

Medical Education Unit Research

School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney

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Bringing knowledge to life

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Message from Professor Ian Wilson



From the Chair

The MEU research program continues to grow with 28 projects now being undertaken that involve at least one member of the MEU staff.

These range from small-scale projects investigating what students go through in preparation for applying to medicine, through PhD projects to ARC funded research. We are now seeing our research devolve into a number of themes:

1. The first year experience, including selection;
2. Online learning;
3. Medical self concept and professional identity;
4. Curriculum innovation and its impact; and, to a lesser extent,
5. Assessment.

We have been developing specific skills in structural equation modelling and Rasch analysis as well as other specialised statistical techniques.

More recently we have staff developing skills in qualitative research and analysis. Developing these skills enables the MEU to undertake a broader spectrum of research.

One way of broadening our research is to undertake cooperative research with other Schools.

Our interest in student selection has resulted in a number of cooperative associations with Australian and overseas Schools.

David Harding has been presenting his research in this area at international conferences.

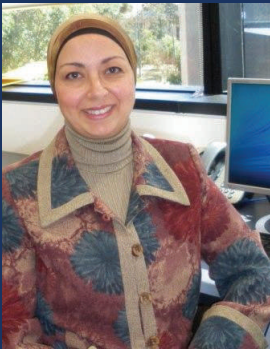
His presentations have generated a high level of interest and requests for cooperative research.

Cooperative research is also occurring with Macquarie University, The University of Sydney, Monash University and The University of Adelaide.

In closing, I would like to welcome Iman Hegazi as our new PhD student. Please look at her profile later in the newsletter. She is a great addition to the MEU.

Ian Wilson
Director of MEU
Professor of Medical Education

To keep up to date with the latest MEU research news and developments, please email Roslyn to join the mailing list, at r.weaver@uws.edu.au



Dr Iman Hegazi

The MEU journal club:

- meets monthly to discuss current medical education research

- met in July to discuss recent medical education conferences

- debated during the August meeting the so-called "Generation Me" label for medical student cohorts

MEU research news

- We welcome our new PhD student, **Dr Iman Hegazi**, who joins us to research empathy and the medical curriculum. See below for more information.
- Several new research projects have begun in the **MEU**, with areas of research including cultural diversity, learning approaches, and academic writing support. See page 3 for details.
- **Professor Ian Wilson** gave a talk at the ASME Annual Scientific Meeting, July 15-17 2009, held in Edinburgh. See below.
- **Dr Bronwen Dalziel** and **Professor Ian Wilson** presented research at the 2009 ANZAME Conference in Launceston, Tasmania. See below.
- The **MEU** hosted three international students from San Diego State University in June, July and August, who worked on projects with the MEU. See page 3.
- The **MEU journal club** continues to meet monthly to discuss recent and relevant research in medical education. See below.
- The **MEU CAMERA** group has created a new blog for online discussions of important topics in medical humanities and medical education. CAMERA reading group and research seminars continue. See page 4.

New PhD student in empathy

In August we welcomed Dr Iman Hegazi to the MEU, who joined us as our new MEU PhD scholarship student. Iman was raised in Melbourne and completed her medical degree at the University of Alexandria, Egypt, where she also completed an MD in Forensic Medicine.

Her research will investigate the impact of medical school on empathy and how best to help students maintain their empathetic approach during a stressful course. We look forward to working with Iman as her research progresses.

Journal club: conferences, "generation me"

The July meeting of the MEU journal club discussed recent Australian and international medical education conferences, particularly in relation to some of the implications of other research undertaken locally and overseas.

Ian Wilson and Bronwen Dalziel both presented research at the 2009 ANZAME Conference in Launceston, Tasmania. The conference was held from June 30 to July 3 and its theme was Bridging Professional Islands.

Bronwen Dalziel spoke on "Using online learning to more effectively accommodate clinical attachments—An ALTC Priority Project", while Ian Wilson presented a session

on "A beginner's guide to writing ARC grant applications".

Ian Wilson also presented a paper at the ASME Annual Scientific Meeting, July 15-17 2009, held in Edinburgh. His talk discussed "The big fish, little pond effect" and whether it applies in medical schools. His talk built on a current research project running now in the MEU.

Bronwen and Ian discussed other papers and panels they had attended, which had encompassed issues such as portfolios, online learning, and medical school entry.

The journal club's August meeting covered the so-called "Generation Me" issue in medical education. Recent journal articles have claimed

this title for current medical students, and the journal club discussed and debated if the apparent generational changes are real or not, strategies for the problems, and the implications of labelling students in this way. Discussion then moved to consider the issue from a different angle: class, and the sociodemographics of medical student cohorts around the world.

The MEU journal club meets monthly, and all are welcome to join. Readings are emailed to interested people ahead of time.

For more information on journal club meeting times and readings, please contact Glenn at the MEU (glenn.mason@uws.edu.au).

New research

Universal diverse orientation (UDO) of health sciences and business students

Research Team: Yenna Salamonson, **Roslyn Weaver**, Kath Peters, Stephen Teo, **Ian Wilson**, Sharon Andrew, Debra Jackson, Andrea Bialocerkowski, Jane Koch

The mixed methods UDO study investigates professional identity, cultural diversity across four student cohorts at UWS: Medicine, Nursing, Business and Physiotherapy.

Learning approaches across health & science courses (LASAC)

Research Team: Yenna Salamonson, **Ian Wilson**, **Roslyn Weaver**

This qualitative study builds on the main LASAC project, which investigated students' learning approaches, stress and academic performance across five health sciences courses. This substudy will explore changes in medical students' learning approaches over time.

Academic writing support in the School of Medicine

Research Team: **Roslyn Weaver**, **Ian Wilson**

Academic publishing is an increasingly vital part of career progression at university, and this project explores academic writing support strategies in the School of Medicine, and the effectiveness of a publication group as a support tool.

For more MEU projects, visit the Research page from uws.edu.au/meu.

New research in the MEU covers:

professional identity and cultural diversity

*

learning approaches

*

academic writing support



Cyril Nierva (L) and Jen Louie

Jen, Cyril, and Shannon visited the MEU to work on projects exploring support services for medical students, and the experiences of "first in family" medical students



Shannon Nolan

San Diego students visit MEU

The MEU hosted three visiting postgraduate students from San Diego State University over June, July, and August, who explored medical student experiences and support services.

Jen Louie and Cyril Nierva, both studying for a Masters in Post Secondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs, joined us for six weeks in June and July. Jen and Cyril were among the first students from San Diego State University to take part in the new overseas component, and chose to visit the MEU to work on a project exploring support services in the medical school, to help design better support programs for our students.

"We were interviewing students to see what support services that they would like so that the School of Medicine could enhance or modify what programs they already offer," Cyril said. The results of these interviews will help to determine "what's in place right now and seeing what could benefit them," Jen explained, adding that some of the challenges that students face include long commutes to the campus, mentoring, and also time management.

"This is the first time our university has sent out students in their program abroad," Cyril said. "I think it's a great experience for any student to go abroad, because not only do you learn the culture, but then you also learn a lot about yourself."

The work continues their own interests in education and student support, with Jen considering a doctorate in education in the future, while Cyril, who taught at elementary (primary) school for several years before her masters, plans to undertake an internship in academic advising. Jen and Cyril will be completing their studies in May 2010.

In August, meanwhile, we welcomed a third student from San Diego State University. Shannon Nolan spent two weeks with the MEU investigating "first in family" medical students, talking to students in interviews and using questionnaires to look at the experiences of students who are the first in their family to attend medical school.

Shannon is enrolled in a Master of Arts in Education, with a concentration in educational leadership and a specialisation in student affairs. She also works at the California State University San Marcos, and is considering continuing her studies for a Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Education. Shannon said that she has "loved" her time in Australia and in the MEU, and hopes to return one day. She expects to graduate in May 2011.

Jen, Cyril, and Shannon have now returned home to continue their studies. We wish them every success as they progress in their studies and careers.

CAMERA blog

The CAMERA (Culture And Medicine Education & Research Affiliation) team has created a new blog to discuss some of the key topics in medical humanities and medical education.

The aim of the blog is to open up dialogue about crucial issues in medicine, ethics, and professionalism, so that anyone interested can read and participate.

Like most blogs, the CAMERA blog consists of a website with posts (short commentaries) made about particular issues, with comments (replies) made

by other people. It's easy and quick for anyone to view the blog and make comments: you can either sign up to wordpress, or just leave a comment without signing in.

The blog posts are based around CAMERA reading group meetings and other topics of interest. If you can't make the meetings or aren't on campus, you can still join us online.

Recent blog discussions have included commentary on the notorious Tuskegee Syphilis Study and related issues of ethical research and race, as

well as doctor-patient communication and what happens when patients or guardians refuse treatment and potentially endanger the patient's life.

The blog is in its early stages, and we encourage you to have a look and join the conversation as we continue to work on building an effective blog.

You can visit the new CAMERA blog at uwscamera.wordpress.com. We look forward to seeing you – and talking to you – online.

Join us at the new
CAMERA blog at
uwscamera.wordpress.com

CAMERA research seminars

The School of Medicine hosts a weekly research colloquia with speakers joining the School to present research spanning the spectrum of medicine. The seminars run on Fridays from 3-4pm and are followed by drinks. Staff, students, and community are always welcome to join us.

Recent CAMERA speakers have included Professor John Hamilton on September 4 (see below and picture at left), and Dr Bruce Storey, who joined us in July to discuss the development of newborn intensive care nurseries in Sydney from a historical perspective.

Professor John Hamilton gave a talk on "Medical Humanities and the Humanity of Medicine", and discussed the importance of focusing on the human side of medical practice. Professor Hamilton has been Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Newcastle, worked on medical education in international institutions, and in 2006 was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to international medical education.

Future CAMERA speakers include Dr Claire Hooker, from the University of Sydney, on October 23 to discuss "Behave yourself! Writing risk in cancer policy", and CAMERA's own Dr Louella McCarthy, on November 27, and we are planning speakers for 2010.

Visit uws.edu.au/camera for more details of upcoming speakers and previous presentations.



Professor John
Hamilton

CAMERA meetings have discussed:

- * race and health research and medical controversies
- * medical television programs and paternalistic doctors
- * portrayals of informed consent, death and dying in film
- * complexities of doctor-patient communication in fiction
- * reflective practice
- * the philosophy of assessment

CAMERA reading group

The CAMERA reading group meets once a month. Members take turns to lead a discussion about an issue relevant to medical humanities and medical education, followed by discussions and debates about the particular topic and its applications to real life.

The scope is broad: discussions have covered controversies in race and health research in past and present times, medical television programs and paternalistic doctors, portrayals of informed consent and death in film, complexities of doctor-patient communication in fiction and biography, reflective practice, and the philosophy of medical education assessment.

We meet each month at the School of Medicine and welcome anyone interested to join us in our reading and discussions. Readings are sent out in advance so that everyone can join in. Contact Lorena at the MEU (l.hough@uws.edu.au) for details.

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