

## Person-centred dementia care caught on film

*Come Into My World. How to Interact with a Person who has Dementia: An educational resource for undergraduate healthcare students on person-centred care* was launched on 4th June at the Alzheimers Australia national conference in Adelaide. It was produced through a partnership between the School of Nursing & Midwifery (SONM), Screen Studies in the Faculty of Education, Humanities, Theology and Law (FEHTL), and the South Australian & Northern Territory Dementia Training Study Centre (SA & NT DTSC). The research and production team comprised of Anita De Bellis, Sandy Bradley, Pauline Guerin, Bonnie Walter and Jan Paterson from the SONM, along with Alison Wotherspoon from FEHLT, and Maggie Cecchin from the SA & NT DTSC.

A hard copy of the resource has been produced and will be available for students and lecturers in undergraduate programs across disciplines. It is presently being converted to an online resource for free access by educators and students. The resource aims to equip students with appropriate psychosocial approaches in their practice when interacting with a person who has dementia, known as positive person work.

The resource takes the form of a workbook and accompanying DVD. The workbook provides students and educators with a theoretical background to person-centred care that is recognised as best practice, with the aim of alleviating malignant psychosocial practices that may lead to unwanted behaviours and deteriorating dementia.

The accompanying DVD contains interviews with health professionals regarding dementia care and Professor Dawn Brooker, considered an expert in this field of dementia care. Five

filmed docu-dramas were researched in the field of practice and provided by members of an advisory group. These docu-dramas illustrate both negative and positive interactions in various settings with different health practitioners. Having read the workbook and viewed the DVD, students are directed to a bank of reflective questions.

The resource has been evaluated by undergraduate student cohorts from four different healthcare programs, and healthcare academics across disciplines in the four universities of the NT and SA. Evaluation data determined the educational resource to be very useful by students and academics.

The use of filmed material to demonstrate the theoretical underpinning of person-centred care is one beneficial way to engage students in evidence-based practice. The collaborative and

interdisciplinary approach used in the production of this resource generated much enthusiasm, interest and willingness to participate by all those involved.

This project was funded by a grant from the SA & NT DTSC and a scholarship from the Nurses Memorial Foundation of SA Inc. The team is grateful for the assistance of all of those who participated in the project including the members of the Alzheimer's Australia SA Carer Advisory and Advocacy Committee, reviewers of the product, actors, film crew and those who provided the settings for the filming of the case scenarios.

For information or queries regarding this resource, please contact Dr Anita De Bellis, School of Nursing and Midwifery on 8201 3441 or by email at [anita.debellis@flinders.edu.au](mailto:anita.debellis@flinders.edu.au)



*Some members of research/production team, advisory group, cast and crew at the preview of the DVD in April 2009*

# Growing Research Activity and Opportunities



There have been several developments over the past weeks which will further strengthen the research activities of our Faculty and increase opportunities for young researchers.

The first was the Vice Chancellor's announcement about the future of Flinders University's Areas of Strategic Research Investment (ASRIs). Four ASRIs based within the Faculty of Health Sciences were supported for continued funding from the University. I congratulate the members of each of the successful ASRIs including the Flinders Centre for Cancer Prevention and Control; the Flinders Centre for Clinical Change and Health Care Research; Ophthalmology, Eye and Vision; and The Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity. I also congratulate the members of our Faculty who belong to ASRIs based in other Faculties of the University, including Flinders Medical Devices and Technologies.

While some of our Faculty's previous ASRIs were not supported for continued central funding, this does not mean that these areas of research are not important for our Faculty. I have been meeting with leaders of these research areas and have asked our Deans to develop strategic advice on how we can continue to support our research activity in each of these areas. I am very aware that

many of our leading and most productive researchers and research teams belong to areas which were not favoured for continued funding, or even part of the original ASRI structures, and I wish to work with each of you to develop ways to continue to see you acknowledged and rewarded for your achievements and to enhance opportunities for you to continue to attain excellence in your important fields of research activity.

A research intensive faculty like ours also needs to encourage innovation in research and the professional development of our younger researchers. Our Faculty and Schools have a range of initiatives in place to support innovation and career development and I am keen to hear your ideas about how these opportunities can be enhanced and further developed. As one example it was pleasing to see five of our leading researchers recognised through the recent Bellberry awards and provided with funding to support submission of NHMRC project grant proposals. Six Nursing and Midwifery partnership grants have recently been announced by the Faculty Research Committee, as well as a number of writing support grants available to researchers planning to submit ARC Linkage Grant proposals in 2009.

The May Federal Budget also saw the announcement of the establishment of the full four year Flinders medical program in the Northern Territory. I congratulate everyone involved in the years of work and effort which have resulted in this successful announcement. This new medical program is designed to allow residents of the Northern Territory to complete the full medical degree in the Northern Territory. Most importantly, this initiative is expected to see a significant increase in the number of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory enrolling in medicine and this should see major improvements in many aspects of Indigenous health and well being across Australia for many years to come.

Research will be a core part of the Flinders University Northern Territory Medical Program and we expect to see flow on effects and research opportunities for many other clinical areas within our Faculty. It is revealing to reflect on many of the research and education partnerships which members of Flinders University have developed across the Northern Territory over the years including the great work of our very successful Northern Territory Clinical School and Northern Territory Rural Clinical School. Examples of our involvement in the Northern Territory include our strong continuing partnership with the Northern Territory Government, the remarkable ten years of activity of our acclaimed Centre for Remote Health based in Alice Springs, the work of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health which has Flinders as a core partner and involves many Flinders researchers, our relationships with the Menzies School of Health Research based in Darwin, our partnership with the new Baker IDI Research presence being developed in Alice Springs, our expanding partnerships with Charles Darwin University and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and our links with a number of other key organisations based in the Northern Territory including many of the remarkable clinical services being provided to the people of the Territory.

The May 2009 Budget announcement marks the start of a new era for health and medical research and education in the Northern Territory and Flinders is proud to be a partner in this innovation.

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# New research suggests Alzheimer's can be beaten with grape seeds

We've all been spitting them out for years, but now grape seeds have been identified by Flinders University researchers as a potential treatment in preventing the development of Alzheimer's disease.

Using a mouse model, a team of medical scientists in the Department of Human Physiology, headed by Professor Xin-Fu Zhou, has found that adding grape seed extract to the diet acts to prevent the formation of deposits of amyloid proteins in the brain. Professor Zhou said that over-production of amyloid-beta proteins, or the body's failure to degrade them, leads to the formation of clumps or snarls in the brain and is a major cause of Alzheimer's disease. 'This aggregation of amyloid will cause loss of nerve connections, cell death and inflammation in the brain, leading to cognitive decline,' Professor Zhou said.

Many fruits and vegetables contain polyphenols - complex molecules with anti-oxidant properties - and some have been identified by scientists as a possible method for reducing amyloid deposition. Professor Zhou's team, in

collaboration with researchers from CSIRO, chose to experiment with the polyphenol extract from grape seeds, a resource in which South Australia is particularly rich.

Grape seed extract was fed to mice affected by transgenic Alzheimer's for six months, after which the researchers observed their behaviour and brain pathology, comparing them with a control group. 'We found that grape seed extract was a very powerful agent in reducing amyloid-beta deposits in the brain. It also produced marginal improvements in cognitive function and, most importantly, reduced inflammation,' Professor Zhou said. He said that the CSIRO team led by Dr Michael Fenech found that grape seed extract also prevented DNA damage by amyloids in the same mouse model.

'In general, grape seed extract demonstrates a strong disease-modifying effect,' Professor Zhou said. Because mice are comparable to humans in physiological and behavioural terms, the grape seed extract is potentially an effective preventive measure against the development of Alzheimer's. 'As a dietary supplement, the effect

of grape seeds is significant and beneficial; it is a safe, natural product which contains "goodies" that we shouldn't throw away.'

Lead researcher Dr Yanjiang Wang said that moderate wine consumption is already recommended to prevent Alzheimer's disease, but since the disease mainly afflicts elderly people, many of whom cannot or will not drink alcohol, grape seed extract is a better choice to prevent the disease.

The study's findings will be published shortly, and Dr Wang will also present the results to the Society for Neuroscience annual conference in Washington DC in November. The team is now seeking funding to enable further research that aims to identify the specific active compounds in grape seeds.

For further information contact Professor Xin-Fu Zhou, [xin-fu.zhou@flinders.edu.au](mailto:xin-fu.zhou@flinders.edu.au)

*Article sourced with permission from Flinders Marketing and Communications Office*

## International Indigenous Researcher Training

Gwyn Jolley and Catherine Hurley from the SA Community Health Research Unit coordinated a two week Indigenous research training course in March funded jointly by the international Teasdale Corti project *Revitalizing Health for All: Learning from Comprehensive Primary Health Care Experiences* and the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health. The course was held at Tauondi College, Port Adelaide. Similar training has been conducted in South America, Africa and India.

During the training, six teams of researchers and research users worked together to further develop their research proposals. Three teams were from Australian Indigenous health services: Urapuntja Health Service, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, and Central Australian Aboriginal Congress; two were First Nations Canadian teams from Saskatchewan and Manitoba and one team from an Aotearoa New Zealand Maori program.

In addition, a number of presentations contributed to participants understanding of comprehensive primary health care globally and locally, and to the development of research capacity.

The major outcomes included: increased understanding of comprehensive primary health care and the importance of research in contributing to the evidence base, increase in skills in developing a research proposal, progress on research proposals, and establishing networks with colleagues. A sense of collegiality developed between



*A training session at Tauondi College*

teams, networks and friendships were established. Teams shared ideas and learning both about their specific contexts and about their research challenges.

The research teams have now returned to their health services to finalise their proposals, and begin implementation. The findings from the completed research projects will feed into projects being conducted across the globe with the aim of increasing the evidence base for comprehensive primary health care and strengthening the provision of effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable primary health care services.

**Gwyn Jolley and Catherine Hurley**  
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# Some parting thoughts from a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

I recently finished my appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at Flinders University, having managed the research portfolio for the University for more than a decade. As I did so, I found myself musing on my experience of the role and what we have achieved.

The role is an odd one. Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) are responsible for the research performance of universities but no-one who actually does research reports to us or through us. Thus, it is very much a matter of responsibility without authority and so the role is one of facilitation. The principal issue is to harness the workforce in a way that has everyone pulling in roughly the same direction.

Against this background, what we have achieved at Flinders over the last decade, and particularly the last five years, in research has been remarkable and something of which we

should all be proud. Particularly through the Areas of Strategic Research Investment we have drawn together researchers from across the institution to work together in innovative configurations which were of their own design. This approach harnessed the creativity and deep knowledge of our research community to bring into existence some distinctive areas which have served Flinders well, resulting in an enduring change of culture, characterised by a willingness to collaborate across the institution and a willingness to consider new ideas.

Furthermore, these changes have led to a real improvement in performance. Overall research income for the University increased in each of the last five years, 67% over the last three years. There has been particularly strong growth in collaborative research, with the number of research contracts increasing

by more than 50% from 2007 to 2008, and 270% since 2004. Research income has risen by 83% over the last three years for which data is available and we now lead the other two SA universities in collaborative research income per capita. Furthermore, these improvements in performance have been achieved in a very competitive environment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those with whom I have interacted over the last eleven years for your cooperation and support. It has been a great privilege to work with – and for – the research community at Flinders.

**Professor Chris Marlin**  
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*Based on a speech delivered by Professor Chris Marlin on 7 April 2008, in the Flinders University Function Centre*

## Community Point-of-Care Services: Expanding Horizons

The Community Point-of-Care Service (CPS) unit within the Flinders University Rural Clinical School (FURCS) has been a pioneer and national leader in the field of point-of-care pathology testing (POCT) for the past decade. Its national Quality Assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services (QAAMS) Program, in which POCT for diabetes management is conducted in over 100 Aboriginal medical services, is considered the benchmark in its field. The program, which has been continuously funded by the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing for the past 10 years, recently underwent an independent evaluation by a Melbourne-based consultancy who concluded: 'All sources of evidence suggest that QAAMS is meeting best practice standards in the areas of Indigenous healthcare, diabetes management and Point of Care testing'.

Over the past 18 months the CPS unit has expanded its POCT research and teaching activities considerably. The unit's Director Dr Mark Shephard explains: 'It's been an exciting period of growth for our unit. We've established new research models in the Northern Territory, in which POCT for acute and chronic care is being conducted in 30 remote health centres using the Abbott i-STAT device [which measures tests including electrolytes, urea, creatinine, blood gases, and international normalised ratio (INR)], and in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in the Western Desert region of outback Western Australia, where the HemoCue DM 201 device is being used to identify and monitor anaemia in clinics across the Lands. Both the i-STAT and HemoCue devices are networked to a Central Data Station (CDS) at our CPS unit, through which all POCT test results are captured electronically from the participating remote health centres and managed by our CPS scientific team. The HemoCue network is the first of its type to be developed in Australia for use in remote health services'.



*CPS unit Director Mark Shephard (far right) and scientist Beryl Mazzachi (second from right) training health professionals at Moruya in NSW*

The expertise of the CPS unit is now also actively being sought internationally. For example, through a partnership between Ngati Porou Hauora (the largest Maori health service provider in New Zealand), Roche Diagnostics NZ and the CPS unit, POCT for INR is being conducted for warfarin management on the CoaguChek XS device across a network of 6 NPH health centres along the East Cape region in the North Island of New Zealand.

The CPS unit is also at the forefront of teaching initiatives in POCT. During the second semester of 2008, the CPS unit delivered a full topic entitled Point-of-Care Testing - Application, Management and Effectiveness to 3rd Year Bachelor of Medical Science students at Flinders University. This is the first time that POCT has been taught as a full topic at any Australian University.

More information on the unit's activities can be found at <http://furcs.flinders.edu.au/cps>

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# Reducing Family Homicide: Learning from Loss

Domestic violence is often a factor in homicides especially of women and children, yet these homicides may be preventable. Some Australian states have established multi-disciplinary Domestic Violence Death Review teams to identify common traits, trends and missed opportunities for intervention, leading to improved responses to domestic and family violence.

The Southgate Institute for Health Society and Equity at Flinders University, with support from University of South Australia and Office for the Status of Women, hosted a Forum on Domestic Violence Homicide on the 20th February. The Forum was chaired by Associate Professor Charmaine Power from the School of Nursing and Midwifery. The forum brought together key representatives from all the significant agencies/services involved in SA to discuss the development of a research proposal to conduct Domestic Violence related homicide reviews in SA, as well as to establish an action group to undertake advocacy work in promoting homicide review.

Key speakers at the Forum included Betty Taylor, consultant and partner in TAVAN Institute, who presented *Dying to Be Heard – Exploring the options for domestic violence death reviews*, and Betty Green, Convenor of NSW Domestic Violence Coalition who presented *Domestic Violence Homicide: Women's Deaths Are Preventable*. Dr Elspeth McInnes from the University of South Australia and Charmaine Power spoke about the proposed review of domestic violence related homicides in SA.

Based on figures from National Homicide Monitoring program there are 76 deaths per year in Australia which are intimate partner homicide, the majority of which have a previous record of domestic violence. On average 25 children per year are the victims of homicide in Australia, with one third of these deaths occurring in circumstances of domestic violence and/or family breakdown.



*Participants at the Forum*

Presenters at the forum emphasized that domestic violence deaths are preventable and preceded by predictable patterns of behaviour. The aim of domestic violence death reviews is not to apportion blame to any individual or agency. Rather it is about identifying the nature and patterns of domestic violence that lead to fatalities and to create social and system reforms to prevent domestic violence. Domestic violence death reviews are invaluable in identifying common weaknesses in systems and protocols responding to domestic violence that have led to a fatality.

Outcomes of the Forum included the establishment of a Research Reference Group which aims to support and facilitate the conduct of DV Death Review research in SA.

An Advocacy Group was also formed to:

- lobby the SA Government for Domestic Violence Homicide Death Reviews,
- support and foster the formation of advocacy groups in states without them
- lobby for a Federal Family Law Death Review process,
- establish and maintain an SA database on

Domestic Violence homicides and assist with establishment of a National Domestic Violence Homicide Review Group.

Please contact Charmaine Power on 82013270 [charmaine.power@flinders.edu.au](mailto:charmaine.power@flinders.edu.au) or Elspeth McInnes on 83024042 [elspeth.mcinnis@unisa.edu.au](mailto:elspeth.mcinnis@unisa.edu.au) for further information about either the Advocacy or Research Groups. Your interest and participation is welcome.



*Charmaine Power addressing the Forum*

## News from the Office of Research

The Flinders University Office of Research has recently released a Research Calendar listing important deadlines and events in 2009 and a Budget Tool Template to assist researchers to fully cost a research project. Both can be accessed at <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/>

You can also keep up to date with Health Sciences specific announcements from the Office of Research by subscribing to their blog at: <http://blogs.flinders.edu.au/research/>

# Student voices on the Faculty Research Committee

The Faculty Research Committee provides strategic advice and direction for research activities in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Executive Dean and Committee Chair, Michael Kidd, is pleased to announce the appointment of two new student representatives to this Committee. Alison Clarke and Julie Fleet are undertaking Research Higher Degree courses in the School of Medicine and the School of Nursing and Midwifery respectively. Here's an insight into their research projects...



Alison Clarke

Alison is currently in her second year of her PhD in the Department of Ophthalmology, investigating the use of gene therapy in prolonging corneal transplant survival. Corneal transplants are performed

in order to improve patient vision and may be undertaken as a result of trauma to the cornea, bacterial or viral ulcers and scarring, or due to a corneal dystrophy. Although corneal grafts have a very high survival rate for the first year post-graft compared with other organ transplants,

they have an average long-term survival time of only 12.4 years. The major cause of graft failure is immunological rejection. Prolongation of graft survival may be achieved by inducing the expression of therapeutic transgenes in the donor cornea to repress various immune response pathways and this immune modulation has previously been successfully demonstrated in animal models. Alison is working with a pre-clinical sheep model using a multigenic therapeutic approach to prolong graft survival.

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Julie graduated from the Flinders University Bachelor of Midwifery program in 2006, and is currently working as a Midwife and Childbirth Educator in a South Australian rural hospital. After achieving first class honours in the Bachelor of Midwifery Honours program in 2008, Julie was awarded a university medal and an Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship to further her studies. In her PhD project Julie plans to explore the use of narcotics in labour by undertaking a randomised control trial, comparing outcomes and efficacy of fentanyl with the most commonly used narcotic,

pethidine. This study also aims to understand the woman's experience and coping strategies during labour while exploring alternative methods of narcotic administration.



Julie Fleet

This research builds upon Julie's Honours project which demonstrated that fentanyl administered subcutaneously during childbirth was safe and efficacious to the mother and had minimal effects on the infant. Further, this method was less invasive and restrictive than narcotics administered intravenously or by epidural and could be managed by midwives through a standing order. It is anticipated that the results of Julie's PhD study will provide women with an alternative choice of pharmacological pain relief during childbirth that is safe and efficacious, and useful for women birthing in rural and remote settings where specialist resources are limited.

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## Bellberry award for aging research

Adult stem cells provide essential capacity for growth, renewal and repair of tissues throughout life. Controlling stem cell activities is important in the development of stem cell-based therapies.

We are particularly interested in changes that occur in the genome of stem cells during aging. Our model system is the muscle stem cell population known as satellite cells. Muscle repair and maintenance becomes less efficient as we age, thought to be largely due to declining function of satellite cells. It is unclear if this decline is intrinsic to the cells, or due to changes in their local environment, or both. We believe that key age-related changes are epigenetic, meaning (in this context) modifications to the genome that do not affect the DNA sequence. Such modifications include methylation of DNA, and modification of histone proteins that package the

DNA. These modifications have a critical role in controlling gene expression.

We have recently received a Bellberry Foundation 'near-miss' award to support the resubmission of a highly scored but unfunded NHMRC grant to identify and compare such epigenetic changes in satellite cells from young and old mice. This project is technically challenging because of the rarity of satellite cells and the difficulty in isolating them from muscle. The Bellberry funding will be used to show the feasibility of our experimental approach.

This project will also complement an ongoing study that investigates a transcription factor called Barx2 that is involved in aging of satellite cells. Loss of Barx2 leads to an apparent premature aging phenotype involving both muscle and skin stem cells. Ultimately we hope that our work will identify targets for drug therapies or provide diagnostic markers of stem cell dysfunction.

**Robyn.meech@flinders.edu.au**



# Celebrating Success in the Faculty

The Faculty of Health Sciences congratulates members who have recently received research grants, contracts, awards or honours. The following list shows Chief Investigators who received research funding from 28/2/2009 to 15/5/2009, as advised by the Office of Research.

## ARC Linkage Projects

- JP Smith, KF Mortensen, DH Broom, Ellen McInyre, Sara Javanparast, JP Craig, L Strazdins; *Working while breastfeeding: best practice strategies for workplaces and childcare centres*, \$132,056
- WA Dawson, JW Boland, John Coveney, Paul Ward, M Stasiak, A Gray; *Zeroing in on food waste: Measuring, understanding and reducing food waste*, \$308,000
- Richard Bentham, Kathleen Soole; *Investigation of Australian crop species for the rhizoremediation of residual sulfonyl urea herbicide contaminations in agricultural soils*, \$78,420

- Meryl Pearce, Eileen Willis, Bradley Jorgensen, John Martin; *Interactions between social, economic and regulatory aspects of residential household water consumption*, \$39,291

## Department of Health & Ageing

- Malcolm Battersby, Peter Harvey, Richard Reed, Peter Frith, Richard Woodman, Jeannette Walters, Sue McKechnie, Julie Bonnici; *Sharing Health Care Initiative: Innovation in Chronic Disease Self-Management Research Grants Program - Are patient competencies improved using the Flinders self-management approach*, \$506,710
- Sharon Lawn, Anna Barbara, Daryll Branford; *Carers Supporting People with Chronic Mental Health Conditions - DVD Learning Resource*, \$48,696

## Neutrog Australia

- Richard Bentham; *A Workplace health*

*assessment at the Kanmantoo site*, \$2,200

## Bellberry Awards

- Robyn Meech; *Effects of ageing and disease on muscle stem cells*, \$65,000.
- Vladimir Zagorodnyuk; *Nerves of the bladder involved in diabetes-induced overactivity*, \$65,000.
- Keryn Williams; *Ophthalmic implants based on porous silicon matrices*, \$60,000.
- Simon Brookes; *Location of pain-sensitive nerves in the digestive system*, \$45,000
- Melissa Brown; *MtrCDE-mediated multidrug resistance in Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, \$65,000.

*Research Pulse* welcomes information regarding grants, awards and honours for publication in future issues.

## Dr Lawn explores the patient perspective

Encouraging health care workers to take the simple step of listening more to the needs and coping capacities of chronically ill patients would help reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, improve working relationships between health workers and patients and ultimately deliver health outcomes for patients, according to Dr Sharon Lawn.

Dr Lawn from the Human Behaviour and Health Research Unit believes that health professionals often operate within the boundaries of a 'reactive' system, which relies on a variety of structured support services to assist patients with chronic conditions rather than supplementing their self management skills.

Dr Lawn said 'It is easy for us as health professionals to be one step removed from our patients. In doing so, we miss important information about their needs and coping capacities. As a result, we are in danger of overlooking the very things that are often the most important barriers and enablers to them living to their maximum potential despite the presence of chronic illness.'

'Consequently, many patients often struggle to problem-solve and negotiate the health system in spite of good self management skills, with some even opting to act passively as recipients of expert advice and intervention, asking few questions. The result of this is that they can receive little service other than ad hoc responses to

issues as they arise which can sometimes be too late, resulting in an admission to hospital that may well have been avoided or delayed at the early intervention or prevention end, where real benefits could have been made.'

To address this, Dr Lawn's team have compiled a collection of case studies from people suffering from chronic illness and produced a booklet entitled *The Person's Experience of Chronic Condition Self-Management*.

This publication is aimed at providing a deeper understanding of the burdens faced by people with chronic conditions and is appropriate for students, health professionals, educators, people with chronic conditions and their carers.

Dr Lawn believes that 'people are more than a string of symptoms to be managed with medications and behavioural adjustments; they have complex life histories that impact on their health behaviours in spite of knowing what is "good for them"'. She said that 'this book has provided patients with a voice and offered a greater understanding of how a person living with a chronic condition responds to illness management and to health system support.'

### Dr Sharon Lawn

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*Adapted from an interview with Charles Gent, Flinders Journal. Reproduced with permission.*

# Flinders deal to prevent pain and deliver financial gain

Flinders University has signed a deal with biotechnology firm, Xenome Ltd, to license research that will assist in the development of drugs to arrest acute pancreatitis, a condition that causes hundreds of thousands of hospitalisations around the world each year and can lead to potentially life-threatening severe acute pancreatitis. The deal has the potential to generate multi-million dollar revenues for Flinders University through milestone and royalty payments.

Researchers at Flinders University and Flinders Medical Centre, led by Chief Medical Scientist Professor Gino Saccone, have discovered that surface receptors in the central nervous and endocrine systems, when activated by the peptide galanin, act as a step in the biochemical cascade that leads rapidly to acute inflammation of the pancreas.

Using animal models of pancreatitis, the Flinders researchers have identified two peptides that block the activity of the galanin receptors, resulting in amelioration of acute pancreatitis. While there are existing drugs that treat some symptoms and complications of pancreatitis, the peptide-based treatment promises the ability to treat the condition directly.

Flinders Partners Pty Ltd, the technology transfer arm of the University, has licensed the new technology to Xenome, a company with extensive experience in peptide development. Xenome will use its capabilities to modify the peptides to create candidate products for pancreatitis treatment that will be then taken into pre-clinical development. Under the contract, Xenome will pay the University a series of milestone payments, as well as contracted research and royalty income.

Managing Director of Flinders Partners, Mr Anthony Francis, said it was pleasing to see ground-breaking science from Flinders in the hands of a company such as Xenome, which has a demonstrated ability to move peptide drugs through discovery into clinical development.

Xenome CEO Dr Ian Nisbet said that “new treatments for pancreatitis are desperately needed and we’re keen to take the technology from the Flinders group forward,” noting also that the deal with Flinders complements the company’s internal discovery and development activities.

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**Flinders Clinical and  
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*Content sourced from Flinders News*

## Angela Binns: supporting research in Health Sciences

In previous issues, *Research Pulse* has often introduced new staff within the Faculty of Health Sciences. This month is somewhat different. We’ve shifted the focus to recognise the efforts of Angela Binns, a longstanding staff member who has worked tirelessly over the past sixteen years to support research within the Faculty.

Angela is the Assistant Manager of Support Services in the School of Medicine and Medical Biotechnology’s Senior Technical Officer. Her roles and responsibilities are varied and she offers support to academic, postgraduate and research personnel within the faculty.

As the Executive Officer of the Flinders Institutional Biosafety Committee Angela is the primary contact between researchers and the committee, whilst monitoring the university’s compliance in all facets of biosafety. Her occupational health and safety responsibilities are broad and extend from the departmental through to the university level. This includes being an active member of numerous OH&S committees, providing inductions for new personnel and delivering training in workplace substances, centrifuges and liquid nitrogen use to researchers.

The School of Medicine common service tissue culture and centrifuge rooms are coordinated by Angela, enabling researchers to access an array of facilities. Within Medical Biotechnology Angela oversees the

coordination of the laboratory facilities and practices and is responsible for the purchase and shipping of research equipment and consumables. Her involvement in the planning of the new Health Sciences Building was an exciting and challenging experience for her.

Angela is proud to have been awarded a Staff Award for Outstanding Contribution to Flinders University in 2007 and in 2008 a School of Medicine Deans Award.

She enjoys interacting with such a broad spectrum on people within the University.

**Angela Binns**  
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If you would like to recognise the efforts of a research support staff member in a future issue of *Research Pulse*, contact [denise.caretti@flinders.edu.au](mailto:denise.caretti@flinders.edu.au).



*research pulse* is an initiative of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Flinders University. Comments and suggestions for future articles are welcome.

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