

Dan Stein Awarded an A-Rating

The National Research Foundation has recently recognised Dan Stein, Head of Psychiatry and Mental Health, with an A-rating, making him the 6th person in the Faculty to earn this distinction. He is now a “researcher who is unequivocally recognised by his peers as a leading international scholar in his field”.

Dan heads up the MRC Research Unit on Anxiety Disorders, located at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town, and is the director of the UCT signature theme on the brain and behaviour.

He has a breadth of knowledge, energy and productivity that are truly inspiring, and his commitment to the highest ideals of scholarship is an example to all young academic clinicians. Congratulations, Dan, on this well-deserved recognition!



Centre for Proteomics and Genomics Research

The Centre for Proteomic and Genomic Research (CPGR) was officially launched by the Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Mosibudi Mangena, on 3 April.



Martin West, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Mosibudi Mangena, Minister of Science and Technology, and Jonathan Blackburn, one of the founders of the CPGR, at the launch function.

The CPGR is an integrated core technology facility, located within the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IIDMM), founded as a not-for-profit organization through a R20m grant provided by the Department of Science and Technology through two of its funding vehicles, the Cape Biotech Trust and PlantBio.

The CPGR’s mission is: (1) to facilitate high quality research in the fields of genomics and proteomics in South Africa through collaborative research initiatives with academia and industry; (2) to enable growth of existing southern African biotech companies into new areas of commercial opportunity through provision of high-quality analytical services; (3) to stimulate new biotech activity through translation of academic re-

search into novel intellectual property and new commercial ventures; and (4) to increase the knowledge-base and the number of suitably trained postgraduate students and postdoctoral scientists.

The CPGR is equipped with high-end mass spectrometers, DNA and protein microarray scanning, high-density gene chip analysis, and real-time polymerase chain reaction technology. Its immediate focus is to improve research capacity for key African diseases such as TB, AIDS, malaria and cancer, as well as in crop science, including the monitoring of genetically modified organisms, biosafety and detection of plant pathogens.

According to managing director Reinhard Hiller, the CPGR stands ready to benefit the entire biotechnology community in South Africa.

Health Technology Innovation

To help address the gaps in provision of diagnostics in resource-poor environments, the Biomedical Engineering Department at Northwestern University (NU) in Chicago and the Healthcare Technology Management Programme at UCT – based within the Department of Human Biology – have established a collaborative partnership which builds on the respective strengths and capabilities of both institutions.



Mladen Poluta, local host, with three professors in biomedical engineering from Northwestern University: David Kelso, Zev Rymer, who gave a lecture on neuro-rehabilitation using robotics, and Matt Glucksberg.

(Continued on page 2)

DEAN’S CORNER

Last week WHO convened conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Alma Ata. Attended by more than 600 participants and ministers from 20 African countries, the conference provided an opportunity for the assembly to reflect on progress with primary health care (PHC) in the region, to exchange best practices, and to consider its future direction.

What relevance did this meeting have for us? This Faculty adopted the PHC approach more than a decade ago and I believe that it is also time for us to reflect on our progress. In particular, the interpretation of the core values

of the PHC approach – of equity and social justice; of community empowerment; and of what constitutes essential and integrated care, among others – bears consideration. The conference emphasised the need to distinguish between issues of *primary level care* services, their resources and infrastructure, on the one hand, and, on the other, the *primary health care approach* – which is comprehensive in both its scope, from health promotion to rehabilitation, as well as its prescription of a health care delivery system covering all levels of care with appropriate referral from the household and community, all the way to the tertiary level services.

It also provided new pointers to components of effective and efficient care, highlighting, among others, the inclusion of traditional health care, health care technology such a telemedicine, essential services, and the role of universities in producing human resources and providing an evidence base for policy and practice.

At a time when the challenges facing us seem overwhelming, a Faculty reflection may provide us with renewed energy to engage with the environment in which we work, and the systems with which we engage, and to map new directions for advancing health equity through the primary health care approach.

Publication of the Month

This month's choice is a paper by Denis Chopera, a PhD student in the laboratory of corresponding author Carolyn Williamson:

Chopera DR, Woodman Z, Mlisana K, Mlotshwa M, Martin DP, Seoighe C, Treurnicht F, de Rosa DA, Hide W, Karim SA, Gray CM, Williamson C (2008) "Transmission of HIV-1 CTL escape variants provides HLA-mismatched recipients with a survival advantage", *PLoS Pathogens*, 4(3): e1000033.

The paper was specially selected by the editors of Public Library of Science (PLOS) who

put out a press release, highlighting the importance of the research. Persons infected with a mutated HIV strain, transmitted from those who have the genetic advantages to control the virus, results in improved survival. The study looked for genetic mutations in the infecting virus in 24 newly infected people in Durban, South Africa.

The study was conducted by CAPRISA (the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa) researchers at the Universities of Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and National Institute of Communicable Diseases.

"Disease progression is determined by a complex interplay between the host and the virus," said team leader Carolyn Williamson. "While the role of host genetics is well established, this study shows that genetic polymorphisms in the transmitted virus can offer survival advantage to a newly infected person. That an interacting network of attenuating mutations may be responsible for better long-term survival could profoundly influence our understanding of the cause and development of HIV. The findings have implications for HIV vaccine design".

Heart of Cape Town Museum

Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the world's first heart transplant, the Heart of Cape Town Museum was launched on 3 December 2007.



You and your overseas visitors can now enjoy a two-hour guided tour of the Museum, located within the Old Groote Schuur Hospital, and learn about the extraordinary chain of events leading up to the historic operation. The tour brings alive the characters of the surgeon, the recipient and the donor.

Open seven days a week, bookings can be made by calling 021 404 1967.

Monthly Quiz

Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu has featured in two of our newsletters in 2008. What is the name of the British university from which he earned both a bachelor's and master's degree, and what was the year that he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace? Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za.

Answer to last month's quiz: The sudden death question asked of Gill Ainslie in the 'Brain of Brains' competition was: What was the capital of New Zealand before Wellington? The answer to the question was: Auckland. Jane Harries was the winner of the R100 book voucher. Well done, Jane!

(Continued from page 1)

As part of the collaboration, a group of NU engineering students together with two biomedical engineering professors, Matt Glucksberg and David Kelso, relocate to Cape Town for 10 weeks each year (this year, 5 of the students are MSc students who will be staying on for a further 3 months). Their full design experience includes exposure to the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts of resource-poor environments as well as healthcare delivery settings.

Two related innovation vehicles offer a new paradigm for the development of healthcare technologies for resource-poor environments by pooling the know-how of partners from academia, donor philanthropy and industry on the one hand, and healthcare delivery and technology management arenas on the other:

The Center for Innovation of Global Health Technologies (CIGHT) was spearheaded by the McCormick School of Engineering and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. In August 2006, CIGHT received a four-year, \$4.9 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to research and develop affordable diagnostic devices for resource-poor environments.

The World Health Imaging Alliance is a not-for-profit corporation created in collaboration between Northwestern University and the University of Cape Town, with partners from the NGO space (notably Rotary International) and industry. WHIA's mission is to advance the availability and use of medical imaging technology to support primary health care delivery in underserved markets in the developing world.

[Mladen Poluta]

Course on Clinical Oncology

The American Society of Clinical Oncology collaborated with local specialists to mount a very successful course on the multidisciplinary management of cancer. More than 180 registrars and young specialists spent the last weekend in April at the Vineyard Hotel's conference centre learning about the most up-to-date methods for treating tumours of the prostate, bladder, kidney, lung, mediastinum and oesophagus.

Co-host of the event, Raymond Abratt, remarked: "We had the great privilege of having Archbishop Desmond Tutu welcome the attendees. He skilfully put the audience in a good frame of mind and talked with candour, dignity and courage of his own illness. He also

made very welcome comments about the spiritual dimension of health care and called on us to make patients whole".



Seen at the course were: Derek Raghavan, Director of the Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center, USA, and co-chair of the event; Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu; Wanda Sheridan, Education Program Manager of the American Society of Clinical Oncology; Raymond Abratt; and Joan Schiller, Director of Medical Oncology, University of Texas, USA .

Happenings in O & G

There have been two big events in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in recent weeks. First of all, Mowbray Maternity hospital was awarded a Gold Medal in the Premier's Special Service Awards. According to head of department Zephne van der Spuy, "I really think that this is testament to what Sue Fawcus has done at Mowbray and how she has turned the situation around there. This is a hospital which is over-worked, understaffed and underfunded and to receive this award says a great deal of the leadership there. I think Sue deserves enormous recognition, obviously together with her neonatology colleagues. She also acts as Medical Superintendent when there is no Medical Superintendent as has been the case this year". To Dr Fawcus and her extraordinary team, we extend our heartiest congratulations!

The second major event is that Mothers to Mothers programme has been awarded a million dollar grant from the Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship. These are granted by the Skoll Foundation in Palo Alto, California for social entrepreneurship projects whose models have been successful. The grant is awarded over three years. This is a tribute to Mitch Besser's efforts and we wish him well with this important project.