Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2008. 2008 already promises to be an eventful year! We introduce two new members to you in this issue of the newsletter, and also welcome a number of new research higher degree students. Further information about these students and their work is given later in the newsletter.

I have met recently with Andrew Cheetham and Gar Jones. We will be arranging a meeting of the group for a bit later in the year to really scrutinise our performance in our key areas, and together decide what sort of strategies we can take to move us closer to the next step. Gar has very kindly offered to participate in this meeting, and will do some preparatory work around the RFCD codes etc to help us focus our discussion and help bring our activities around these four programs into a much sharper focus. So far, we are travelling quite well given our stage of development. However, we recently submitted our annual report for 2007 to the research office. Once the data is audited and scrutinised, we will be able to get some feedback from Gar and Andrew about our performance to date, and some of the pathways ahead.

It is also great to be able to announce that the School of Nursing has provided some extra support for us in the form of three grants of $50,000. Each one is to fund the development of an emergent research area. I am heading up the Workforce in Nursing Group (WiN), Esther has the Aged Care group, and Virginia has the Nurturing Parents and Parenting: Enhancing family, community and organisational support for parents through Research (NIPPER) group. All these groups are charged with developing research in their particular areas, and also with providing developmental opportunities for new and emergent researchers. More information about each of these groups appears later in this newsletter. Congratulations to Virginia who recently obtained $30,000 from the College to establish ExPO, a multidisciplinary node focussing on research about pregnancy outcomes. ExPO has College node status, and fits within the FaCH umbrella.

One of the really exciting things about 2008 so far is our change of name. We recently gained approval for the change of name from N-FORCE to “Family and Community Health Research Group” FaCH. We arrived at this name after a very lengthy consultative process involving core members and key research office personnel. It could easily become the “Centre for Family and Community Health” should we be able to achieve Centre status in the future. This is also a more inclusive name that should make us more attractive to successful researchers from other disciplines.

Finally, I would like to offer my warm congratulations to our pending graduates, details of whom appear later in the newsletter. We have two PhD and a MHons graduands in the forthcoming ceremony. Congratulations also must go to the supervisory panels, who work so hard with each and every student to achieve these successful outcomes.
Welcome to FaCH

Maree Johnson RN, B.App.Sc., M.App.Sc., PhD recently became a core member of Family & Community Health Research Group. Professor Johnson is a registered nurse and epidemiologist and has conducted statewide and national research projects focusing on crosscultural health, women’s and child’s health, aged care and community care, casemix, funding models, health outcomes and risk management behaviour of health professionals. Dr. Johnson’s publications appear in national and international nursing, medical and health services journals. Her recent research work included a national survey of risk management behaviours amongst a large cohort (5250) of Australian medical practitioners and a similar methodology has been developed for nurses. International collaborative research, resulting in grants and publications and consultancies, has emerged from her work as a Visiting Professor to the University College Dublin Faculty of Medicine, School of Nursing & Midwifery.

Welcome to UWS

Sansnee Jirojwong BSc (Nsg & Mid), MPH, MMedSc, PhD, RN is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Nursing, University of Western Sydney. Prior to moving to University of Western Sydney, Sansnee was a Senior Lecturer at Central Queensland University and taught at a Faculty of Nursing in Thailand and Brunei. Sansnee’s early research projects focused on migrants’ health and their behaviours while they are in a host country or returning to their home country. Over the past six years, Sansnee has been involved in a number of projects in Queensland rural communities and worked closely with local health practitioners. Sansnee has worked with local communities and disadvantaged groups including migrants and people in rural areas to increase the accessibility to health and social services by the migrants. Sansnee’s research articles are published in Women and Health, Transcultural Psychiatry, Australian Journal of Rural Health, Health and Social Care in the Community, Southeast Asian Journal of Tropical Medicine & Public Health and Journal of Advanced Nursing. In 2008, Sansnee and Professor Pranee Liamputtong co-edit the book, “Population Health, Communities and Health Promotion: Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation” to be published by Oxford University Press.

Welcome to a new associate member

Ritin Fernandez RN; MN(Critical Care); PhD Candidate recently submitted her PhD for examination and is the Manager at the South Western Sydney Centre for Applied Nursing Research, Deputy Director of the NSW Centre for Evidence Based Health Care and an Adjunct Research Fellow at the University of Western Sydney. She has a coronary care and critical care nursing background and is actively involved with Australian Cardiac Rehabilitation Association. Ritin also works with clinicians from the Sydney South West Area health Service to evaluate newly released guidelines and other clinical non-funded projects. As an Adjunct Research Fellow, Ritin
teaches research methodology to undergraduate nursing students at UWS. She is frequently invited to present on systematic reviews and application of evidence based practice. She has 40 peer reviewed publications and 46 national and international conference presentations. Ritin is also the international peer reviewer for the Cochrane Incontinence Group, Cochrane Wounds Group, Journal of Wound Ostomy and Continence Nursing, International Journal of Evidence based Health Care, International Journal of Nursing Practice, Evidence Based Nursing, Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing, Coronary Artery Disease and the Tohoku Journal of Experimental Medicine. Given her expertise in diagnostic methods and statistics, Ritin is also a member of the Cochrane Diagnostic methods group.

**New PhD student supported by ARC linkage project**

By the end of March we will have a new full time PhD student working on the project "**Establishing breastfeeding: An analysis of the language and practices used by midwives and lactation consultants when interacting with new mothers**". We had a very competitive field for this position and only wished that there were more scholarships available. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of midwives’ language, practices, education and public policy on first-time mothers’ breastfeeding experiences in the early postpartum period. This research will focus specifically on the interactions between midwives and lactation consultants (LCs) and women and the impact these have on women’s breastfeeding experiences. The research team are interested in investigating the ways in which health professionals interact with women in relation to breastfeeding, including what type of advice and support they give women, how they portray breastfeeding, how they represent the mother-child relationship and if these practices differ in hospitals that have achieved BFHI accreditation.

**Recent RHD students**

Still in the process of defining her project, **Kristie Maurici** joins us as a BN(Hons) student part-time, with supervisors Professor Rhonda Griffiths and Associate Professor Lorraine Ferguson. **Lisa Perrone** is a new PhD candidate for Associate Professor Margaret Vickers and Professor Debra Jackson and **Jasmin Perrone** is also a new PhD candidate for Associate Professor Margaret Vickers and Professor Lesley Wilkes. **Rakime Elmir** is a new PhD student under the supervision of Associate Professors Virginia Schmied and Louise O’Brien. **Jeni Stevens** has begun her BHons in the area of birthing doulas with Professor Debra Jackson and Dr Kath Peters. Welcome to all our new students.

**Congratulations to UWS top researchers**

In December 2007 the PVCR, Professor Cheetham held a small reception attended by the Vice Chancellor in which the contributions of the Universities top researchers during the 2004-2006 triennium was acknowledged. Three School of Nursing, Family & Community Health Research Group core members achieved at this level and had their contributions acknowledged. These were:

- **Lesley Wilkes**, in the top 40 by publication and in the top 20 by higher degree research student completions.
- **Louise O’Brien**, in the top 20 by higher degree research student completions and
- **Debra Jackson**, in the top 40 by publication. Congratulations and well done.

**Congratulations Debra**

Further congratulations are in order to **Debra Jackson** as winner of the Vice-Chancellor’s Excellence Awards for outstanding achievement and recognition in Postgraduate Research Training and Supervision at the end of last year.
Debra was especially delighted that she was nominated by two of her former students (and current colleagues!), Drs Lauretta Luck and Kath Peters, both of whom are active associate members of the Family & Community Health Research Group.

Debra is pictured right after receiving her award with Lauretta on her left and Kath on her right.

Congratulations RHD Graduands
We currently have three Family & Community Health Research Group RHD students on the Graduand list, graduating this April.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduand and award</th>
<th>Thesis title</th>
<th>Supervisors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms Michel Edenborough PhD</td>
<td>“The Prevalence, experience and nature of child-to-mother violence in a high-risk geographical area”</td>
<td>Professor Lesley Wilkes, Professor Debra Jackson, Ms Judy Mannix</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Ashwin Kumar PhD</td>
<td>“The use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) as lived by individuals living with chronic illness”</td>
<td>Professor Lesley Wilkes, Dr Shantala Mohan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms Myra Sgorbini MN (Hons)</td>
<td>“Living with Hepatitis C and Treatment: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Patients and their Partners”</td>
<td>A/Professor Louise O’Brien, Professor Debra Jackson</td>
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NIPPER Program

Nurturing Parents and Parenting: Enhancing family, community and organisational support for parents through Research (NIPPER)

The NIPPER research group lead by Virginia Schmied focuses on enhancing and supporting services provided to parents by their families, their communities and social service organisations. The program of research is supported by a team including, SON staff, industry collaborators, Adjunct fellows and higher degree students. Three research themes are currently supported by funded research: supporting parents and parenting, strategies to increase initiation and duration of breastfeeding, and creating sustainable health services to meet the needs of parents. At a recent meeting, team members also identified issues around cross-cultural parenting, men as parents and vulnerable families as themes for potential development. Some of the current projects include: “A healthy start: a study to design a new model of postnatal care in South West Sydney”, “The Baby Friendly Initiative: exploring the implementation and dissemination of a global policy”, and “Exploring professional collaboration: a key to sustainable universal health services”.

If any staff member would like more information on NIPPER please contact Virginia on v.schmied@uws.edu.au (ext 9505) or Annie Mills on ann.mills@uws.edu.au (ext 9503).

Exploring Pregnancy Outcomes (ExPO)

In December 2007 the College Research Committee called for expressions of interest from staff to form College Research Nodes. We are very pleased that one of the successful applications is for ExPO. The focus of the ExPO research node is to explore both the short and longer term health outcomes for women (and their infants) who have poor health, or medical complications in pregnancy such as hypertensive disorders, diabetes or obesity. We aim to strengthen research collaboration across schools, build research capacity and generate new knowledge that results in improved
health for mothers and babies, particularly those living in Sydney’s Greater West. This research node links researchers within the Family and Community Health Research Group and the School of Nursing with researchers from the Schools of Medicine and Biomedical and Health Sciences.

We will conduct epidemiological research using linked data to investigate the relationship between maternal poor health or complications in pregnancy and longer term outcomes for women’s health and the health of their infants and children. This work will be complemented by in-depth research using both well established and innovative social science methods to explore the experiences of women who have complications in pregnancy and to understand the way in which health services and professionals respond to their needs.

**The first meeting of collaborators was held on March 31st.** If anyone would like to talk more about the possibility of linking with this group please do not hesitate to contact Virginia v.schmied@uws.edu.au

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**Workforce in Nursing: Sustainability, health and practice development (WiN) Group**

Family and Community Health Research Group has successfully been awarded the sum of $50,000 from the School to develop the program of research on *Workforce in Nursing: sustainability, health, and practice development* (WiN Group) which will go towards supporting a number of small projects that may grow into larger studies, attracting external funding. To-date two projects are in development, "Understanding whistleblowing in the health sector: Experiences before and after the event" and "Post-registration experiences of NESB nurses entering through completion of a compressed program".

Another area of support for early career researchers and students will be writing retreats. For those of you who have not participated in these before, they are an excellent strategy for building strong working relationships and also for generating actual outcomes. See the advanced notice for 2008 Writing Retreats reported later in the e-Newsletter.

The WiN group sits within Family and Community Health Research Group and will contribute to the strength and output of FaCH. Members of the group include (in alphabetical order): Sharon Andrew, Vasiliki Betihavas, John Daly, Patricia Davidson, Kathleen Dixon, Michel Edenborough, Lorraine Ferguson, Liz Halcomb, Debra Jackson, Lauretta Luck, Judy Mannix, Robyn Moroney, Louise O'Brien, Olayide Ogunsiji, Kath Peters, Lucie Ramjan, Debra Raymond, Yenna Salamonson, Ana Smith, Virginia Schmied, Lyn Stewart, Maxine Veale, Roslyn Weaver and Lesley Wilkes.

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**Aged Care Research Sub Group**

The members of the *Aged Care and Graduate Workforce Issues Stream* represent an interdisciplinary team. Here is a list of the current members: Esther Chang, Leader of Stream, Sharon Bourgeois, Lyn Stewart, Nicole Knox, Liz Halcomb, Lorraine Ferguson and Karen Hancock. John Daly will continue to collaborate with the group on a number of projects in his capacity as Dean of Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, UTS. In addition, all students being supervised by the above staff are invited to be a part of the stream.

**Research Areas of Interest**

The research areas of interest are in aged care and dementia, bereavement and the role of the community nurse, and graduate workforce issues. The group received a $20,000 UWS partnership grant for the bereavement study, and a $5,000 education research grant from the College of Health and Science to conduct a study into successful nursing graduates. The group is currently preparing Federally funded grant proposals for their research areas of interest.
The group has been funded to employ a Research Development Officer for 3 days per week to facilitate the group’s goals. Dr Karen Hancock has been appointed to this position.

**Visiting Scholars**

**Ms Briege Casey** from Dublin City University visited us on the 22nd of February at the Campbelltown campus to present and discuss the use of nursing humanities in teaching and learning. Briege has worked in a range of mental and general health care settings in Ireland and Britain. She is a Pathway leader for the BSc Mental Health program and is particularly interested in the use of narrative and arts based approaches in health care, education and research. She is the facilitator of creative writing groups with nurses and mental health service users. Currently undertaking EdD; Narrative and Life Story Research, University of Bristol. Qualifications -RGN (1984), RMN (1987), BA Modern Arts (1990), P.G. Cert. and Diploma in Further and Higher Education (1998), R.N.T (1998), MSc Advanced Nursing (2001). Her presentation generated lively discussion and interest in the program.

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**Professor Tonda Hughes** (University of Illinois) visited UWS from Friday 29th February to Wednesday 5th March. She gave an informative presentation at the Campbelltown Campus on Monday the 3rd of March focused on “How to develop a successful research career” which was of great interest to RHD students and early career colleagues. Professor Hughes holds a Chair at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the Department of Public Health Mental Health and Administrative Nursing and has extensive research experience in drugs, alcohol, sexual identity and women’s health.

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**Professor Roger Watson** (University of Sheffield) will be visiting the School during the week of 14th April 2008. Prof Watson holds a Chair at the University of Sheffield and is a renowned scholar and author of many provocative and cutting edge papers regarding a range of contemporary issues confronting nursing and health. He also has considerable expertise in dementia research. On Tuesday the 15th of April he will be presenting at the Parramatta campus between 2-4 pm. The discussion will be focused on research and the benefits and pitfalls associated with this.

**Report on Writing Retreats in 2007**

FaCH supported two writing retreats at the UWS Hawkesbury Conference Centre at the end of last year for FaCH students and Associate Members. The purpose of these retreats is to provide mentorship to support the generation of relevant quality publications for PhD candidates Rebecca O’Reilly & Leah East submission to peer review journals.
The first retreat in November had 12 early career researcher and student participants and three mentors, Professors Debra Jackson and Lesley Wilkes and Associate Professor Louise O’Brien. Those taking part in the intense writing program worked on a total of 16 papers, many of which were completed before the end of the retreat and have since been submitted to various peer review journals. The second retreat supported 11 early career researcher and student participants and three mentors, Professors Debra Jackson and Patricia Davies and Kath Peters, Lauretta Luck, Tamara Vallido, Sarah Gabrielle & Glenda McDonald Associate Professor Louise O’Brien. Participants at the retreat worked on a number of academic writing activities, journal articles, book chapters, ethics applications, confirmation of candidature and thesis chapters, with 7 papers and a book chapter completed for peer review. For those of you interested in applying for a place at one of the forthcoming retreats please contact Michel m.edenborough@uws.edu.au for further details and an information sheet and see below for advanced notice of dates set aside for 2008.

**ADVANCED NOTICE....Writing Retreats in 2008**

FaCH writing retreats will go ahead this year at the UWS Hawkesbury Conference Centre on the **23rd - 25th June**, **20th - 22nd October** and **15th - 17th December**. The purpose of these retreats is to provide mentorship to support the generation of relevant quality publications for submission to peer review journals. Mentors are selected from the Core Membership group who volunteer to take part, advising and guiding participating students and early career researchers.

Expressions of interest for the first of the three retreats will go out shortly. For those who are interested and would like to participate, please mark your calendar and get in touch with Michel m.edenborough@uws.edu.au to register your interest.

**Media release of the Child-to-mother violence findings**

A press release went out on the 11th of February (see below) with a great deal of interest generated in the national and international press regarding the project “A study of the prevalence, experience and nature of child-to-mother violence”. Researchers on the project were Michel Edenborough PhD candidate, and supervisors Professors Lesley Wilkes and Debra Jackson and Ms Judy Mannix. To-date there has been approximately 34 reports from print, radio and television media.

**UWS opens curtains on child-to-mother violence in our suburbs**

A research project conducted by the University of Western Sydney (UWS) has revealed that 51 per cent of women experience some form of violence at the hands of their own children.

The project was lead by Professor Lesley Wilkes from the School of Nursing at UWS and funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant. Professor Wilkes says there are a complexity of issues that make it more difficult for women to protect...
themselves against violence from their child.

“There are many types of violence that mothers experience from their children in the home but people shouldn’t assume violence has to be physical,” Professor Wilkes says.

“While bullying, hitting and threats of self-harm from their children are what mothers are most fearful about, the most common forms of child-to-mother violence reported are swearing and name-calling, demeaning parenting skills, damaging property, the ‘silent treatment’ and aggressively making demands.

Professor Wilkes says a woman’s role as mother focuses concern away from themselves and often redirects the concern to their child. For example, where women might be encouraged to separate from a violent partner, dividing from a violent child is not viewed as a possibility by mothers.

UWS PhD graduate Michel Edenborough who conducted the study of over 1000 women selected at random from the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Penrith and surrounding suburbs, says mothers attributed much of this conduct as ‘normal’ teenage behaviour but admitted to being fearful of their children.

“The questionnaires were designed to inform researchers about the incidence and frequency of violence, identify the perpetrators and targets and explore the experiences of child-to-mother violence; as well as identify the support networks and services women can utilise,” Ms Edenborough says.

The questionnaires revealed mothers are particularly fearful of sons aged 13-18, although daughters can also be violent towards their mother.

“A blurred power dynamic between parent and child results in mothers experiencing frequent intimidation, lack of respect and bullying - which is not acceptable or typical teenage behaviour,” Ms Edenborough says.

The study found that the younger the child commences this behaviour the longer it continues and the greater the amount of violence occurs – suggesting that a child who is violent to their mother may continue to be violent to others when they reach maturity.

Professor Wilkes says studies like this provide a clear understanding and recognition of issues that mothers often face alone; and can assist health and community services to help families stop the violence that is occurring behind closed curtains in our suburbs.

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**Family & Community Health Research Group**

**Publications**

**Books, Book Chapters and Journal Papers for 2007/2008**


47. Griffiths, R., Stone, A., Tran, D., Fernandez, R., & Ford, K. (2007). Drink a little; take a few drugs; Do nurses have knowledge to identify and manage inpatients at risk of drugs and alcohol? *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 26, 545-552.


