

New deputy deans take up the reins



The Dean Team recently welcomed Prof Gregory Hussey and Prof Sue Kidson to their new roles as part-time deputy deans. Prof Hussey has the portfolio of Research and Prof Kidson that of Post-graduate Affairs. We wish them everything of the best in their new roles.

DEAN'S CORNER

At the risk of sounding clichéd, it is hard to believe that we are past the half-way mark of the year and are galloping towards final exams, holidays and the silly season.

Taking a leaf from our country's leader, perhaps it's time for a review of the year to date.

We started the year horrified by the stories coming out of Zimbabwe—from the increasing food shortages and rampant inflation to elections marred by violence and incarcerations, and, finally, the breakdown of the public health system in that country.

This brought challenges to us as a university, not only to find ways to support

current Zimbabwean students, but also to try to assist the future doctors of Zimbabwe, particularly when the medical school had to be closed. This would have put enormous strain on the eight South African universities with medical schools, but the university has reopened and students are able to continue their studies.

On the home front, a fire broke out on Table Mountain in March, prompting emergency measures to keep the perimeter of the Faculty buildings adjoining the N2 damp to prevent the spread of the fire and students eagerly speculated about the closure of the campus. Unfortunately for them, city

authorities and several helicopters were able to bring the fire under control.

The next few months were dominated by the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) and the resulting strike by doctors across the country. This brought mixed reactions from both the medical fraternity and public at large. At the time of writing, the offer by government had been accepted by trade unions, with the proviso that areas of concern be addressed.

We apologise for the absence of a July edition and a late August edition as a result of circumstances beyond our control and we look forward to producing the next issue!

TB vaccine on trial

Four month old Janenique Pienaar of Worcester, South Africa, made history on Wednesday, 15 July 2009 when she became the first baby in 80 years to be vaccinated in a proof of concept efficacy trial (Phase IIb) of a candidate TB vaccine.

The candidate vaccine, MVA85A/Aeras-485, is being tested at the TB vaccine research site of the South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative (SATVI), in partnership with Aeras Global TB Vaccine Foundation, the Oxford-Emergent Tuberculosis Consortium Ltd and the Wellcome Trust .

Baby Janenique lives in the Boland, an area with one of the highest rates of TB in the world (1400/100 000) and in which HIV and TB are the main causes of death. Like all South African newborns, she was given the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine at birth to protect her from getting TB. While BCG is known to protect against severe forms of TB in children, it does not appear to protect against lung TB, the main form of TB. BCG itself can also cause disease in HIV-positive infants.

TB has become a major public health problem worldwide, particularly in countries of the South.

Killing 1.7 million people a year, and having infected a third of the world's population, it is also the main cause of death among people living with AIDS.

The urgent search for a new, safe and more effective TB vaccine, for all ages, all types of TB and for those living with HIV, has seen 10 new TB vaccine candidates in clinical trials worldwide, of which SATVI is testing four at its site. SATVI is currently the largest dedicated African TB vaccine research group. Established in 2001, SATVI is conducting groundbreaking TB vaccine research at



its site 120km from Cape Town. It has the infrastructure and capacity to conduct large-scale TB vaccine clinical research, having conducted large-scale epidemiological TB studies in babies and teenagers as well as a Phase IV trial involving almost 12 000 infants.

SATVI has cutting-edge laboratory facilities based at the University of Cape Town, where it conducts immunology studies to measure the body's responses to vaccine candidates. The laboratory also focuses on understanding how our immune systems protect us against TB, which is important information for further TB vaccine development.

- Linda Rhoda

Preventable blindness in the spotlight—Vision 2020

The number of people suffering from visual impairment in the world has come down significantly in the past nine years, but it is up to health-care workers to keep that downward trend going.

So said Professor Colin Cook at his inaugural lecture, *Vision 2020 - The right to sight*, on 22 July.

Cook reported that there were 30 million blind people in 1980, and that number jumped to 38 million and 50 million in 1990 and 2000, respectively. But it has gone down to 37 million by 2009, thanks to Vision 2020.

The Vision 2020 initiative was launched in 1999 by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and the World Health Organisation, for the Global Elimination of Avoidable Blindness. Its

purpose is to eradicate the main causes of visual impairment - cataract, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy - and to give millions of needlessly blind people the right to sight.

"Vision 2020 is having an impact, and it is our responsibility to continue the good work," he said.

Cook drew a bleak picture of the current

situation, saying that the highest burden of blindness is in Africa, the poor hit the hardest. Yet most of these cases are treatable and preventable.

Among the reasons for the persistent problem is the population boom, the ageing of the world

population and inadequate eye-care services for the poor, he explained. Cook said infrastructural and human resource developments, as well as disease control, were key to eliminating blindness. He advised, though, that the process would be like "eating an elephant - piece by piece", and team effort was required. Essential to this would be the establishment of 4 000 programmes around the world, with a chain of training, supervision, and support extending from community level up to the tertiary level.

"One of the greatest

impediments is the lack of human resources in Africa. UCT is strategically well placed to train clinicians who are competent to deal with individual patients and who have a good public health perspective," he said.

- UCT Daily News



Human trials begin for African-developed HIV vaccines

Two HIV vaccines developed by UCT's Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IIDMM) have begun clinical testing at Crossroads in Cape Town, and in Soweto, Johannesburg.

The trial, called SAAVI 102/HVTN 073, is a milestone for South Africa. The country is one of the few developing nations, and the first in Africa, to have developed an HIV vaccine and put it forward for human clinical trials.

The vaccines are the culmination of eight years of research and development involving scientists across South Africa and globally.

Through joint funding from the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative (SAAVI) and the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the trial is being conducted jointly with the HIV Vaccine Trials Network and NIAID, part of the US National Institutes of Health.

The vaccine designs are based on HIV subtype C, the dominant strain circulating in

Southern Africa.

The US arm of the trial has 12 participants, while the South African arm plans to recruit 36 participants at its two sites.

"Reaching this important milestone of

translating our discoveries in the laboratory to testing in humans would not have been possible without the support of a large team of people from UCT, together with national and international collaborations," says Professor Anna-Lise Williamson, leader of the vaccine development team and joint staff member of the IIDMM and the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS).

"An effective vaccine against HIV/AIDS remains a top global health priority, and it is our hope that the evaluation of these vaccines in clinical trial will provide some important answers that will bring us

closer towards this goal."

Medical Research Council president, Dr Anthony Mbewu, hailed the development of the vaccines as a "giant leap" for science and technology in South Africa.



Women's Day in the Faculty

Myths and preconception about perinatal depression were exploded at a talk in commemoration of Women's Day, which was held in the Faculty on Thursday, 6 August 2009.

Dr Bavanisha Vythilingum, a psychiatrist and head of the Division of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry in the Faculty, was the guest speaker, who gave an interesting and entertaining talk on this serious subject. She pointed out that not all depression is "post-natal", hence the use of the term "perinatal", as it can strike at any stage during and after the pregnancy.

She emphasized that depression during and after pregnancy is widespread and should not be stigmatized. She drew on the example of film star Brooke Shields, whose battle with postnatal depression was made public and went a long way towards "normalizing" the "baby blues".

Dr Vythilingum also pointed out that mothers who do suffer from depression are often concerned that they are not adequate mothers. Research shows that this is not the case, in many instances their mothering skills are adequate, if not superior, but it is the fear of "falling short of perfection" that causes the depression.

She ended by saying that women with perinatal depression need support from their family and friends in order to recover.

UpToDate is available at FHS

The Faculty of Health Sciences has purchased a one year subscription of the UpToDate online clinical resource in support of clinical teaching and training.

This resource is available via: <http://uptodate.med.uct.ac.za> and requires a valid UCT Staff or Student number and password for access.

To access the resource:

1. Enter the above URL in a web browser.
2. If prompted with a security warning about the site certificate click to accept the certificate permanently.
3. Enter your Staff or Student number and your password. This will be the same password as used to access your UCT email. Use all 8 characters of your staff number.
4. If you are successfully authenticated you will be redirected to the UpToDate site. You will need to accept the UpToDate licence agreement before gaining access to the database.

Please report problems accessing UpToDate via email to rodger.duffett@uct.ac.za.



Some of the awardees at the 2009 Discovery Awards — look out for the UCT folk!

Faculty staffers scoop Discovery Awards

Annually the Discovery Foundation hosts The Discovery Foundation Awards Programme, and this year UCT made us proud. These awards are given in recognition of the efforts of medical experts in addressing areas of greatest need in South Africa's healthcare sector. The event took place on June 11, 2009. The Discovery Foundation made 22 awards in the three categories aimed at benefiting academic medicine, specialist resources and healthcare service delivery, innovation and training.

The Discovery Foundation Academic

Fellowship Award (*In search of excellence through knowledge*) UCT received five of the 11 Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship Awards - Dr Ashley Chin, Dr Hoosain Khalfey, Dr Ntobeko Ntusi, Dr Shaheen Pandie and Dr Gregory Symons.

Discovery Foundation Sub-specialist Award (*Encouraging our leading experts*) UCT received two of the nine Discovery Foundation Sub-specialist Awards - Division of Gastroenterology and Division of Infectious Diseases.

Discovery Foundation Excellence Award

(*Service delivery, training and innovation*) UCT received the Discovery Foundation Excellence Award – Department of Medicine, Groote Schuur Hospital.

This award will help to provide a support structure for training academic clinicians through research. The increasing numbers of Discovery Fellows and other research trainees has clearly shown the need to set up a central clinical support unit to ensure a lasting expansion of the work of producing academic clinicians.

- Lameez Mohd

US\$1.2 million for Prof Jeebhay's team

Assoc. Prof Mohamed Jeebhay from the Centre for Occupational and Health Research (COEHR) in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine and colleagues from the University of Michigan, KwaZulu-Natal and Stellenbosch were recently awarded the Millennium Promise Award worth 1.2 million dollars from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the USA.

The grant will address research and research training in Southern Africa in non-communicable chronic respiratory diseases (COPD, adult and pediatric asthma, pneumoconioses) in relation to environmental, occupational, lifestyle and genetic and epigenetic factors.

Prof Jeebhay and his colleagues aim to provide training opportunities to professionals in the clinical and public health sciences, so as to develop research training capacity of a multidisciplinary team of public health, laboratory and clinical health science researchers to focus on chronic lung diseases. In this way they hope to build Centres of



Excellence in several SADC countries, including Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique while ensuring that mid-level South African researchers and clinicians acquire advanced skills in specific areas.

This is the second NIH-funded coup for Prof Jeebhay and his colleagues after they received the Fogarty International Center (FIC) International Research and Training in Environmental and Occupational Health (ITREOH) grant a year ago.

Tai Chi classes on campus

Four months ago a group of UCT staff in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine set up lunchtime Tai Chi classes at the Mac Club.

The idea was to create an opportunity for academics and other UCT staff to get out of their heads and away from their computers and take part in gentle physical exercise. Tai Chi, originally a martial art developed in ancient China, is a moving meditation that reduces stress, strengthens muscles and joints, and improves balance and coordination.

Classes are held once a week on Tuesdays from 12.45 to 1.45 at the Mac Club in the Barnard Fuller building on Medical Campus. Classes are run by Richard Jordi who works in the Industrial Health Resource Group at UCT. Richard has practised Tai Chi for 13 years. Anyone who is interested in taking part in the Tuesday lunchtime Tai Chi class should contact Richard at Richard.Jordi@uct.ac.za.

Publication of the Month

South Africa has a high enrolment rate for grades 1 – 9, but simply being enrolled in school is not enough to ensure meaningful access to education, or meaningful learning outcomes.

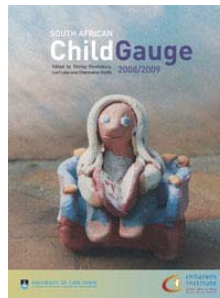
This is one of the key issues highlighted in the *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009*, an annual review of the situation of children in the country, which was released on 18 June 2009 by the Children's Institute (CI).

Focusing on the theme of 'meaningful access to basic education', the publication reflects on a range of factors that can enable or hamper children's access to and progress through school.

Meaningful access to

education, said the CI's Prof Shirley Pendlebury, requires among other things access to well-conceived text books and other learning materials; competent and prepared teachers who are able to use a range of appropriate classroom practices; a curriculum that builds a strong basis in the foundation phase; teaching facilities and resources such as laboratories and well-stocked libraries; and a safe and supportive environment.

"Ninety-six percent of children of compulsory school age



are enrolled in school, yet poor national averages for language and mathematics in grades 3 and 6 show that most learners do not acquire the skills and understanding that give substance to the right to education."

Only 36% of grade 3 learners passed the literacy and 35% the numeracy assessments in 2007, according to the preliminary findings.

The situation for grade 6 learners is not any better: the national average for language of literacy teaching was 38%, and for mathematics only 27%.

A Human Sciences Research

Council (HSRC) study shows that the development of literacy is hampered by children not reading enough; and the lack of specific and good literacy instruction, linked to the qualification of teachers and the quality of their training.

The *South African Child Gauge* monitors the realisation of children's rights and is published annually by the Children's Institute, UCT. Key features include: legislative developments affecting children; child-centred data tracking children's access to social assistance, education, housing, health and other services; and a series of essays to inform, focus and sometimes direct national dialogue and debate.

SAAHE Conference strikes the right note

The second National Conference of the South African Association of Health Educationalists (SAAHE) was held on the UCT Medical Campus from 2nd to 4th July 2009.

The Western Cape region of SAAHE has been the most active of the provinces in initiating first regional, and then last year, a national conference and this initiative resulted in UCT hosting the second national event before the circus moves to Gauteng in 2010.

The conference was attended by more than 150 African delegates and eight overseas visitors from the United Kingdom, the United States and Malaysia. The support from the Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) allowed access for more delegates from the rest of Africa than ever.

The broad topics that were covered during the conference were, assessment, capacity building, staff development, quality assurance, teaching methods especially Problem Based Learning and its variations, ethics, student support, selection of students, electronic and IT use in education, clinical skills training, portfolios etc. There were 72 papers



and 36 posters presented and the standard remarkably high.

There were pre-conference workshops and special interest group meetings the day before the conference started including a delegation from the embryonic Medical School of Namibia due to open in 2010 in Windhoek.

A Health Sciences Faculty Teach-In-For-Teachers was held during this busy educational week and proved to be a resounding success with teachers from all disciplines attending lectures and workshops on the following:

Feedback, How students' learn and why teachers teach, How to lecture and use PowerPoint, Vula and IT, portfolios and clinical teaching.

The evaluation of this event suggests that those attending would like it repeated and extended so this may well become a feature of the UCT educational landscape.

- Athol Kent

Prof Potter on allergies

Allergies are a serious business. So much so that the Health Professions Council of South Africa has just recently greenlit a formal sub-speciality in allergology at UCT, reported Professor Paul Potter in his inaugural lecture, Allergies in South Africa, delivered on 25 June.

Good thing, too. Millions of South Africans - some 30% of the population, in fact - suffer from some form of allergy, be it an early-morning's bout of hay fever or life-threatening anaphylactic shock from a bee sting.

"Allergies are very important in terms of morbidity and quality of life," said Potter, based in UCT's Lung Institute.

And as a contributor to everything from poor sleep to absenteeism, it's also a drain on the economy.

But South and Southern Africa are ideal vantage points from which to observe and study the causes of allergies, said Potter. The regions are home to an array of people, living conditions - from under-developed rural areas to sophisticated first-world-like suburbs - and biomes, so there's plenty of research material.

"Allergology in Africa is not only an important health priority, but Africa is a natural laboratory for studying the factors leading to



the global epidemic of allergy," said Potter.

And that's illustrated in the sweep of research done by scientists at the Lung Institute and elsewhere in South Africa, some of which Potter listed. That work has identified an array of unknown allergens, from grasses, fungi and seafood to ever-present house dust mites, locusts and latex gloves.

Potter recently put the finishing touches to a document for the World Allergy Organisation to standardise, across the globe, medical-student training in allergies. And he is keen to get the word out into the secondary and tertiary health-care sectors.

"There is a need for allergy-people out there."

- Morgan Morris

Monthly Quiz—Win a R100 Exclusive Books voucher

Preparations are in full swing for the FIFA 2010 World Cup. What score did FIFA president, Sepp Blatter give SA on its preparedness to host the event following the conclusion of the Confederations Cup? Send your answers to:

Melanie.jackson@uct.ac.za.

Answer to last month's quiz: Influenza

A virus strains are categorized according to two proteins found on the surface of the virus: hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). All influenza A viruses contain hemagglutinin and neuraminidase, but the structure of these proteins differ from strain to strain due to rapid genetic mutation in the viral genome.

Influenza A virus strains are assigned an H number and an N number based on which forms of these two proteins the strain contains. There are 16 H and 9 N subtypes known in birds, but only H 1, 2 and 3, and N 1 and 2 are commonly found in humans. First with the correct answer was Nicki Fouche, who wins the book voucher.

Faculty mourns two losses

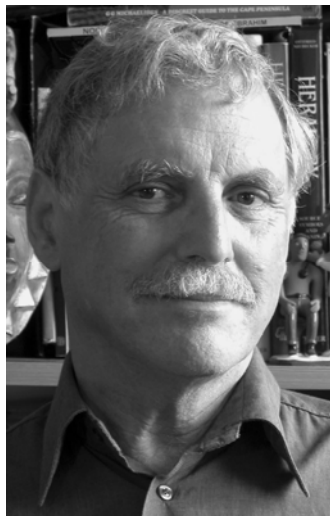
Graham Bresick pays tribute to Cecil Helman

Cecil often visited the Division of Family Medicine when in Cape Town. A family practitioner at heart, he took a keen interest in the development of family medicine at UCT, always willing to offer support and keen to explore opportunities for teaching and research at his Alma Mater.

When we last met we discussed identifying opportunities to collaborate on HIV-related research and planned to explore this further. Sadly, this was not to be.

During Cecil's talk in the MPH module on Behavioural and Anthropological Sciences in Health in 2000, his passion for drawing attention to the importance of understanding patients' socio-cultural context was clear; he noted that the indigent, because of their circumstances, need more frequent visits to gain control over their disease. He called it the 'intensive care' of primary care, noting that in South Africa the opposite is all too often true. It is an important insight that I continue to share with students.

I attended one of Cecil's highly-rated courses on Cross Cultural Primary Care in London in 2002 where I and others had the benefit of the breadth and depth of his knowledge on culture, health and illness. Some of the most interesting discussions were at the lunch tables of his favourite restaurants nearby.



At the South African launch of his book *Suburban Shaman* in July 2004 at a well known bookstore in the southern suburbs Cecil was asked to read a few of his favourite passages. I was surprised at the degree of shyness he displayed in response to the attention and accolades. Although he studied and spent time with peoples of many different cultures, it seems he was nevertheless a private person.

During his sabbatical in Cape Town in 2007, Cecil joined me during a morning session with final year family medicine students at a community clinic where he sat in on consultations. As expected, he offered many interesting insights when we reflected together on the patient

encounters for the morning - as well as a fair number of ideas for research.

Toward the end of his sabbatical he came to see me in my office and reflected on the profound impact being home for an extended period had had on him then even though he had been back many times over the years. He was particularly surprised at the emotional and spiritual impact and seemed to be struggling to make sense of it. While a very experienced anthropologist observer, he was being confronted with the challenge of observing his own responses to the many contradictions he encountered in the country of his birth in transition. I felt very privileged that Cecil felt free to share this with me. He planned to write about it; I don't know whether he did. It seems now that this may have been soon after he was diagnosed with a terminal disease, adding to the intensity of the experience.

I will miss Cecil's visits, insights and passion for understanding the patient's context in order to understand the patient. Thankfully the results of his research and reflections and their importance for health care teaching and practice are recorded in his books. The relevance of his work will stand the test of time.

Dr Graham Bresick
Acting HoD—School of Public Health and Family Medicine



Prof Janet Seggie.

Prof Seggie garners College of Physicians' highest honour

Professor Janet Seggie of UCT's Department of Medicine is the first woman to be elected as the Arthur Landau Lecturer by the Fellows and Councillors of the College of Physicians of South Africa.

This is the highest honour that specialist physicians can bestow on a colleague in South Africa.

Prof Seggie will be required to deliver a lecture at all the medical schools in the country over the next six months. Her lecture, titled *Educating Doctors for Africa: a captivating "alchemy"*, will focus on South Africa's recent MBChB curriculum renewal processes.

"It's a special honour to receive this prestigious award from my peers," said Prof. Seggie. "Arthur Landau was a very special physician and teacher, who took an interest in all of us as we undertook our specialist training as registrars at Groote Schuur Hospital."

The annual travelling lectureship is awarded in honour of Dr Landau, a former president of the College.

The Faculty of Health Sciences is justifiably proud of Prof Seggie's achievement and we look forward to hearing of her successes as she presents her lecture around the country.

- Chris McEvoy

Team player Francois Majoos will be missed

Dr Francois Majoos may have been best known to his students as a respected lecturer, but in South African rugby circles, he was something of an expert in sports medicine, having served on the Medical Committee of SARFU and had been the team doctor for several national rugby squads.

He obtained his MBChB at UCT in 1973 and went on to qualify as a specialist physician with an interest in rheumatology in 1987. Dr Majoos, who had been diagnosed with motor neurone disease, passed away in the early hours of Saturday, 2 May. The same day, the Vodacom Stormers paid tribute to him by observing a moment's silence before the start of the game.

He will be sorely missed by his colleagues, undergraduate and post-graduate students, and, of course, by his patients. The Faculty extends its deepest sympathy to his wife, Edna, and sons, Emlyn and Dylan.



The Vodacom Stormers pay tribute to Dr Francois Majoos before the start of the game against the Waikato Chiefs on Saturday 2 May 2009. Photo courtesy of Carl Fourie.