

## Pink power in Khayelitsha

*“Pink is the best colour in the universe...”*

Well, at least that’s how I view things. Fortunately, there is a worthy pink campaign that happens every October: Breast Cancer Awareness month. UCT has embraced this whole-heartedly, as is evidenced by the sudden pinkness of its website.

We are a little pink UCT satellite, operating out of Khayelitsha. Under Professor Lynette Denny, we do cervical cancer and HPV vaccine research. We also offer a colposcopy service to the local community.

Although breasts are somewhat north of our area of concern, they are fundamental symbols of “woman-ness”, and we decided to nuzzle up to them and conduct an awareness campaign for the day hospital from which we operate. The few nurses who could be spared from their clinical duties in this busy clinic, joined us as we wheeled around our make-shift mobile “roadshow”.

Our caravan consisted of our sister-in-charge, the pap smear nurse, the health promotion sister, other nurses, and me - the “token *mlungu*”.

We got Xhosa pamphlets from CANSA, and made posters on general awareness, and how to do the breast self-examination. We used a stitch tray trolley, jazzed it up in pink, and the *piece de résistance* was my wire art woman’s torso, dressed in a pink sequinned bra. Pink helium balloons tied to the trolley heralded our arrival as we moved through



**Breast cancer awareness champions: W. Mdalnkoma, Dr Chivaugn Gordon, X. Tom, Nurse N. Samson, Nurse N. Ndevu and Sr Phila Mawu (Sister-in-charge, KCCSP) with the pink trolley that caused all the fuss at the Khayelitsha Cervical Cancer Screening Project.**

different areas around the clinic.

Sr Mawu gave a 10-minute presentation at each stop, and I must say that the crowds (women *and* men) were riveted... after all, it’s not every day a horde of pink women with a pink sequinned bra arrive to talk about BREASTS! Everyone was made to practise the examination on themselves, after which questions were answered. There was much

crowd participation!

The entire exercise cost R60, a couple of hours, and a raid of our wardrobes for pink clothing. Perhaps we can inspire other clinics to do the same – saving lives, one small, pink campaign at a time!”

*Dr Chivaugn Gordon,  
Sub-investigator, Khayelitsha Cervical Cancer  
Screening Project*

### DEANERY CORNER: Shaping the Faculty and transforming lives—Dr Reno Morar

Three recent experiences have given me a peek into the ‘transformation world’ of our Faculty.

The recent exhibition of photographs highlighting the health and human rights abuses of our past and documenting the anti-apartheid struggles of health workers is a timely reminder of ‘the way things were’ not too long ago. Yet, this stands in contrast to the very noble intentions and aspirations exposed in the Faculty Charter and Faculty oath, which must serve as a timely reminder of ‘the way things are to be’. Realising the aspiration of our Faculty Charter will be about **transforming lives**. The recent hosting of the Social Accountability of Medical and Health Sciences Education Workshop here at the

Faculty represents yet another opportunity to transform. Defining a set of feasible indicators of social accountability for use by health science faculties in South Africa that could be used for monitoring and evaluation of institutions, faculties and programmes within our context are transformative.

The recent College of Fellows’ Young Researchers Award given to Dr. Elmi Muller for her work in renal transplantation with HIV-positive persons highlighted a contribution to yet another major transformative achievement. In late 2008, the renal transplant unit at Groote Schuur transplanted a kidney from an HIV-infected deceased donor into an HIV-infected recipient. Dr. Muller’s work was a landmark in transplantation medicine as it

represented the first time an HIV-infected organ had been transplanted into an HIV-infected patient anywhere in the world. This pioneering work is, too, about **transforming lives**.

The Annual Student Mentoring Programme Function, in which recognition is given to second- and third-year students in the Faculty who volunteer to mentor first-year students, is yet another peek into our transformation world. It is an immense privilege to be ‘in relationship’ with another in a structured programme designed to support fellow students. Peer and student mentoring is about **transforming lives**. May this Faculty long continue to transform and may many, many more ‘transforming lives’ stories be told ....

# Double-header at FHS as Meissner and Sturrock deliver inaugurals

It was a double-header at the Faculty of Health Sciences on 22 September when Professors Peter Meissner and Ed Sturrock delivered their inaugural lectures. The lectures were dedicated to the memory of Emeritus Professor Ralph Kirsch, a mentor and friend to both.

In his welcome address vice-chancellor Dr Max Price commented: "This is the first time I've attended a double act!"

The reason for this unprecedented double feature was that Meissner and Sturrock's career paths have intertwined throughout their careers, culminating in their appointments as professors in the Division of Medical Biochemistry in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences.

Using *The Lord of the Rings* as an analogy, Meissner gave a basic introduction to the colourful world of porphyrin rings and the genetic mutations that have formed the foundation of his work. He submitted that this is the "one ring that rules them all!" Much of his work has revolved around the R59W mutation that leads to Variegate Porphyria, which is uniquely common in the South African population, with the founder gene having been traced back to 1688, with the arrival of Dutch orphan girl who had come to Cape Town to marry a farmer of Dutch origin.

One of his closing messages was to appeal for continued study of rare diseases, emphasising that even if a disease is not common, it is worthy of study and provides unique insight into complex biological systems. Further, scientists working in such studies are able to contribute directly to the well-being of these patients and their families.

Both young academics found themselves under the wing of Emeritus Professor Wieland Gevers and in the laboratory of the late Emeritus Professor Ralph Kirsch, studying the ring that would bind their careers - the porphyrin ring, that forms the basis of so many chemical reactions

in the body that are essential to life.

From the Porphyria Laboratory, their paths diverged a little, as Meissner spent some time at the University of Georgia as a visiting Fellow, while Sturrock accepted a Postdoctoral Fellowship at Harvard.

Their interests had also diverged to a degree at this point, as Meissner continued his study of

porphyria, a passion which developed at the tender age of seven, when he acted as his mother's unpaid field research assistant. Doreen Meissner was a research nurse in



Prof Peter Meissner.

Professor Lennox Eales' laboratory, and then young Meissner accompanied her on visits to the community to recruit porphyria sufferers for the laboratory.

Sturrock, on the other hand, had become interested in the structure and function of angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE), an enzyme that plays a key role in blood pressure control and which led to his interest in drugs to treat cardiovascular disease, particularly for hypertension. Following the completion of his PhD, Sturrock went to the Centre for Biochemical and Biophysical Sciences and Medicine at Harvard Medical School where he



Prof Ed Sturrock.

began work on ACE, the protein that has occupied the last 17 years of his life.

The importance of drug discoveries such as ACE inhibitors was brought into a sharper focus for Sturrock recently, following news of his sister's stroke at the age of 53. He described hypertension as one of the greatest public health challenges of the 21st century, affecting 26% of the world's adult population. It is expected to increase to 30% in the next 10 to 15 years.

Speaking about the challenges for treating hypertension, he pointed out that the faculty's own Professor Lionel Opie, an A-rated researcher, believes that there is no need for new drugs to treat hypertension, and that it is often possible to achieve optimal results with a combination of existing drugs.

Other clinicians and professionals in the pharmaceutical industry believe that newer drugs are needed as there are patients who still do not reach their BP goal with current drugs. Presently, one of the important challenges for treating hypertension is polypharmacy or the use of multiple medications by a patient. One of the ways in which this challenge is being addressed is the introduction of the polypill - a single pill that contains four drugs (Aspirin, a statin or cholesterol-lowering drug and two blood pressure-lowering drugs). This

approach could also have a significant effect on the burden of cardiovascular disease in developing countries because they are all inexpensive generic drugs.

Meissner returned to the Liver Research Centre in 1993 and Sturrock joined him in 1997. Both were appointed Wellcome Trust International Senior Research Fellows, Meissner in 1997, and Sturrock in 2004. Meissner was also appointed a Fellow of the University of Cape Town in 2005.

## Open Educational Resources Wiki for health

(<http://tinyurl.com/healthOERWiki>)

Open Educational Resources (OER) are defined as "educational materials and resources offered freely and openly for anyone to use and under some licenses to re-mix, improve and redistribute" (<http://OpenContent.uct.ac.za>).

Open educational resources include:

- Learning content: full courses, course materials, content modules, learning objects, collections, and journals.
- Tools: Software to support the creation, delivery, use and improvement of open

learning content including searching and organization of content, content and learning management systems, content development tools, and on-line learning communities.

- Implementation resources: Intellectual property licenses to promote open publishing of materials, design-principles, and localization of content.

With this in mind, the Health OER Wiki is a space for learners and faculty staff to locate available OER currently online. This extensive open repository features local and international

links that offer a wide variety of learning materials.

This space is open to contributions from other users, please let us know if you found anything you would like us to include: [HealthOER@uct.ac.za](mailto:HealthOER@uct.ac.za). Besides the obvious intellectual capital value of such a space, the aim of the Health OER team is to make this wiki sustainable, based on the contributions from those who wish to increase its impact and functionality.

Gillian Stevens

# Apartheid health exhibition for Biko Day

The Steve Biko Memorial exhibition, currently on show at UCT's Faculty of Health Sciences, will likely elicit disturbing memories for many South Africans born before 1994. For younger viewers, the exhibition reflects just how far apartheid affected the provision of health care in South Africa.

On loan from the Wits University-based Adler Museum and presented by the faculty's Transformation Portfolio in commemoration of Black Consciousness Movement leader Steve Biko's death, the poster exhibition uses photographs, news articles and historical information to explore the interplay between apartheid, health and health care, and draws out some implications for the present and the future. Many of the ethical issues that confronted health professionals under apartheid still challenge them in different guises in the 21st century.

Vice-chancellor, Dr Max Price noted that the exhibition was created while he was a Dean of the Health Sciences Faculty at Wits and out of a realisation that the reality of apartheid remains foreign to many black and white students born after the release of Nelson Mandela. The show helps them to understand the current status of health care - and what needs to be done to change the situation.

Price suggested the show becomes compulsory viewing for health sciences



Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price, points out a familiar face to Prof Denver Hendricks, Prof Marian Jacobs (Dean) and Roshan Galvaan.

students. Among the themes is a story of the origins of the inequalities that existed in the provision of health care in South Africa, how apartheid affected health care, the way health became a vehicle for the anti-apartheid movement locally and abroad, the abuse of human rights by doctors, and the ambiguous roles of academics at certain medical schools and health science faculties.

"Some academics recognised that apartheid was wrong but were unable to practice what they believed in," Price noted.

Professor Marian Jacobs, Dean of the Health Sciences Faculty, reminded staff and students that the struggle is not over, and challenged them to share ideas on what more needs to be done in the future.

*Daily News*

# Students talk admissions

Students spoke out to the media about UCT's controversial admissions policy at a press conference hosted at the Faculty of Health Sciences on 1 October.

Welcoming the media, Faculty Dean Professor Marian Jacobs acknowledged that using race as a proxy for disadvantage in their admissions process had been under the media spotlight recently.

For this reason, she explained, the media had been invited to discuss the issue with senior medical students, who shared their experiences and opinions.

"UCT was the only university I applied to because it was the only university with an admissions policy that gave me a chance to be accepted," said final-year student Marwala Pule, who added that he was the only learner from his 50-strong matric class to make it to university. "Now I'm definitely graduating as a doctor because of the support for students with my background."

Fifth-year student Thadathilankal Jess John said that although UCT plays a huge role in addressing the differences between students, race shouldn't be used exclusively as a proxy for disadvantage.

"Although we use race as a proxy now, we already notice other social factors which should be included, such as family background and income," said Jess.

"There was already a quota system in place for race and gender when I applied," said student leader Allison Powell, "but it has always been a clear and transparent system. It doesn't worry me in any way because I actively understand the reasoning behind it."

Allison also noted that the system allows the university to produce qualified medical practitioners from diverse backgrounds. "I've had to learn Xhosa, but I'm not very good at it, so I might not be the best doctor for a patient who speaks only Xhosa."

Lwando Mpotulo agrees with Powell's last point. "In my community, nurses and teachers were the highest-qualified people. Now UCT is producing doctors who are familiar with this background."

Lwando failed his first semester in first year. "I went through all sorts of support programmes," he says. "After failing I entered the intervention programme, but even before that people were already trying to help me."

"I never feel inferior to my white counterparts," says Lwando. "I was at a disadvantage, but that can be overcome."

Now in his fifth year and on the Dean's Merit List, Vuyane Mhlomi suspects that the admissions policy was the only reason he was accepted by UCT, because his application to Stellenbosch University was rejected.

"This was my first experience of learning

with whites, and the impression I received going into first year was that whites are the top students in the country," he said. "So when my first results came back and they were better than many white students', I was quite shocked!"

Vuyane says that school results are a poor indicator of how a learner will perform at university, but race is still the best indicator of disadvantage. He points out that once accepted, students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds still have to work just as hard, if not harder, than other students to earn their qualifications.

"If not for the admissions policy, students like me would never have made it," he says, "and I think I deserve to be here."

"There is no question that black students are disadvantaged; so right now, race is the major measure," said student Shannon Calloway. "UCT is putting a huge effort into producing graduates who are appropriate for the country, doctors who don't simply accept the norm."

Prof Jacobs agrees. "Our goal is to produce graduates capable of working in primary health care in South Africa who care about human rights and about their integrity."

Prof Jacobs told the media: "The admissions policy is not just aimed at redressing our history, but also our curriculum, in the method and in the places we teach."



# Saluting long service



Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof Marian Jacobs, poses proudly with the 2010 long service awardees. With a collective experience ranging over 265 years, the Faculty is in safe, experienced hands!

At the Long Service Awards ceremony on 5 October, Vice-Chancellor, Dr Max Price said it was unusual and special for people to stay with one employer for a long time in a world where staff often jumped from one career to another. The staffers' long service says something about the university and about themselves, he added.

A total of 78 awardees were honoured for 45, 35, 25 and 15 years of service, and together have clocked up 1 760 years of service.

# Congratulations to ...

... Prof Dan Stein on his appointment as one of two UCT Research Fellows for 2010.

... Dr Jo-Ann Passmore and Dr Elmi Muller, who have been selected as recipients of the College of Fellows Young Researcher Awards.

... The authors of 'The Model of Creativity', Matumo Ramafikeng, Roshan Galvaan, and Professor Lana van Niekerk, who have had their article placed in the Spanish Occupational Therapy Journal "Revista de Terapia Ocupacional".

Conceptual frameworks are the core concepts of occupational therapy thinking used in practice by occupational therapy students, therapists and scientists.

This module offers a foundation of OT practice and understanding OT focused theories, in the training of 3rd year OT students. It is a continuation of what they have covered in 2nd year where they covered generic conceptual frameworks.

The article, translated into Spanish, can be accessed on the journal's website: [www.revistatog.com](http://www.revistatog.com).

... UCT graduate, Errol Norwitz, who was recently appointed Chairman for Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Tufts Medical Centre, Boston.

... Another well-known alumnus, Michael Belfort, who was recently appointed Chairman for Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Baylor College, Texas.

... A group of undergraduate physiotherapy students, who took top three prizes at an Inter-university Research Day.

The South African Physiotherapy Association hosted the annual Intersarsity Research Presentations on Monday 12 October. There were three presentations from each of the three universities: the University of the Western Cape, Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town. UCT took all three top places (with a tie for third place).

**First:** A comparison of the effects of an active warm-up compared to a passive warm-up on muscle power, sprint performance, flexibility and heart rate recovery.

**By:** Alex Scott, Kathleen Fennemore, Aeysha Smith, Tasneem Solomon, Geron Barnes, Nicole Faulmann, Sphelele Sikhakhane and Judy Jordaán (Supervisor: Dr T Burgess).

**Second:** The effectiveness of a CRAC intervention on recovery following muscle damage.

**By:** Bridget Clayton, Susan Hutchison, Bryony McDonald, Robyn Blake, Charlene Marshall, Janine Victor, Carlyn-Rose Richards (Supervisor: Dr T Burgess).

**Third:** An audit of the GSH pain clinic.

**By:** Mitesh Patel, Nicola Brown, Nikki van der Westhuizen, Phillipa-Anne Kirschner, Cynthia Sebata, Samantha Sparg and Gillian Veary (Supervisor: Ms R Parker).

## "Tis the season to say thank-you ..."



As the academic year draws to a close, there are many thank-yous to be said, from dedicated teaching staff to patient bus drivers who ferry the students to their clinics, but it is also important to thank the students and student organizations that enrich the lives of the students of the Faculty of Health Sciences. Two such events took place this month, (top) the recognition of student mentors, and (bottom) acknowledging the dedication of the committee members of the various student societies and bodies..