



Faculty News March 2007

Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town



NRF Ratings

The University has recently announced that 22 researchers have been awarded ratings from the National Research Foundation (NRF) for the first time. More than a third are from our Faculty. Our newly rated researchers are: Raymond Abratt (radiation medicine), Marc Combrinck (medicine), Aqiel Dalvie (public health and family medicine), Collet Dandara, Vandana Govan and Muazzam Jacobs (clinical laboratory sciences, pictured at right), Julia Goedecke (human biology), and Heather Zar (child and adolescent health). In addition, Emeritus Professor Eric Harley has recently had his rating renewed.



Given the importance of the NRF ratings in contributing towards our aspiration of being a research-led faculty, we will be running workshops later in the year for anyone interested in applying for a rating.

From the Editor

I would like to pay tribute to the contribution of the previous editor, David Dent. I am sure I speak for many of us when I say that over the past few years he has made a significant contribution to the Faculty. The monthly newsletter was something that I looked forward to because it helped to celebrate all the positive stories that emanated from a group of special people who have made, and continue to make, an important contribution to UCT. I plan to continue in that vein and so I encourage you to share your stories with me. I may not be able to publish them all (ah, the power of the media!) but I will endeavour to make this a publication in the fine tradition that David has established. Please contact me at: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za.

Health Sciences Library

We are pleased to announce increased electronic access to journals from the Springer Publishing Group. Among them are: the *European Journal of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases*, *European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, *European Journal of Pediatrics*, *European Spine Journal*, *European Surgery*. UCT Libraries now has a subscription to the online package of *Annual Reviews* journals. Titles include *Genetics*, *Immunology*, *Medicine*, *Neuroscience*, *Pharmacology and Toxicology*, and *Public Health*.



Staff and students who use the Interlibrary Loans service may now submit requests online. Remember to check ALEPH, the Library's online catalogue or the Electronics Journals to make sure the book or journal is definitely not available at UCT, before submitting the request online. For international requests, please continue to contact the Interlibrary Loans Office in person. For more details,

please have a look at the link on our web page. To register for this service, please phone: 021 406 6142 or contact Marion.Konemann@uct.ac.za

[SV]

European Parliamentarians Visit

A delegation from the European Parliament visited the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IIDMM) last week. They were in town to meet some of our own ministers and to attend the Budget Speech by Finance Minister Trevor Manuel. Their visit came in the wake of the recent announcement that UCT and the IIDMM will be hosting the Cape Town component of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB).

The ICGEB, expected to be launched later this year in September, will help the world's scientists determine the mechanisms underlying both infectious and non-infectious diseases at a molecular level. The UCT hosts included the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Njabulo Ndebele, as well as Professors Iqbal Parker, Marian Jacobs, Kathy Driver and Kit Vaughan.

[HT]



Iqbal Parker with members of the European Parliament: Phillip Bradbourn (UK), Michael Gahler (Germany) and Jan Mulder (The Netherlands)

Opportunity for Research on Disability

UCT was recently invited to participate in discussions and planning for an extensive 5-year research programme directed by the Southern African Federation of Disabled People and funded by the Department for International Development in the UK. The goal of the programme is to achieve equality for disabled people and their attainment of quality life through poverty reduction. The purpose of the research programme is to generate rigorous research evidence that enables Disabled People's Organisations (DPO's) to contribute to effective 'pro-poor' disability policy and practice.

Lana van Niekerk and Martha Geiger (School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences) attended a planning workshop in Gaborone, Botswana in late February. Issues

emerging from the discussions included the need: to shift ownership of research; to engage in more participatory research practices; and to develop bilateral capacity building. UCT, together with the Universities of Stellenbosch and the Western Cape, and DPO's from the region, are forming a research consortium to take this project forward. Current negotiations include funding for more students from the SADC region to attend the MPhil (Disability Studies) course, and developing course modules which can be presented in other countries for capacity building.

[MG, LvN]

Publication of the Month

A new monthly feature that I plan to introduce in April will feature a piece of scholarship that has been recently published. So, if you have just published a paper in *Nature* or the *New England Journal of Medicine*, or any other journal, please let me know about it. I would also be interested in books, book chapters or important policy documents. Please send me the publication details, including some background information.

Dean's Corner

Two sets of circumstances arising over the past few weeks demonstrate the implications of our responsibilities and rights as health professionals and academics at UCT.

The first relates to the HPCSA opening an investigation into the practice of Dr Wouter Basson during the apartheid era. The enquiry is a response to complaints lodged with the Council about Basson's alleged role in attempts to develop bacteria capable of killing Africans. In the last few weeks, it has called on a group to review the case in the context of our responsibilities as health professionals, and a member of our Faculty has been invited to participate in that process. This case will be subject to rigorous enquiry, and we will contribute to that process as academics, as members of the health profession and as South Africans bound by our Bill of Rights.

The second is the reaction to the threat of cuts in services at the central hospitals in the region. We are fully aware that achievement of health equity demands a redistribution of health care resources and that such a system operates best when each level of health care – from primary to tertiary – operates in an efficient and effective manner. The concerns about the possible cuts in the tertiary service therefore relate not only to impact of cuts on the central hospitals which are already under huge pressure, but also to the impact on other levels of care, stressed by a burden of very sick patients, whose options for referral will be further compromised by such reduction in services.

The actions of our senior colleagues in raising concerns in both of these settings are entirely in line with our rights to academic freedom, a right hard won by UCT against the background of apartheid repression, and marked by the annual TB Davie Memorial Lecture. But more importantly, these cases highlight our primary obligation to promote the health and welfare, through ethical practice and high standards of care, of those we serve – our patients and our communities. This is the foundation of our Hippocratic

Oath and is at the heart of our Faculty Charter which places protection of human rights at its core.

In the short term, we are engaging with the budget and planning process through a variety of channels. But in the medium- to long-term our goal – to secure better care for our patients and communities – will be served best by securing strong partnerships with the public health service sector and strengthening the link between those who manage, and those who deliver the services. This should be underpinned by the principles of health equity, and will be enacted through a joint agreement, good partnership practices and a commitment to placing public service centrestage. This will result in a health care plan, based on strong evidence from all sectors, that is owned by all, and fashioned in the best interests of those we serve.

Course on Good Clinical Practice

If you are planning a research project that involves human subjects, and do not yet have the necessary accreditation, then help is on the way. Professor Raymond Abratt and colleagues will be offering their course on Good Clinical Practice on 14 April. For further details, please contact: Janet.Sirmongpong@uct.ac.za or telephone 021 404 4265.

Completion of Successful Fellowship

Dr Joyce Aswani has recently completed the Karl Storz Fellowship in Otolaryngology. She now returns to the University Hospital in Kenya a highly trained head and neck surgeon, with experience in laryngectomy, neck dissection, laser endolaryngeal surgery, and the management of facial fractures. Her fellowship has strengthened our Faculty's ties with Kenya.

[JK]



Peter Le Roux of Marcus Medical hands Dr Joyce Aswani her certificate.

Monthly Quiz

In 1944, one of our medical students, RA Lawrence, was elected to the Students' Representative Council. Almost 60 years later, in May 2002, Dr Lawrence returned to his *alma mater* for a special Faculty event. What was significant about his election to the SRC and what was the Faculty event that he attended?

As always, the first correct answer will win the book voucher. Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za