

Medical Education Unit Research

School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney

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University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

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Newsletter

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Message from Professor Ian Wilson



From the Chair

The research in MEU continues and we are starting to develop a positive standing in the School and across the wider University. From this we are starting to be approached about research and collaborations.

We have been approached by Charlotte Rees and Rola Ajjawi from the University of Sydney to be involved in the pilot of their research exploring the relationship and role of patient, doctor and student in bedside teaching. Ethics forms have been completed, and when they are approved the study will commence.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, Kirsty Jackman is conducting her honours degree

exploring the impact of examination scores on academic self concept, and how resilience may buffer the negative impact of such scores. Kirsty is based in the Centre for Educational Research (CER) at UWS, and is being supervised by Marjorie Seaton (CER) and me. This research will form the pilot for a larger study examining the Big Fish Little Pond Effect (BFLPE).

BFLPE has not been researched in medical students, although anecdotally there is evidence of it occurring. BFLPE has been described in elite high schools or classes and elite athletic squads. Students judge their own performance and academic self concept by comparison with peers, and in elite schools or classes there is a negative impact on educational and personal outcomes. Students of equivalent academic achievement do better if they are in a general class or school than if they are in an elite group. The negative effects persist for at least four years after leaving the educational institution. There is some evidence of

this in medical students, with high achieving students failing out of medicine.

Before the next MEU newsletter, Janet Chan will have received her new SimMan and has already started planning her study on the use of simulation to teach physiology in an integrated manner. The results of this study could have a major impact on the teaching of physiology.

The other major event for the MEU has been the approval of a scholarship for a PhD student in medical education. We have already received expressions of interest from potential students. If you know of anyone interested in a full-time PhD scholarship in medical education, please direct them either to the advertisement that appears in this newsletter (see page 5), or the UWS website (<http://www.uws.edu.au/research/scholarships>), or me, for more information.

Ian Wilson
Director of MEU
Professor of Medical Education

MEU Research News

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

- The MEU has a new full-time PhD scholarship available for applicants wishing to research developments in higher education. For details, see the advertisement on page 5 or visit the UWS website at <http://www.uws.edu.au/research/scholarships>.
- We welcome **Kirsty Jackman**, from the UWS Centre for Educational Research, who will be involved with the MEU as a CER Honours student undertaking research into medical students' examination grades, self concept, and resilience.
- The MEU **CAMERA** group hosted its May research seminar with invited guest Dr Alan Lem, who presented a paper on creative music therapy. See page 3 for more details. The CAMERA reading group also meets regularly to discuss medical humanities topics ranging from the philosophy of education to the use of film and television in medical education as a teaching tool.
- **Glenn Mason** has organised the new MEU Journal Club, which meets regularly to discuss issues in medical education. See full story on page 3.
- **Roslyn Weaver** is facilitating a writing group in the School of Medicine that helps faculty and postgraduate students develop their academic writing skills and increase their publications. The meetings offer the opportunity for members to receive and share constructive feedback on their own and other people's papers. These sessions will be followed by general discussion with special guest speakers, who will address a variety of topics involved in publishing and academic writing. These issues range from dealing with writer's block, hearing an editor's perspective, responding to referee reports, and other relevant topics.

Online learning project update

The course material has generally been well received by the students, and has helped them to keep their clinical experiences grounded in the scientific basis of medicine.

Bronwen Dalziel and Glenn Mason from the MEU are collaborating with researchers from Macquarie University on an ALTC-funded research project about online learning in undergraduate medical education. The project began in 2008, and here Bronwen discusses the progress so far.

Students in Year 3 have been using our new eLearning Modules to complete the Scientific Streams section of their course. To date, three separate modules have been attempted by the students, who were divided into separate streams at the beginning of the year.

The course material has

generally been well received by the students, and has helped them to keep their clinical experiences grounded in the scientific basis of medicine. As one student commented informally, "it reminds us to keep reading textbooks and looking up information online, while we are on our hospital attachments".

There have been various activities that have interested the students, such as forums, which are facilitated by content experts and allow the students to explore problems and share information in a collaborative environment. The students have also enjoyed simply answering questions and reading

each other's answers, sharing literature search results to answer EBM questions, and using available online resources.

Although the streams have generally gone well, the few issues that have arisen are being ironed out as we go, and a full review of the modules will occur over the next half of the year. At the same time, work is progressing on the Year 4 and 5 Streams, with several of the groups meeting and outlining Learning Outcomes and themes for their modules. We are looking forward to creating some innovative learning activities over the next few months.

Bronwen Dalziel

Journal club

The MEU Journal Club has several broad aims:

To conduct discussions around teaching and learning

To provide feedback on conferences

To discuss the wide array of issues around medical education

Creative music therapy clients can include children, adolescents and adults, who may have physical, learning or intellectual disabilities, emotional difficulties, or other health-related problems.

The MEU has recently started meeting regularly in a journal club, organised by Glenn Mason, who works with the MEU on an ALTC grant administered by Macquarie University. Here, Glenn discusses the reasons for forming the group, and some of the topics discussed so far.

The journal club has several broad aims.

To conduct discussions around teaching and learning

What is teaching? Is there a difference between teaching and facilitating? What is learning? How do we learn? What is blended learning? Is online learning a substitute for face-to-face instruction?

To provide feedback on conferences

To discuss and share current research in education and medical education

To discuss the wide array of issues around medical education

Some of these issues include student assessment, the use of electronic portfolios, online learning and medical education, the use of simulation as a teaching and learning tool, and more.

The journal club meets once a month to discuss a wide range of topics and thus far we have held three meetings with the following topics: the nature of facilitation, student self-assessment of their learning experiences, the use of TV and popular culture in medical education, refugee health and the educational value of simulation in medical education.

The format of the meetings differs slightly but essentially follows a similar pattern where a paper, or a set of papers, is

introduced and then opened up for discussion.

The group is composed of staff with expertise and interests in education and medical education, literature and literary criticism, genetics, philosophy and online learning. This diverse range of backgrounds reflects the school's emphasis on the multi-disciplinary approach to medical education.

Anyone who is interested in education or medical education is welcome to attend, and the next meeting will be held on June 25 in the School of Medicine.

For more information, or if you would like details on any of the articles already discussed, please contact Glenn Mason (glenn.mason@uws.edu.au).

Glenn Mason

CAMERA seminar: Creative music therapy and beyond

The new medical humanities research group CAMERA (Culture and Medicine Education & Research Affiliation) hosted its second public seminar on Friday, May 29, 2009. School of Medicine staff, students and community members were joined by visiting speaker Dr Alan Lem, who gave a talk on "Creative Music Therapy and Beyond".

Dr Lem's presentation explained some of the background and uses of this approach to therapy. Creative music therapy is a method of improvisational music therapy that originated with Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins, and it offers great scope and potential for building relationships between therapists and clients. It can be used in individual or group therapy sessions, and clients can include children, adolescents and adults, who may have physical, learning or intellectual disabilities, emotional difficulties, or other health-related problems.

In his talk, Dr Lem discussed the benefits of creative music therapy, which can include developing communication skills, supporting clients in times of emotional difficulties, working on ways to manage relaxation, and also using the therapy to aid in rehabilitation. The therapy can assist people with autism, dementia, and clients with other needs.

Dr Lem is the Course Advisor for the Master of Creative Music Therapy program and Manager of Clinical Training for Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Australia. He is a music therapist, supervisor, lecturer and composer with an interest in improvisational music therapy, music and imagery and music for health and well-being. Alan has also published several music scores, educational guides and CDs for use in music therapy.

For details on CAMERA, visit www.uws.edu.au/medicine/som/medical_education/camera.

Medical Education Unit

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RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

The UWS School of Medicine has a doctoral scholarship available for an outstanding applicant who wishes to research developments in undergraduate medical education. The successful applicant will be a part of a vibrant research culture in the School which has quickly established a track record in population health, mental health, integrative physiology and medical education. Current projects in medical education research include: investigating the selection of medical students, the assessment of clinical competence, the quality of international medical education and on-line learning.

The scholarship holder will join a dedicated group of researchers carrying out projects which include, investigating the first year medical education experience and the use of simulation, assessment and educational measurement. The School is primarily located on the Campbelltown campus, in new state-of-the-art purpose built facilities.

The project can be developed to suit the interests and background of the applicant, and will be supervised by a panel of researchers led by Professor Ian Wilson.

Criteria

* Bachelor Honours degree Class 1 or 2.1 in a relevant field or equivalent qualifications and experience.

Scholarship

* Index-linked, tax-free stipend of \$30,427 per annum for up to 3 years.

* Research Training Scheme funded place in the course.

How to apply

* Applicants should contact Prof Ian Wilson to discuss their research interests before applying.

* The application form and a research proposal should be submitted prior to the closing date.

* The application form is available on the web: www.uws.edu.au/research/scholarships

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Further information about the School of Medicine at UWS

<http://www.uws.edu.au/medicine/>

<http://www.uws.edu.au/medicine/som/research>

Applications Close 12 June 2009