



Faculty News April 2007

Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town



A Silver Lining

Congratulations to Dheshnie Govender, PhD student in Cell Biology, whose essay entitled *A Silver Lining* won the first prize in the Young Science Writers' Competition. Sponsored by the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement and the *Saturday Star*, Dheshnie's prize included a trip to San Francisco to attend the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Her 700-word essay, which was composed so as to make a scientific topic accessible to the general public, describes the way in which adult stem cells contribute to the colour of our hair. You can download Dheshnie's winning entry at: <http://www.saasta.ac.za/sciencewriters/winners.shtml>



Dean's Corner

Planning is in the air. The University leadership has initiated the planning cycle for the coming year, the "province" is about to release its comprehensive service plan, and the last Faculty Board meeting focused on planning – of health care services; of research; of postgraduate affairs; of teaching; and of administration.

Among these, two areas of are immediate concern. The first relates to the current plans and budget for health services, which remains a challenge for the clinicians and the Faculty as a whole. Over the past few weeks, concern about the impending service cuts have been expressed by the University, the Faculty, and the clinicians in the central hospitals, with the young doctors, other health professional staff and our students all adding their voices of protest. Several meetings have been held with senior officials of the Department of Health, and engagement with all concerned will continue in our attempts finalise the joint agreement (which has stalled), and to secure a health platform which is adequate to ensure delivery of quality health care and related quality teaching of our undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The second is the plan to review the nature of the "academic job" in our Faculty and within that, to define a fair teaching load for each member of the academic staff. The status quo is that – for a variety of reasons – teaching of undergraduate students is not shared equitably across and within different sectors. There is therefore a need to return to a system in which the core mandates of health sciences –



teaching, research and, for some, service – are acknowledged as being the responsibility of each academic. A proposal for this teaching policy was presented at the Faculty Board meeting and, in the coming weeks, consultations will be held with the different sectors of the Faculty to develop consensus.

I have taken a year to learn, to listen and to feel the pulse of the Faculty. 2007 will be a year of settling, and it is my hope that by the end of this year, we will have gone a long way to set firm plans in place for each of our areas, so that we can look forward to greater stability in the coming years. In so doing, I am mindful of Robert Burns' warning to Mousie that "... the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley (awry) ...," but I remain optimistic. For having a framework of revitalised high level plans from the Vice-Chancellor and University leadership, having a new health department policy for academic health sciences, and – most importantly – working with a committed faculty team, all hold much promise.

[Marian Jacobs]

Awards for Scientific Presentations

Our congratulations go out to Associate Professor Ernesta Meintjes (right) and Dr John Joska for the respective awards they received at the recent 2nd Biological Psychiatry conference for the "best presentation by a young researcher" where "young" is defined as < 45 years. John received his prize in the psychiatry section, while Ernesta, who holds an NRF Research Chair in Brain Imaging, won the South African Neuroscience Society section. Ernesta's winning presentation included functional magnetic resonance images of children with fetal alcohol syndrome while performing cognitive tasks.



Long Service Award: 31 Years in the Faculty!

David Bourne, currently Chief Research Officer in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine, joined the then Department of Comprehensive and Community Medicine in 1975, having obtained the first postgraduate qualification in Environmental Science in South Africa from Wits University. David's main field of research has been in Vital Statistics, particularly the analysis of mortality, and he probably knows more about the analysis of death certificates than anyone in the country. He has also coordinated a national birth defects surveillance system since 1985, and has served on both national and international health informatics committees. His most recent work has been on estimating the extent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic using innovative techniques. We wish him many more productive years!

[RE]

Body Maps of Hope

Next time you're walking up Anzio Road, take a look at the stunning new artworks which adorn the old entrance to the Medical School Library. The figures and life stories of three women, recreated in colourful mosaic, were inspired by the Body Maps project, an initiative of the Bambanani HIV/AIDS support group in Khayelitsha ("bambanani" means "to lend hands"). Lovell Friedman, an artist and teacher, was commissioned to design the artworks which she conceived as a way for the women to tell their stories of courage.



Publications of the Month

As promised in last month's *Faculty News*, we are introducing a new feature. This month we focus on books and we recognise four publications from our students, staff and alumni.

Kopano Matlwa, a 4th year MBChB student (right), has recently won the European Union Literary Award for her first-time novel entitled *Coconut*. The prize includes a publishing contract with Jacana Media, a cash award of R25,000 plus a trip to the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany later this year. *Coconut*, which is a story about a young person's struggle with identity, will be released later this month and will be showcased in the homebrew collection of Exclusive Books. Why don't you visit the store and check out this impressive first novel?

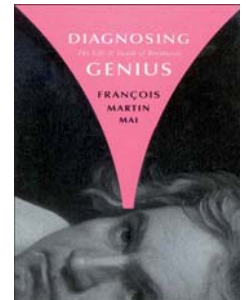


The second book we are featuring is by one of our past staff members, Professor Johan Naudé, entitled *Making the Cut in South Africa*. It is published by the Royal Society of Medicine in the UK and is an autobiographical account of Naudé's medico-political journey. As a urologist and transplant surgeon, he was known as the "Poor man's Chris Barnard," an appellation that often led to considerable

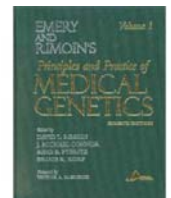


confusion among his patients! The publishers are offering special discounts to UCT staff, students and alumni so if you'd like to get a copy, please contact Greg Judelson at: ams3@icon.co.za.

Our third featured book is entitled *Diagnosing Genius. The Life and Death of Beethoven*, and is authored by a 1956 alumnus, Professor François Mai. Mai is a psychiatrist based in Ottawa, Canada, and his book explores Beethoven's extraordinary ability to compose great music despite severe health problems, including deafness and depression. Published by McGill-Queen's University Press, you are entitled to a 20% discount if you contact Joan Tuff, our Alumni Officer at: Joan.Tuff@uct.ac.za.



Finally, we also feature a chapter by Emeritus Professor Peter Beighton, entitled "Hereditary Noninflammatory Arthropies," which appeared in the 5th edition of *Principles and Practice of Medical Genetics*, edited by David Rimoin et al. and published by Churchill Livingstone.



Mothers to Mothers to Be

Dr Mitch Besser, a member of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, has recently been recognised with an Impumelelo Award for his work in establishing a wonderful programme called "Mothers to Mothers to be." It enables women who are HIV positive to receive the support of mothers who are also HIV positive and have previously given birth. Disclosure is encouraged, support is provided and skills are taught which can be utilised to generate income. M2M2B has attracted attention from around the world, including a visit from Mrs Laura Bush. Mitch and some of his mothers were recently invited to the White House to share their experiences. More information about this remarkable programme can be found at: <http://www.m2mafrica.org>.

[ZvdS]

Monthly Quiz

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the heart transplant by Chris Barnard and his team at Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH). However, 11 years before this famous operation, an even more far-reaching development occurred at the hospital. It involved the insight provided by the head of radiotherapy to a part-time nuclear physicist. What are the names of these two people and what was this far-reaching development? Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za

Answer to last month's quiz: Dr RA Lawrence was the first black student elected to the SRC and the special event he attended on 9 May 2002 was the signing of our Faculty Charter. Check out the framed charter with his signature in the Barnard Fuller Building. Melanie Alperstein was first with the correct answer and wins the book voucher.