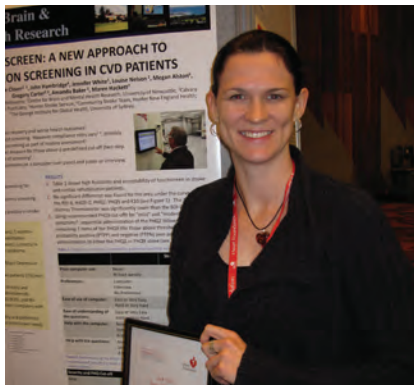




HEART RESEARCH CENTRE NEWSLETTER

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Dr Turner celebrates prize at recent Heart Foundation conference



Above: Dr Alyna Turner, Senior Research Fellow

Senior Research Fellow Dr Alyna Turner won a prize for her innovative poster presentation at the third Annual Conference of the National Heart Foundation. The conference was held in March at the Melbourne Convention Centre. Its theme was 'Heart to heart: from access to action'.

Dr Turner's poster was entitled 'Touchscreen: a new approach to depression screening in cardiovascular disease (CVD) patients'. Dr Turner evaluated this screening method in a study to assess depression in post-stroke patients, conducted with colleagues in Newcastle. The Heart Research Centre congratulates Dr Turner on receiving this prestigious award by the Heart Foundation.

The conference was a great opportunity for networking with colleagues from Melbourne, interstate and overseas who shared a research interest in depression and its links to CVD. Some of the conference sessions most relevant to Heart Research Centre work included sessions about risk reduction and secondary prevention in CVD patients, psychosocial issues and indigenous heart health.

Other members of the Heart Research Centre team attending the conference included Director of Research Dr Barbara Murphy, and Senior Research Fellow Dr Rosemary Higgins.

Dr Murphy gave an oral presentation in a session on psychosocial aspects of heart disease. Her presentation focused on the importance of screening patients for depression both in hospital and after hospital discharge. Dr Murphy also discussed how and when to screen for depression in cardiac patients.

Dr Higgins presented findings from a randomised controlled trial of the Centre's 'Beating Heart Problems' program. Dr Higgins' paper highlighted the very strong benefits of this program for cardiac patients with depression who showed significant improvements in their

mood, health behaviours and risk factor profiles after attending the program, confirming the value of the program for this group of patients.

Heart Research Centre staff were highly regarded at the event, which offered a unique opportunity for all involved to enrich their knowledge of cardiac research and care. The conference also validated the importance of continued research into the social and psychological aspects of heart disease. The Heart Research Centre's mission and work in this area was recognised in a forum of dedicated peers.



Above: Prof Edward Janus, Director of General Internal Medicine at the University of Melbourne, President of the Board, Heart Research Centre and Dr Alyna Turner.

Heart disease and retirement



Most heart disease in Australia occurs in people reaching a common retirement age; that is from 55 to 75 years. Those who are younger tend to continue working while those who are older often consider it may be time to retire. This means of course that they are making a decision regarding whether or not to return to work. Some have actual physical disability arising from heart attack or cardiac surgery while others develop psychological difficulties such as feelings of anxiety or depression, even hopelessness, in response to their cardiac event.

Return to work or retirement?

A reluctance to resume work can arise because people believe their work caused their heart disease; for some this includes physically active work or psychologically demanding work. For others the work may be less demanding.

In the community there is a folklore view that work, irrespective of its nature, must in some way be bad for some people and the opportunity should be taken to retire from work gracefully because one now has heart disease. The question arises whether one should retire early or continue as planned. The diagnosis of heart disease may result in a change of plans.

Many people need to go back to work as they need the income work generates. Advice from their doctor should be

sought as to when to return and whether they work as before or whether the hours or tasks need to be modified.

Certification of fitness for work

In some instances specific tests are required because of government regulation, which is reasonable. Thus heavy vehicle driving requires fitness to drive certification after a stress test. The same applies to working with heavy equipment as a plant operator. A certificate of fitness for work is of great value in helping you resume work, whereas a certificate stating that you have heart disease is not. Most employers prefer to accommodate the needs of their employees and this can be done if appropriate certification is provided, if required.

It is desirable to avoid lay advisors and lay advice. There is deeply ingrained folklore that work may in some way have been harmful over the years or that work may, if demanding, function as a trigger for another heart attack, or trigger symptoms that lead to another operation. The reality is that if the work is physically demanding and has been accomplished in the past, it should be accomplished in the future, particularly if weight is controlled and fitness retained or regained. If work was enjoyable up until the time of the heart event and you wish to continue, then return to work in full measure is beneficial. If there are aspects of work that are difficult, then you may find that these can be modified with little inconvenience to yourself, to the employer or your work mates.

Life after heart attack or surgery

Equally as important as consideration of retirement, is consideration of other aspects of your future which are within your own control. Thus it is advisable to have a diet which is low in saturated fat and to be physically active. Generally, people need to lose weight - many people nowadays who have

heart trouble, have it partly because they are overweight or even diabetic. Prescribed medication to control blood pressure and cholesterol levels should be taken daily. It is important to cease smoking, completely. Even an occasional cigarette can have serious negative consequences.

The years ahead

Life expectancy with heart disease extends generally over many years and this continues whether work is resumed or not. There is some evidence to suggest that resumption of work in itself is beneficial in terms of life expectancy and general capacity to function normally.

Any problems relating to retirement can be discussed with your doctor. Also remember that your family and spouse are affected by your decisions in these matters and hence their opinion and concerns should be addressed. Your spouse may need to discuss these matters with the doctor, preferably in your presence.

Both patients and partners who are naturally concerned about the future may need help in resolving questions about retirement. They should not make major premature decisions about the future. However, they should also remember that physical and mental deterioration occurs with aging, and hence should not leave decision making for too long.

Enjoy retirement or resumption of full activity; whatever is most suitable or most necessary.

Dr Alan Goble

Cardiology Consultant

Garry Webb



SNAPSHOT

Garry Webb was recently elected to the Heart Research Centre's Board. He is an accountant with experience in corporate and commercial organisations

with a strong interest in the not for profit sector. He can recall times when, as a child, his own family received the generous support of charities such as St Vincent de Paul. This experience made him want to give something back and help the not for profit sector. Garry was happy to join the board of the Heart Research Centre when approached.

Garry was introduced to the field of accounting while still in secondary college. He has always found business finance to be an attractive and logical process. He started his first career position in finance in December 1975. In 1985 a serious car accident meant that Garry needed to take time off work to care for his wife and their two young children. The family then moved from Victoria to Queensland where Garry joined the company that is today known as Suncorp Metway. He has also worked

as an academic at both university and TAFE level, and as a member of local government in a small council and at Gold Coast City Council.

The challenges he faces now, personally and professionally, are common to many and change little with the passage of time. These are the challenges of creating a happy, healthy and equitable society. Garry believes that if you can do something for others, no matter how small your contribution, it is worthwhile. While Garry would like to continue to contribute to the Heart Research Centre and other charities for many years, he considers his greatest personal achievements to be his two daughters, now aged 27 and 28, and the family unit he and his wife have formed over their lifetime together. He is a fanatical Collingwood AFL Club supporter!

Significant findings lead to paper in medical journal

Director of Research Dr Barbara Murphy recently had a paper published in the medical journal *Heart, Lung and Circulation*. Her paper was titled 'Lifestyle and physiological risk factor profiles six weeks after an acute cardiac event: are patients achieving recommended targets for secondary prevention?'

Her study involved assessing the risk factor profiles of a consecutive series of patients five to six weeks after their cardiac event. These patients were admitted to hospital after acute myocardial infarction or to undergo coronary artery bypass graft surgery or percutaneous coronary intervention. Dr Murphy's paper described the patients' risk factor profiles and the implications for the prevention of future cardiac illnesses.

The National Heart Foundation of Australia publishes guidelines for

achieving cardiovascular health and reducing risk factors.

"Research has shown that 90% of the risk of a future cardiac event is attributable to modifiable risk factors."

Thus people who have experienced a cardiac event can help to prevent a recurrence by modifying their lifestyles and health behaviours, and taking prescribed medications.

Dr Murphy and her team found that almost three quarters of the 275 patients assessed in the study were above the recommended targets for waist girth. Almost half were above targets for blood pressure and below target for high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, the 'good' cholesterol that appears to protect against cardiovascular disease. These results

demonstrate that there remains great potential for improving the way patients are managed after their cardiac event.

The publication of this research paper represents a valuable opportunity for Dr Murphy and the Heart Research Centre's work to be peer reviewed and widely disseminated. It is also a testament to the value of the Centre's research and its relevance to the work of other health professionals.



Dr Goble's retirement

Dr Alan Goble has announced his retirement from June 2011. The Centre's newest research fellow had the opportunity to interview Dr Goble and talk with him about his career and his long involvement with the Heart Research Centre.

Why cardiology?

In the summer of 1948, a recent medical graduate by the name of Alan Goble had been contemplating his future career prospects when fate intervened. A cricket ball careering in his direction* at a match between the Alfred Hospital's residents and old boys resulted in bruised sporting pride (he did little to slow the ball's progress), but more significantly for the new graduate, a broken finger.

As the doors of a surgical residency closed, Dr Goble said that it would have required more dexterity than his broken finger allowed, another window of opportunity opened. A medical term with Dr Davis and Dr Kay ensued at the Alfred Hospital, and Alan Goble's interest in cardiac medicine was awakened.

Some time later, under the mentorship of Sir Clive Hamilton Fitts, a renowned thoracic and cardiac physician, this interest developed into a passion. Somewhat unusually for the time, Sir Clive championed a person centric rather than protocol approach to medicine. This philosophy was also to be the cornerstone of Dr Goble's approach to medicine, and to inform his involvement with the Heart Research Centre (HRC) many years later.

* For the cricketers amongst you, Alan was fielding Mid Off at the time.

A diverse career in brief

What follows has been nothing less than a truly remarkable career spanning more than five decades. Dr Goble has worked for, and been associated

with, numerous organisations. These include St Vincent's Hospital, the Austin Hospital, The Royal Melbourne Hospital, Brompton Hospital and the National Heart Hospital in England, the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand, World Heart Federation (WHF), World Health Organisation and the Australian Cardiovascular Health and Rehabilitation Association. Other achievements include establishing the National Heart Foundation's Work Assessment Centre (later renamed Cardiac Rehabilitation Unit), acting as the Chair for various organisations including the WHF Committee of Secondary Prevention, the National Heart Foundation Committee on Exercise and Rehabilitation and most recently President of the CSANZ, the foundation Chairman of the HRC.

Career highlights

When asked to reflect upon the achievements of which he is most proud, Dr Goble's answer is remarkably humble, "...having had the privilege of working with a diversity of people as well as having the opportunity to learn and pass along relevant information. Everybody knows certain things that other people don't know. By working collaboratively, you can fill the gaps quickly". When pressed about specific career highlights, he identified his involvement in the establishment of the Heart Foundations Rehabilitation Committee and Rehabilitation Unit, and his long-term association with the HRC. He initiated the establishment of the HRC in 1989.

Alan and the Heart Research Centre

Dr Goble noted that the Centre's development was the result of the complementary views, experience and skills of both himself and the Foundation Director, Dr Marian Worcester. Both had identified an important vacuum in the care of cardiac patients and cardiac research of the time that is, understanding the psychological, social and behavioural aspects of cardiac

patient's experience of, and recovery from cardiac illness. Dr Goble said that this was unique at the time, given that the majority of cardiac research funding was being directed towards the study of "...rats, humans and test tubes rather than exploring the value of educating patients to provide a sense of optimism about their future and giving them the skills to improve their own heart health".

Heart Research Centre present day and future

Twenty years on from its inception, the HRC undertakes a varied research program. It also offers comprehensive training for health professionals to ensure the widest possible spread of its research findings. In both its research and training, the HRC has made valuable contributions to the field of improving psychosocial outcomes for patients and their families, as well as gaining a world wide reputation for the excellence of its work.

Alan commented that the continued success of the HRC, as a not for profit organisation, will depend upon ongoing financial support from the community in the form of donations and bequests, along with grants from funding bodies.

Views on retirement and future plans?

Dr Goble reflected that he is well practised at retirement, having had numerous opportunities over the years! However, he concedes that he has postponed his retirement from the Centre as long as possible. He said that the decision has been made less difficult, knowing that the current staff share his passion and will continue his vision into the future. Alan also noted that he was looking forward to pursuing his long-held ambition of penning an historical novel, the inspiration for which is Byrons' poem 'The Destruction of Sennacherib'. (poem overleaf)

Flexible online learning package goes live

The Heart Research Centre and the Hunter New England Area Health Service have developed an online training package for health professionals working with patients with chronic illness.

The package, which comprises five modules completed online over five hours, trains health professionals in chronic disease self-management (CDSM) and motivational interviewing (MI). The online training focuses on building health professionals' skills and confidence in working with their patients to assist them to self-manage health behaviours and emotional wellbeing. The first health professionals were enrolled in February this year.

The Heart Research Centre has been offering face-to-face CDSM and MI training to health professionals over many years. However, health professionals practicing in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia have difficulty attending centre-based training. Indeed, many practitioners have difficulty spending time away from their busy workplace to complete face-to-face training.

Translation of the Centre's training into a flexible online learning package has ensured that this training is now available to practitioners across the country. This joint initiative has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

According to Dr Rosemary Higgins, the Centre's Training Program Manager, "the online training package is designed to be user



Above and Left: Screen shots from the online training program.

friendly and very practical. It can be completed in the participants' own time and at their own pace, which is proving very appealing to busy practitioners". One participant said "I loved it. I've never had time to attend training before, but I could easily fit this into my busy schedule. I think it is spectacular, brilliant!"

After undertaking the training, health professionals are more able to assist their patients with self-management. One said "I am now able to listen to patients, to work with them on behaviour changes they are ready to make, and to allow them to accept responsibility for their own health outcomes". Another stated "I like the fact that the client is the change agent, not us", highlighting the patient-centred nature of the training.

The Heart Research Centre is committed to making this online training available to all health professionals working with patients who have a chronic disease.

Contact Us

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