

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

NEWSLETTER January 2007

NRF Chairs awarded



Ernesta Meintjies: imaging

Dr Ernesta Meintjies, a senior scientist in the MRC/UCT Medical Imaging Research Unit, has been awarded an NRF Research Chair in Brain Imaging. She has a PhD in nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy from Oregon State University and has extensive expertise and training in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) physics. Her current research is focused in two areas: functional MRI and diffusion tensor imaging studies of brain development in children with fetal alcohol syndrome; and cardiac MRI, using innovative image processing techniques to measure and understand heart function. Her projects are funded by the National Research Foundation from South Africa and the National Institutes of Health from the USA. Dr Meintjies is a key member of the Brain and Behaviour Initiative, one of two research signature themes supported by UCT. Her appointment to the NRF Research Chair in Brain Imaging is timely in view of the recent acquisition of a 3 Tesla MRI scanner, to be located at the University of Stellenbosch's Tygerberg campus, and jointly operated by UCT. [CV]



Iqbal Parker: cancer research

Professor Iqbal Parker, currently the head of the Division of Medical Biochemistry, has been awarded a prestigious research chair in Cancer Biology by the South African National Research Foundation. This award will allow him to continue and expand his work in the area of oesophageal cancer. The chair will focus on several areas of work ranging from epidemiology to molecular biology. Over the past years he has contributed significantly to the development of young scientists in South Africa and this award will allow him to continue this excellent work. We congratulate him on an excellent achievement. [GH]

Research think tank

Under the leadership of the Dean, Professor Marian Jacobs, and arranged by Professor Iqbal Parker, Director of Research Operations, a



Broaden the search. Find someone who can teach the new curriculum, publish in Nature, and write major grant applications

morning workshop was held in December to initiate a discussion around the establishment of a research strategy that will guide the Faculty for the next 5 to 10 years. The facilitator was Professor Kit Vaughan who led discussion on topics which included: governance (for departments, the faculty and the university); communications; priorities; infrastructure (library, information technology, and large ticket laboratory equipment); new initiatives (in particular, signature themes); the NRF Research Chairs; capacity development (creating careers in research); ethics (both human and animal); funding opportunities; finding the balance (in basic vs clinical vs public health research); improving productivity (both in publications and postgraduate students); and transformation (moving beyond diversity). Two important themes emerged: the challenge of creating an environment which encourages a research culture; and the need to plan and fund a clinical research facility with its own infrastructure. [CV]

New ultrasound / echo machine

The World Heart Federation have donated a state-of-the-art Sonosite Micromaxx portable ultrasound/echo machine to the 'Awareness Surveillance Advocacy Prevention' (A.S.A.P.) Project for the Control of Rheumatic Heart Disease in Africa', a project directed by Bongani Mayosi. The portable echo machine will



be used to screen children in school in the Vanguard Population Area (Langa and Bonteheuwel) for the prevalence of rheumatic valve disease. At least 5,000 children in primary and secondary schools will be screened by echocardiography over the next 3 years by the A.S.A.P. team. The Vanguard area has been identified by the World Heart Federation as the first place in Africa that will be used as a demonstration site of best practice in the control of rheumatic heart disease on the continent. The main aim of this ambitious project is to eradicate rheumatic heart disease 'in our lifetime'. [BM]

Chair of Paediatric Surgery

Alastair Miller returns in May to the Red Cross Children's Hospital to assume the Charles FM Saint Chair of Paediatric Surgery. Professor Heinz Rode, the admired previous incumbent, has kindly agreed to remain in the division until then. Alastair Miller is a UCT graduate, and received his paediatric surgical training at the Red Cross Hospital. His interests in paediatric surgery are broad, and his contributions many. A major contribution has been to paediatric liver transplantation, where he leads the field in this country. He returns after holding the chair of Paediatric Surgery at the Birmingham Children's Hospital since January 2004. He has been involved with about 112 liver, 20 kidney and 23 intestinal transplants as well as the full range of paediatric hepato-biliary and pancreatic surgery. Birmingham is one of three referral centres in the UK. As clinical lead he has been exposed to the current climate of intense audit and clinical governance that is the rule in the NHS today.



IAEA Cancer Management Meeting

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2005 was awarded in equal shares to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

and its Director General, Dr. Mohamed El Baradei. The IAEA has decided to use its portion of the prestigious prize to improve cancer management and childhood nutrition in the developing world. Their first venture in December was to host a *School for Cancer Management* in Cape Town. Groote Schuur Hospital and the University of Cape Town



Lionel Louw special advisor to the Premier, Dr Saadiq Karriem, Premier Ebrahim Rasool, Professor A Abratt Director of the Course, Minister Pierre Uys.

hosted the event with Professor Raymond Abratt as Director. There were attendees from 25 African countries and major international and national organizations involved in Cancer management, WHO, UICC, American Cancer Society amongst others. Two policy documents were produced, both aimed at improving cancer care in Africa. One was co signed by all the major organizations present dealing with comprehensive cancer control and one more specifically for Radiation Oncology - dealing with education, clinical research, and evidence - based medicine and emerging technologies. [RA]

The Body, 2006

The library stairwell has, ascending, eight large artworks. These paintings were made by 1st year Fine Art students at the Michaelis School of Fine Art,

UCT, for a project in which they were required to visualise the interior/exterior of the body, in acrylic and house paint on canvas or board. The project was taught by Lynne Lomofsky and Justin Brett.



Dean's Corner

2006 has passed in a flash, and after a year of exhilarating highs and the deepest lows, we face a new year which holds much hope.

The news that academic health sciences can expect a substantial increase in core funding is especially welcome as this will provide long-awaited relief from the pressures of maintaining high standards of teaching and research alongside an ever-increasing health care workload. We also look forward to new developments in the undergraduate programmes, in postgraduate affairs and in research. And we remain optimistic that our relationships with the Health Department and the National Health Laboratories Services will be consolidated.

From the Dean's Office, we wish all members of our Faculty family good health and the strength to engage with all the excitement and challenges of 2007. Thank you so much for your contributions which enrich our Faculty in so many different ways. *Marian Jacobs*

Advice for new Faculty members

For the young researcher: Christopher Maske

✓ **Read.** Nothing focuses the mind better or generates more good ideas than finding out that the brilliant thought you had over coffee this morning was in last month's journal.

✓ **Get your hands dirty.** Get going at the bench or in the field early in your project - you will learn more about what is possible and focus your project much better by trying techniques, getting some data and learning from your cells/ genes/ proteins/ subjects.

✓ **Fail.** Don't be afraid of new techniques or approaches, do them the first time knowing that you will probably fail initially, will learn a great deal, and will develop a protocol that is better than the one with which you started.

✓ **Dare to...** Don't ever have to read a paper and say to yourself "I had that idea/ data two years ago".

✓ **Research is either evolutionary (incremental) or revolutionary (changes everything we know about something).** Most is in the former category, the best is in the latter. Always keep an eye out for the revolution in your test tube!

Teaching students: Vanessa Burch

✓ **Authentic learning** - whenever possible focus learning activities around real patients or paper-based real clinical scenarios. Students learn by applying new knowledge and skills to real-life situations

✓ **Provide feedback** - feedback is one of the most powerful ways of changing student learning behaviour, altering their performance and supplementing their own insights.

✓ **Educational alignment** - as assessment drives all student learning behaviour, ensure that key issues are examined in a way which promotes the development of desired practice. Examine that which you teach.

✓ **Provide multiple opportunities** to practise new skills or the application of new knowledge. Students learn best by practising and applying new knowledge and skills, so provide as many opportunities for applied learning as possible.

Relating to patients: Janet Seggie

The word *patient* encompasses so much more than "he/she who seeks medical attention":

✓ Friendship, kindness, warmth and empathy are qualities that the best doctors exhibit.

✓ Think of your most beloved relative (Mother, Father) as being the one in your patient's place.

✓ Undertake your interview and examination with care and gentleness mindful always of your patient's dignity.

✓ Be aware of your permitted invasion of your patient's privacy of mind and body (usually within seconds/minutes of your meeting each other) and strive to protect your patient's modesty and confidentiality.

✓ Serve as your patient's advocate.

Human resources & staff: Miriam, Naeema, Lyn

✓ **People make the institution,** and are the institution. We often forget

this. Without people the institution cannot live, thrive, achieve.

✓ **Each person has a special contribution to make.** Harness this value

✓ **Take the considered approach.** Identify the real issue/s and deal with it, not the person. Don't allow things to "stew."

✓ **Motivate people by rewarding them with responsibility and helping them grow.** Separate the "Hygiene" from the "Motivating" factors. Hygiene factors include working conditions, salary, relationships at work. These need to be sorted but do not necessarily guarantee motivation.

✓ **Value your sense of humour.** Seeing the funny side of life is essential for maintaining healthy relationships, remaining optimistic during difficult times and reducing stress.

Selecting master's & doctoral students:

Raj Ramesar

✓ **Investigate applications** not only for top achievers, but also for those who might not have had adequate opportunity to manifest their intellect adequately

✓ **Devise a proforma** questionnaire that will aid referees to give you accurate feedback for areas in which you want the student to excel.

✓ **Seek human qualities** and capability to get on with other people; this should come out in the referee's report as well as during the interview.

✓ **Select a range of students** who reflect the host lab's/unit's/PI's commitment to education and training in the current South Africa

✓ **Ensure** that the support structures you have in place enable and empower students, while at the same time providing a cumulative measure of productivity e.g. through pyramidal research

Mentoring students: Cynthia Sikakana

Students should realise that:

✓ Given the privilege to study, they have a choice of how to make use of this; in life, each individual is the architect of his/her own destiny.

✓ The purpose of their studies is to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to function in their chosen profession. Therefore they should strive to achieve understanding of their subject matter; they are not just studying to get marks.

✓ They should aspire to make learning a joy; they should be passionate about what they do.

✓ It is important to maintain a balance in life; they should take the initiative to use the facilities and opportunities (human and material) provided by the academic environment of a university to develop a humane, independent and scholarly personality.

Atlantic Philanthropies Award

The School of Public Health and Family Medicine in partnership with the UCT Graduate School of Business has received a grant of R16 million over five years from the Atlantic Philanthropies to continue with the Oliver Tambo Fellowship Programme for training senior health managers. Started in 1996 with funding from the Kaiser Foundation, the Programme has thus far trained 175 public sector managers who have graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Management. They have resolved to focus their grant-making activity in four specific areas: Ageing, Disadvantaged Children & Youth, Population Health and Reconciliation & Human Rights

Quotes for January

How unfair! Only one health, and so many diseases. --V Schlichter

Thanks to modern medicine we are no longer forced to endure prolonged pain, disease, discomfort and wealth. - Robert Orben

All professions are conspiracies against the laity. -G Bernard Shaw

Your health comes first; you can always hang yourself later. *Yiddish proverb*

PHYSICIAN, n. One upon whom we set our hopes when ill and our dogs when well. - *the Devil's Dictionary*, Ambrose Bierce

Neurotic means he is not as sensible as I am, and psychotic means he's even worse than my brother-in-law. - Karl Menninger

