about 20 minutes before the motion was released,” she said.

"It was incredibly exhilarating, and we felt that we’d done a lot of hard work to get to the grand final. It was a real honour to be speaking in front of all our peers and a couple of hundred people from the international community.

Andrew Phillips was a member of a Monash team which won the prestigious Edinburgh International Tournament last year and reached the semi-finals of the 1998 world championships. "In true Monash Debating Club style, the pin is in to share their world championship experiences with the younger, less experienced members of the club when it resumes this year. According to O’Sullivan, she and Phillips partly owe their success to the atmosphere of "love and nurturing" that exists in the club.

"The club runs an extensive training program, where the emphasis is on enthusiasm and learning, not on winning,” she said. "Experienced and non-experienced debaters are piled up so that younger debaters can learn from their peers.

Monash has a strong debating tradition, with teams reaching the final stages of the world championships for the past four years and winning the Australasian titles over three consecutive years.

Phillips said the Monash team would defend their world championship title next year, "purely for the joy of debating".
Music history in the making — the Indonesian connection

BY BRINDA HARDIE

When musicologist Professor Margaret Kartomi encountered the Gamelan Digid, she knew it was rare, but never imagined the extent of its historic significance.

Since this rare collection of Javanese instruments, which is actually a traditional Indonesian orchestra or gamelan, was transferred into live performance in 1993, it has blossomed into a major attraction. In less than 20 years, she has turned its origins to a New Guinea prison of war camp and discovered an Australian link.

"Now that we know more about its history, the Gamelan Digid has become as much a historical artifact as a rare and important collection of musical instruments," said Professor Kartomi, the head of Musicology in Monash University's Music department, where the instruments gamelan has been archived since 1977.

"There are many gamelans in existence in areas ranging from Javanese musical traditions in Indonesia and Malaysia, including a contemporary one housed at Monash, but the Gamelan Digid is the only one of its kind in the world that we know about. It is in a very unique and historically significant collection of Javanese and Indonesian and Australian music at the time.

"The result of Professor Kartomi's work, the music department has secured funding from the Australian Indonesia Institute, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, to conserve and exhibit the 39-year-old Gamelan Digid.

In collaboration with colleagues from the University of Melbourne as well as Indonesian and Australian gamelan experts, a research team led by Professor Kartomi will restore the wood, metal and glazes of the 19 gamelan instruments and stabilise and fortify them for future use.

Once the gamelan is restored, the plan is to exhibit it in several Australian capital cities and in Jakarta. And Professor Kartomi is designing its restoration and history in a major study, which she hopes to publish this year through the Indonesian Arts Society.

In what reads like a script for a major motion picture, the story of the Gamelan Digid began in 1977, when the Museum of Victoria called upon Professor Kartomi to identify the unusual collection of handmade musical instruments found in its basement.

A noted musicologist and Indonesian specialist, Professor Kartomi said she immediately recognised the 39 pieces as part of a traditional Javanese gamelan, and agreed for it to be transferred into her care.

She was rewarded and intrigued by the simplicity and ingenuity of its design — constructed from mass-produced materials, which were unlike anything she had seen before.

The instruments were set in a reversed pattern of frames and sound boxes — some made from discarded doors and parts of buildings, but others were uniquely crafted, which are still visible today. Most of the instruments, such as gongs and drums, were made from recycled and junked wood, each skillfully beaten and tuned to a distinctive high-pitched gamelan sound.

Drawing on her own research and a network of ex-Digitel prisoners and academic colleagues, Professor Kartomi traced the gamelan to the Tanah Merah (Red Earth) camp for Japanese political prisoners situated on the upper reaches of the Dijal River in central New Guinea in the then Dutch Netherlands East Indies.

Professor Kartomi estimates the prisoners built the gamelan over a 10-month period under the supervision of a political prisoner, Postapuranewadi, an expert gamelan maker and musician from Surakarta in Central Java.

"He had been well-known gamelan maker and musician in Java before being deported and was remembered by many inmates at Digid for his musically skills."

The gamelan... served as a unifying symbol... and was probably their only real source of comfort and 'escape'.

The gamelan, she believed, served as a unifying symbol of the prisoners' national pride and was probably their only real source of comfort and 'escape'.

Despite the gamelan’s fragility, Professor Kartomi said, the sound and stability of most of the instruments were remarkably good after 70 years, reflecting the skill of the Japanese Prisoner of War. Postapuranewadi and the other music classes.

Surprisingly, while no two gamelan are exactly alike, each closely resembles that of Monash's own gamelan.

Through her investigations, Professor Kartomi found the Gamelan Digid had arrived, safely packed, in Australia in 1993 where the Dutch brought their Javanese prisoners to this country during the Japanese invasion of Indonesia.

The prisoners and their gamelan were later transported by train to Cown, Australia's main prisoner-of-war camp in New Guinea. At the time, Professor Kartomi said, the credited Dutch had misled the Australian Government into believing that the Indonesians were pro-Japanese prisoners.

However, she said, the ex-Digitel prisoners had begun their own political campaign. "It started on the train journey through Sydney to Cown, when some of the prisoners were believed to have thrown a letter from the window which explained that they were not pro-Japanese. Somewhere, their letter found its way into the hands of the Australian Railway Workers Union," she said.

After only a few months, the prisoners were released from Cown and transferred to Melbourne with their gamelan.

"Melbourne's Indonesian community provided support for the political activities of the former prisoners who, working alongside unionists and the Communist Party of Australia, had become freedom fighters for Indonesia's independence," Professor Kartomi said.

Some of the gamelan musicians were housed, at the expense of the Dutch, in the Indonesian House of the Hotel Metropole, at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth streets, in Melbourne, where they presented regular Friday night ball shows of Javanese gamelan music, dance and drama.

After Indonesia achieved independence in 1945, some of the Digitel played players returned home, but they left the gamelan behind.

Professor Kartomi said there were still many unanswered questions about the Gamelan Digid.

"Until we uncover more of the clues, we can only speculate that it was a way of keeping the prisoners occupied as well as a means of keeping the Dutch entertained."