

Community Connections

University of Wollongong - Special Supplement No.4

Combating diabetes in a living laboratory

Diabetes is on the march in Australia, with 7.8% of Australians now suffering from the Type 2 version of the disease. NSW has experienced a 300 percent increase in diabetes in the past 10 years, and experts warn that unless the trend is reversed two million Australians will suffer from the disease – mostly caused by lifestyle and diet - by 2010.

However, a program involving a partnership between the University of Wollongong, the Illawarra Division of General Practice (IDGP) and Beaton Park Leisure Centre aims to not only help people with diabetes, but actually reverse the disease.

University of Wollongong School of Health Sciences Senior Lecturer Owen Curtis, who helped set up the Exercise – Essential Medicine for Diabetes Program in 2004, sees the Illawarra community as a “living laboratory”, where UOW staff and students can work with the community to provide positive outcomes for both.

“Through a program like this the University provides a valuable resource to the community, and in return our students are exposed to this ‘living laboratory’ where they can work on real cases in a safe and mentored environment while developing their skills,” Mr Curtis said.

Under the program, final year Exercise Science and Rehabilitation students work with people who have recently been diagnosed with diabetes. Their mission is to implement individually-tailored exercise programs for each person with diabetes, and support and monitor progress over a 12-week period.

The students and the people with recently diagnosed diabetes meet six times over the course of the 12 week program either at Beaton Park Leisure Centre or in their own home. Beaton Park provides access to exercise equipment in the gymnasium and all program participants have assessments and programs written by qualified Exercise Physiologists.

“It’s a matter of both the students and the people with diabetes learning and giving,” Mr Curtis said. “The students must earn the trust of the people they are dealing with, and form and manage on-going relationships. In return, these students provide enthusiastic support and advice for individuals who often require lifestyle change, including increasing physical activity and changing the foods they eat.”

We spoke to people directly involved in the program:

The Participants

The *Exercise – Essential Medicine for Diabetes Program* is a family affair for Geoff and Anne Hyland of Berkeley.

Anne, 62, participated last year after she had developed



UOW student Clare Fitzgerald (left) is assisting Geoff Hyland (right) combat the effects of diabetes through exercise and diet. Geoff's daughter Lee McEvoy (second from right) and wife Anne are also involved.

diabetes from medication she was taking. She is attending again this year to support her husband Geoff, 61, who joined the program after he was diagnosed with the early stages of diabetes, complicating an existing problem with kidney stones. Their daughter Lee McEvoy, 41 of Figtree, also joined the program this year to try to combat a glucose intolerance and ensure it does not develop into diabetes.

Geoff said before he joined the program he had done little exercise over the past 15 years, and “loved his food”. Now he attends the program three times a week, follows the exercise program Clare has devised for him, and regularly takes his dog for 1½ hour walks. He also follows a much stricter diet and “doesn’t eat the wrong things any more”.

He lost 18 kg in the first six weeks of the program, and is delighted with his increased energy levels.

“It’s a realistic diet and exercise program, and I’m feeling better all the time,” he said. “When I started on the exercise machines I’d be lucky to do 10 minutes at a time, but now I’m doing 25 minutes and upping the speed “

Geoff said the program had improved his kidney stones symptoms and he was hopeful it would turn back the diabetes.

Lee said she was enjoying the program, and could feel the benefits. “Before I started I didn’t have the energy to do anything, and now I have,” she said.

The Student:

For Bachelor of Science (Exercise Science) student Clare Fitzgerald, being involved in the program has convinced her that she is studying the right degree – a degree that will allow her to make a difference in people’s lives.

Clare works with diabetes sufferer Geoff Hyland and his daughter Lee McEvoy, implementing exercise and diet regimes to help them better manage their health problems.

“It is great to get real experience working with people, and to be able to help them and see them improving,” she said. “I love it, and I think Geoff and Lee enjoy having someone young to listen to. They understand that I’m still learning, and they’re always helpful and supportive. They’ve both made a lot of progress and it is good to see the way they encourage each other.

“Being involved in this program has reinforced what I want to do, and where I want to go in my career. It has helped me realize that I am in the right degree.”

Continued on Page 2.

Schizophrenia program focuses on self-help

A national program developed at the University of Wollongong is making a real difference to the way schizophrenia and other mental health disorders are treated.

A team of University of Wollongong researchers is leading the way in a new treatment and training program that is quietly revolutionising treatment for schizophrenia and other mental health disorders and helping sufferers lead active, meaningful lives.

The program is being funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) under the Australian Integrated Mental Health Initiative (AIMhi) and involves training mental health workers in a new approach that moves beyond traditional medical treatments for patients.

The model (referred to as the Collaborative Recovery Model) focuses on treating sufferers more holistically by helping them manage their own symptoms and motivating them to set goals, achieve dreams and lead fulfilling and rewarding lives, despite their psychiatric disability.

A major emphasis in the program is for patients to become involved and play a significant role in their own treatment and rehabilitation.

UOW's Illawarra Institute for Mental Health (IIMH) co-ordinates the training program for mental health workers, and works closely with the South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service to train its mental health staff at a variety of services from Fairy Meadow to Nowra.

IIMH also coordinates 10 training sites located in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The UOW team comprises Chief Investigators Dr Lindsay Oades,

Professor Frank Deane and Dr Trevor Crowe and other Associate Investigators who supervise six PhD students working on affiliated projects. They collaborate closely with Dr Robert King and Professor David Kavanagh at the University of Queensland which is also a partner institution.

The UOW team has already trained more than 400 mental health workers to use the Collaborative Recovery Model to treat patients with mental illness, primarily schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

"This program is really helping to destroy the stigma attached to individuals suffering from severe and enduring psychiatric disability," said Dr Oades. "There has always been this notion of helplessness and that patients are unable to fend for themselves, but AIMhi is helping patients to take ownership of their own health and treatment and we're seeing some very positive results.

"Patients want to work to own their recovery and work on whole of life issues. This program trains the mental health workers to help their patients achieve that," Dr Oades said. "We are 2¹/₂ years into a five-year program, so we are still evaluating the success. However, the feedback we have received from mental health workers and consumers has been very good."

"The tragic thing about an illness such as schizophrenia is that while there is a relatively low prevalence in the community, it has a high impact on the life of the person and their family. It often hits people aged between 17 and 25, disabling them just when their lives are about to take off, and can be caused by a genetic vulnerability triggered by stress from relationships, work or study, or sometimes by substance abuse."

The AIMhi research group based at UOW include (from left): PhD student Samantha Clarke, Chief Investigator Professor Frank Deane, PhD student Sarah Marshall, AIMhi High Support Stream Co-ordinator Trevor Crowe, PhD student Retta Anresen, Chief Investigator Dr Lindsay Oades and Research Assistant Yvonne Peros.



Combating diabetes in a living laboratory

continued from page 1



Members of the team working on the diabetes program (from left): UOW students Clare Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Watt, Luke Meessmann from Beaton Park Leisure Centre, Linda Blackmore from the Illawarra Division of General Practice and UOW students Leah Ebbeck and Felicity Keller.

The Academic

Senior Health Sciences Lecturer Owen Curtis believes the *Exercise – Essential Medicine for Diabetes Program* provides invaluable experience for his students while delivering a tangible benefit for the community.

Mr Curtis, who was first involved with the program in 2004 in partnership with the Illawarra Division of General Practice, supervises the students involved in the program to ensure they work in a mentored environment as they apply the theory and practical skills that have learned through their University studies to a real life situation.

"The students have to demonstrate interactive skills to interview the people with diabetes, establish their health history, and then manage a health intervention program. They also support the individual to achieve this lifestyle change," he said. "The students must earn the trust of the people they are dealing with, and form and manage on-going relationships."

"The students learn a lot, but it is a two-way street. Diabetes is a devastating disease, but it can be helped and even reversed by lifestyle changes. This program is really about self-management, and the students help the people with diabetes to manage their illness through improved lifestyle."

The Doctors

Linda Blackmore is the Diabetes Program Officer at the Illawarra Division of General Practice.

She has been involved with the *Exercise – Essential Medicine for Diabetes Program* from its start in 2004, and is now working with her fourth group of students and diabetes sufferers. Linda has a coordination and evaluation role and also promotes the program to the region's doctors as

a valuable addition to their overall treatment for diabetes patients.

"The doctors really like the program and have input into the way it runs," Linda said. "They like having somewhere to send their patients where they know they will be supervised and get the help they need to start exercising properly."

"The important message that we try to get across to the participants is that exercise is in fact a form of treatment for their diabetes, that it has therapeutic qualities rather than simply being a change of lifestyle."

"The program has had very good results and it is a great example of where the Division can work with the University and the fitness industry to achieve worthwhile outcomes."

The Graduate

Luke Meessmann has seen the Diabetes Program from both sides. Last year he was involved as a student in the final year of his Exercise Science degree at UOW. This year he is working as an Exercise Physiologist responsible for co-ordinating the program as part of his job at Beaton Park Leisure Centre.

Luke works part-time as an Exercise Physiologist at Beaton Park and also at the Exercise Science and Rehabilitation Centre (ESRC) at UOW. He believes the program delivers tangible benefits for the community as well as the students involved.

"I was involved with the program as a student and now I am involved as part of my job, and I have seen how it can help people with diabetes," Luke said. "It is also really beneficial for the students to have the opportunity to do some really practical work with people."

"I have no doubt that the experience I gained on the program as a student helped me get the jobs I have now with Beaton Park and ESRC."

Uni involved in Men's Business

When University of Wollongong Research Fellow David Fildes started evaluating the 'Three In One' Men's Project being set up by Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI) last year, he thought it was simply the final stage of his Master of Public Health Studies.

But he was so impressed with the work that HCI does in the community that he joined its Board of Management. UOW's Centre for Health Services Development (CHSD), which employs him as a Research Fellow, has agreed that he can devote 80 hours a year of his professional time to working with HCI.

Mr Fildes became involved with HCI when, as part of his Masters course, he was set the task of developing an evaluation methodology which could be applied to the Three In One Men's project. The main goal of the project is assisting unemployed, migrant men to regain self-esteem and a sense of purpose by providing skills-based activities.

The project was an initiative of HCI and the South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service (SESIAHS), and grew from a Multicultural Health Service report in 2002-03 that had identified high levels of depression, idleness and poor self-esteem among migrant men of mainly Portuguese background who were no longer in paid employment.

Participants involved in the men's project meet every Friday at a shed/workshop in Coniston, where they are involved in practical projects that contribute to the community. Currently they are creating a wrought iron and maiola coffee table and later in the year they will design and build artistic, wrought-iron security fencing to protect and beautify community bread ovens in a park in Cringila.

"This project targets migrant men aged from their 40s to retirement age, who aren't in paid employment for a variety of reasons," Mr Fildes said. "It is helping restore their self-confidence, by providing a network of support and giving them a chance to use their skills in practical ways to help the community. It can also help them to get back into paid employment."



(From left): Manuel de Jesus, David Fildes, Alex Goncalves, Kim Williams and Alex Tsalidis at the Three In One Men's Project at Coniston.

"There is a definite public health need for programs like this."

HCI Manager Frank Wallner said it was valuable to have UOW input into Healthy Cities projects like the Men's Shed.

"We've always had strong support from the University, and generally had someone from the University on our Board," Mr Wallner said.

"There is encouragement of both staff and students from various departments to be involved in community projects and we have had input from public health, environment, business and science. For small organizations it is an additional resource which can really assist our project work" he said. "

"It's great to have someone like David working with us. He has brought important research skills to our men's group and to our Board, and is also helping us prepare submissions for funding other projects. He has a strong interest in what we are doing, as well as enthusiasm, ideas and a strong research background."

"Involvement with Healthy Cities is a good way for the University to directly help create a healthier Illawarra community."

For more information about this project or if you are keen to participate please contact Frank Wallner at Health Cities on 4226 5000 or David Fildes at the University of Wollongong on 4221 5281.

Staff Profile



Owen Curtis

Title

Senior Lecturer

Faculty/Unit

- School of Health Sciences in the Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences

Community engagement activities

Recipient of the inaugural 2006 Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Community Engagement.

Owen was recognised for his contribution over 15 years in fostering productive engagement between the local community and University and for the way in which he has integrated this engagement into his teaching of Exercise Science.

His achievements include:

- The introduction of an exercise intervention program at Port Kembla Hospital, which has now developed into a stand alone department within the hospital;
- Development of the Exercise Science and Rehabilitation Clinic on campus which provides the opportunity for the community to access University staff and student skills;
- Development of the Workfit Model at the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital;
- Development of Self Management Education Camps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with Diabetes in conjunction with the Aboriginal Medical Service; and
- Delivery of the exercise component of the Care for the Carers Program sponsored through NSW Health (with the support of his students).

Owen has been able to attract grants and scholarships from community groups and foundations to support student involvement in these programs over many years.

Inuit writer heads speakers' list

International indigenous writer Alootook Ipellie will be a special guest at tomorrow night's Indigenous Writer's Night in Wollongong.

The founder of the event, Associate Professor Gerry Turcotte from the University of Wollongong's Centre for Canadian-Australian Studies, said the event has grown from its humble beginnings six years ago into an exciting festival.

"This year's event will probably be the biggest ever and includes both established and emerging writers," Professor Turcotte said.

Special international guest is the Canadian Inuit writer, Alootook Ipellie, whose stories, poems and articles have appeared in many Native American publications. Ipellie grew up in the settlement of Frobisher Bay, but many of his poems evoke the old, nomadic camp life of his grandfather.

The bestselling author Phil McLaren will also speak. An Aboriginal born and raised in Redfern, his debut book, *Sweet Water, Stolen Land*, won the prestigious David Unaipon Award. This year's winner of the same award, Tara June Winch, will also be present along with

other local indigenous writers.

The event, called Celebrating the Voice, represents a collaboration between UOW's Centre for Canadian-Australian Studies, UOW's Woolyungah Indigenous Centre and the South Coast Writers' Centre.

The 6th Indigenous Writers' Night will be held tomorrow night at the Aboriginal Cultural Centre, 22 Kenny Street, Wollongong from 6pm. All are welcome.

Contact the South Coast Writers' Centre on 4221 3387 for more information.

Ale and academia an interesting combination



Dr Chris Turney presents Uni in the Brewery at the Five Islands Brewery in March. The next in this popular lecture series will be held on 28 June.

Combining ale and academia has proven a winner for the University of Wollongong.

The popular Uni in The Brewery public lecture series at Wollongong's iconic Five Islands Brewery started in November, 2003, and its enduring popularity can be attributed to the unique combination of quirky and informative presentations from UOW academics and the Brewery's informal setting and excellent beer – not to mention the fact that entry is free.

The audience also has the chance to question the UOW academics in a relaxed and convivial atmosphere.

Since it started in November, 2003, the Uni in the Brewery series has covered diverse topics ranging from the history, art and science of brewing beer to real life CSI and forensic science, and whether Ned Kelly should be considered a

hero or a villain.

Other topical subjects covered have included tsunamis and coastal real estate, why our children are getting fatter, and last week's presentation by two UOW Creative Writing lecturers, Dr Shady Cosgrove and Alan Wearne, on how NOT to write a best-seller.

In March Dr Chris Turney from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences discussed the science of when things happen, our obsession with time and our need to know how old things are.

He focused on famous dating controversies - from the development of the modern calendar to the age of the Earth.

For his talk, Dr Turney drew upon parts of his new book called *Bones, Rocks and Stars: The Science of When Things Happened* (due to be

published by Macmillan Science on June 13 this year).

Professor Thomas Madsen from the Faculty of Science will present the 17th Uni in The Brewery lecture on Wednesday, 28 June.

His presentation, titled *Was Tyrannosaurus Rex an endotherm?* looks at a question that is hotly debated by scientists around the world - whether some (or all) of the spectacular dinosaurs, such as the mighty Tyrannosaurus Rex were warm-blooded or cold-blooded.

"In 1986 Robert Bakker, a famous American palaeontologist, published a book entitled *The Dinosaur Heresies* in which he presented data on predator-prey ratios of carnivorous dinosaurs and their prey. His results suggested that these huge predators must have been warm blooded," Professor Madsen said.

"Since 1989 I have been conducting studies of predator-prey ratios of water pythons and their main prey, the dusky rat, in the Top End of Australia."

Professor Madsen will be presenting the results of his studies, and discussing whether his data supports or rejects Robert Bakker's hypothesis of dinosaur endothermy.

The lecture will be held from 5.30-6.30pm.

It will be followed on 20 September by Professor Jan Wright from the Faculty of Education, who will be discussing whether the current "obesity epidemic" is simply a case of moral panic.

Professor Wright, author with Michael Gard of the book *The Obesity Epidemic: Science, Ideology and Morality*, will be joined by Michelle Fraser, a therapist and social worker with many years of experience working with young people, who will discuss current messages about fat and the healthy body.

Program targets talented school students

Talented mathematics and computing students in Years 7-12 from across the region this month participated in an annual series of enrichment program run by UOW's Faculty of Informatics.

The Faculty comprises the Schools of Mathematics and Applied Statistics; Information Technology and Computer Science; and Electrical,

Computer and Telecommunications Engineering.

The Faculty's activities are broadly centred on mathematical, computer and electrical engineering-orientated subjects, and the enrichment activities were led by interested members of staff on topics ranging across those areas.

Organisers say that students with a genuine gift and interest in mathematics or computing gain a great deal from participation in the program.

Many of the 'enrichment' students have progressed to complete degrees in informatics, and have entered successful careers. The program includes Friday afternoon lectures and workshops, Saturday school computing and

Saturday school mathematics.

Approximately 250 students participated in this year's sessions on May 12 and 13.

Organiser Daniel Saffioti, a lecturer in the School of Information Technology and Computer Science, said the program is creating a buzz in the Faculty.

"We are encouraging the schools to help promote this initiative to students as it is a wonderful way to give students a valuable learning experience through a diverse range of activities," Mr Saffioti said.

"In addition, one of the students who participated as a high school student in the program last year actually worked for us this year on delivering the program."

What's on at Uni

Upcoming Public Interest Events at UOW

Free Public Lectures

24 May 6pm - 22 Kenny St Wollongong

CELEBRATING THE VOICE - 6th INDIGENOUS WRITERS' NIGHT

UOW's Centre for Canadian-Australian Studies and Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, in collaboration with the South Coast Writers' Centre, is hosting this festival.

6 June 5:30pm - UniCentre

BUDDHISM AND THE POST SEPTEMBER 11 WORLD

A talk by the Venerable Dr Yi Fa from the Boston Buddhist Cultural Centre and Boston University.

Music

26 May From 6pm - UniBar

JAZZ IN THE UNIBAR

This is a big jazz event, featuring a double bill of two of Australia's most prominent jazz acts – Andrew Robson Trio and Ben Winkelman Trio. For more info and ticket prices contact 4221 8171 or mcicero@uow.edu.au

Faculty of Creative Arts Performance

24-27 May 8pm - IPAC

PEER GYNT

by Henrik Ibsen a new translation by May-Brit Akerholt, Directed by Patrick Nolan. Illawarra Performing Arts Centre. Tickets \$20/\$15 conc./ \$8 students.

Art Exhibitions

Until 1 June - FCA Gallery

NAVIGATING THE MOMENT

Opening: Thursday 18 May, Artists: Clare Cochrane and Di Epoff.

6-16 June - FCA Gallery

DEFECTIVE STORIES

Opening: Thursday 8 June, Artist: Maureen Clack.

Book Launch

24 May 3.30pm - UniShop

BOOK LAUNCH AND SIGNING

No One Can Stop the Rain by Karin Moorhouse & Wei Cheng. RSVP 42 218 058 or natalieo@uow.edu.au

For a more comprehensive listing of events on campus, visit www.uow.edu.au/events