

Issue 5 | July 2007

## What's Inside

- **RADM Gaumer MC USNR visit**
- **Health Studies Progress**



- **Dental Research**
- **Director's Message**
- **Living Well Think Tank**



- **Farewell to COL Len Brennan**
- **Advances in Communications**
- **Education Proposals**
- **Adelaide Update**
- **Key Contacts**



## RADM Gaumer visit

In April, CMVH hosted the USN Assistant Deputy Surgeon General for Total Force Integration (Associate Deputy Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Human Resources), RADM Ben F. Gaumer, MC USNR. Admiral Gaumer was visiting Australia for a fortnight exploring what the ADF is doing in Health Reserves recruiting and retention. Whilst in

Brisbane he took the opportunity to visit CMVH and learn what the Centre is conducting in health research, e-Health and professional development. Since his return to the United States Admiral Gaumer has been of great assistance to CMVH in identifying points of contact in the US Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery for medical recruiting standards.



## Health Studies Progress

**The Solomon Islands Health Study has been launched, with invitation packages mailed out to 1,000 randomly selected participants earlier this year. Already, 19% of participants have responded positively to the request to participate. Many participants, 43% of those agreeing to take part in this study, have chosen to complete the questionnaire online.**

The Bougainville and East Timor Health Studies, which complete the evaluation of the Near North deployments, will launch in the second half of this year and will involve asking more than 12,000 people to participate. Planning for the Middle East Area of Operation study is also progressing, with the research proposal recently submitted to Defence Health Services.

The Deployment Health Surveillance Program staged its inaugural Stakeholder Day on 29 March 2007 at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Its purpose was to brief key Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) about the DHSP's forthcoming studies, in the event that their members are approached to participate in the studies. Attendees also included the Chief of the Defence Force, the Service Chiefs of Navy, Army and Air Force, and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, The Hon Bruce Billson MP.

CMVH also recently hosted a meeting with locally-based representatives from veterans' organisations, known as the 'Kindred Organisations', to discuss the Deployment Health Surveillance Program. The Kindred Organisations' members committed to promoting the positive benefits for veterans in participating in the DHSP studies through their member publications and member meetings.

CMVH welcomes the appointment of Associate Professor Susan Treloar as Head of the Deployment Health Surveillance Program. One of Susan's first roles will be to lead the investigations on the East Timor and Bougainville studies. Susan's background includes public health research and teaching, and she joins CMVH from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR), where she was a Senior Research Fellow in Genetic Epidemiology.

# Dental Research

CMVH has an innovative dental research cell directed by WGCDCR Greg Mahoney. WGCDCR Mahoney's principal research area is in Dental Risk and the unscheduled dental visits of deployed personnel in the ADF. This is part of the Defence Dental Services effort to improve personnel capability through improved preventative, treatment regimes and through fewer dental emergencies.

The research is part of a collaborative project between the University of Queensland and The University of Adelaide as part of a PhD study program. The study is well advanced with both the pilot study and the cross sectional study completed. At the moment Greg is involved in analyzing the data and preparing the prospective component of the study. Greg's (left below) supervisors are LTCOL Scott Kitchener from CMVH, Professor Gary Slade (right below) from University of Adelaide and Dr Adrian Barnett from School of Population Health, University of Queensland.

LCDR Nick Cusack is completing his MPhil project through CMVH. Nick is examining the changes, if any, in caries risk in naval recruits. It is thought that as recruits entering the navy undergo dramatic changes in lifestyle, work effort and diet and that this may manifest itself in increased caries risk. The results of this research could dramatically alter the dental services preventative treatment strategies. Nick, too, is well advanced in this study with the cohort selected and baseline measurements taken.

The ADF, DVA and CMVH have recognized that dental health is an important component of serving members' and veterans' overall health and in recognition of that the dental research unit is involved in the Deployment Health Surveillance Program. Oral health is thought to be an early indicator of anxiety and PTSD and it is hoped that the longitudinal monitoring of veterans' oral health profile will lead to improved outcomes with PTSD by early recognition and diagnosis.



# Director's message

CMVH is an 'innovative and ambitious concept' which has achieved a 'wide range of successful outputs' and is 'fully functioning and operational' according to the committee which undertook a review, three years after CMVH commenced operations, as required by the CMVH contract.

Led by Chairman Major General Mike Von Bertele, Chief Executive, UK Defence Medical Education & Training Agency, the Review Committee worked hard over the first week in July when they focussed on CMVH performance to date. They interviewed over thirty three staff and students from the three universities in the Consortium, Queensland, Adelaide and Charles Darwin, 17 representatives from the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs, and 9 others mainly from ex-servicemens organisations and other military and veteran research centres. Other committee members were Dr Charles Engel, Director of the Deployment Health Clinical Center at Walter Reed in Washington DC; Dr Simon Oldfield, Defence Science and Technology Organisation; Russell McLaughlan, National Manager Operations Support, Department of Veterans' Affairs; Professor Neville Marsh, University of Adelaide; Professor Sandra Dunn, Charles Darwin University and Professor Sue Tett, University of Queensland. Shirley Leuthner was Secretary to the committee.

They found that 'CMVH had effectively:

- Networked across Defence, DVA, UQ, UA and CDU
- Developed a one-stop gateway for research related to military personnel and veterans
- Created a broad, complementary research base across the UQ and UA nodes and laid foundations for development of the CDU node
- Built an effective research capability to conduct the Deployment Health Surveillance Program'.

Useful guidance for future directions for CMVH were provided in recommendations which are summarised below:

- Review strategic plan, clarify breadth and focus
- Think Tank output to drive strategic policy development and inform doctrine
- Annual meeting to co-ordinate with other relevant research agencies
- Director's role divided, add UQ academic lead
- Review presentation of finances
- Succession planning for senior positions
- Adjust balance between contract and research grants, develop programmatic approach to research
- E-health: focus on strategic policy, but needs more resources
- Strengthen academic supervision
- Militarise MPH (Defence) more
- Seek to develop operational performance standards for Defence Health personnel, then analyse their training needs analysis in primary care, secondary care, occupational health and mental health, life long learning
- International networks for sharing knowledge.

I think the most important of their recommendations is the need for us to focus down in our strategic planning, and for us to do this working closely with the Departments of Defence and Veteran's Affairs. We have built a unique, flexible asset for military and veterans' health in Australia, but we need more guidance on the issues which are most important.

The next Think Tank, for which planning is now underway, is on future issues in military and veterans' health and this should assist with determining priorities.

As well as the committee, many people contributed to the review, but in particular I would like to thank Colonel Len Brennan who took the lead in organising this important process as our Chief of Operations, as his last contribution before moving on.

# Living Well Think Tank



**On 3 May, 2007 a Living Well mini-think tank event was held in Canberra by Robyn Mobbs, Senior Lecturer-Living Well at CMVH. The think-tank was the outcome of collaborative efforts by the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) Director's Research Initiative, the Department of Veterans' Affairs policy-makers, academics from a number of universities from Queensland, Adelaide, Flinders**

**University of South Australia, Deakin and Southern Cross, as well as Health Services Australia Group.**

The aim and objectives of the Living Well seminar were to initiate enhanced wellbeing for veterans by:

- Presenting current thinking about wellness concepts and health promotion from Australian and international research

- Examining models of wellness and enhanced health care delivery
- Exploring the applicability of a wellness/preventive/self-management primary health care approach to DVA.

Session one of the seminar program explored concepts and models of wellness through the life course. Wellness was described as well-being plus physical health which broadens earlier understandings of health as the absence of disease. Topics covered included barriers to wellness, interactions between social exclusion and health, the relevance of autonomy and empowerment, ageing well and the importance of increasing physical activity among veterans.

During the second session, innovative ways for re-orientating health care delivery towards a wellness approach were explored including lifestyle medicine and early intervention in General Practice, preventive health care and systems change for the self-management of chronic and complex conditions and rehabilitation.

## Farewell - COL Brennan

The Chief of Operations, **COL Len Brennan**, was posted to Joint Operations Command in July. Len provided a valuable contribution to the ongoing development of the CMVH in a particularly busy period. The members of CMVH thank Len for his leadership and contributions during his posting and wish him well in his new posting in Sydney.



## Advances in Communications

**CMVH's Think Tank /Communications Pillar recently received a boost with the appointment of Alan Pinsker as the new Conjoint Think Tank/Communications Officer. The pillar has increased responsibility for managing the flow of information between stakeholders and for ongoing facilitation of this engagement in the future.**

Alan joined CMVH in Brisbane in late May 2007 and has responsibility for managing the Think Tank Pillar/Communications Pillar which promotes the work of CMVH and facilitates debate on key issues for military and veterans' health. Alan is impressed with the Think Tank concept and is also interested in the synergies created in combining the Think Tank and communications roles.

Alan is relishing the opportunity to continue his interest in making a contribution to people's health and well-being through population health approaches that can help to identify broad trends and issues, and then ultimately contribute to solutions of benefit to the individual. The Think Tank/Communications works with issues that are of importance to the health and

well-being of our serving military, as well as those that relate to the longer term health outcomes for veterans.

*"With the wider range of deployments currently being undertaken by the Australian Defence Force than has occurred in the recent past, CMVH is an interesting place to work to identify ways to tackle the health consequences of these deployments both in a pro-active way prior to, and during, deployment and then providing post-deployment assistance," he said.*

*"It is clear that the Think Tank program provides a unique opportunity to bring together high calibre policy and operational experts to identify emerging issues in military and veterans' health and to suggest approaches for addressing them into the future. I am keen to see the outcomes of the Think Tank promoted more broadly to generate further engagement and debate from key stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, to ensure that we are leading the way in marshalling strategic input on these issues that will ensure that Australia is well-prepared for the issues of the future."*

Alan has worked in Australian Government marketing, media and policy areas for the past 10 years, across a range of departments including the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Alan was most recently an Acting Public Affairs Director, with responsibility for National Security Media and a range of associated campaigns, and has worked as a Campaign Manager on a range of Population Health Campaigns including the National Tobacco Campaign, the Immunise Australia Campaign and the National Illicit Drugs Campaign, as well as Marketing Manager for the Job Network Employment Services.



# Education Proposals

The Professional Development Pillar has been very busy for the first half of this year with our annual Road Show. The road show provides a perfect opportunity to update Defence health practitioners on CMVH's research activities and further developments in professional development opportunities available to them.

There has been particular interest in the new sixteen unit option for the Master of Public Health (Defence) program and the work done on health workforce innovation and the development of the physician assistant program.

The proposal for a post-graduate course for Defence psychologists has progressed with the Professional Development Officer and Chief of Operations meeting with the Head of School, UQ Psychology in mid-May 07 to discuss options for external delivery.

A proposal for the approval of unspecified credit towards the MPH (Defence) program for the completion of the Logistic Officer suite of health courses has been submitted to the School of Population Health Teaching and Learning Committee. If this proposal is successful similar requests for approval will be used for other Defence health related courses.

# Adelaide update

Adelaide hosted the March Board meeting and a dinner was held at the Adelaide Club for the Board members and VIPs including Mr Stephen Quinn and Mr Michael Lucas from DSTO (bottom left photo); MAJGEN Peter Arnison and Mr Roxley McLennan from Department of Premier and Cabinet - Defence Unit (bottom right photo); Mr Ian Kelly and Mr Tich Tyson from DVA, WGCCDR Greg Hampson from Institute of Aviation Medicine and other invited guests from UA and UQ. The dinner provided the customers and stakeholders of CMVH the chance to meet and network and was a great success.

disaster response is also now complete and the report has been presented to Department of Health and Aging.

## Professional Development

The Military Occupational and Environmental Health Course was held in Adelaide again 9-24 July at RAAF Edinburgh. Thirteen students took part with MAJ Greg Canning of 11 CSSB in Townsville being named the Dux of the course and is pictured here receiving the trophy and Defence Health prize of \$500 from LTCOL Greg Flinn. The course can be taken as part of the MPH (Defence) or as a stand alone course.

## Research

The Adelaide Node has recently won the NHMRC Port Pirie Lead Study. This research will focus on the effect of heavy metals on cognitive development among other issues. The node has also been part of the MEAO Deployed Health Surveillance Program Planning Phase and has just completed another MEAO based research project. The Military Aircraft Fuel study report was recently presented to Defence and the feasibility study into 'On the Job' training in biosecurity and



# Key contacts

**Director** Prof Niki Ellis  
Ph: (07) 3346 4874 or 0434 072118  
N.Ellis@uq.edu.au

**PA** Miss Sarah Noonan  
Ph: (07) 3346 4873  
s.noonan@uq.edu.au

**Director Adelaide Node** Prof Alexander McFarlane  
Ph: (08) 8303 5200 or 0419810962  
Alexander.Mcfarlane@adelaide.edu.au

**Director Darwin Node** A/Prof David Cooper  
Ph: (08) 8922 8196  
David.Cooper@menzies.edu.au

**Chief of Operations** Vacant  
Interim inquiries (details below)  
LTCOL Peter Nasveld, Research Coordinator

**Business Manager** Dr James Conner  
Ph: (07) 3346 4957 or 0401 102 847  
james.conner@uq.edu.au

**Research Coordinator** LTCOL Peter Nasveld  
Ph: (07) 3346 4953 or 0401 696 294  
p.nasveld@uq.edu.au

**Office Manager** Ms Bev Ware  
Ph: (07) 3346 4876  
b.ware@uq.edu.au

**Professional Development** CAPT Genevieve Liebich  
Ph: (07) 3346 4860 or 0412 158 515  
g.liebich@uq.edu.au

**e-Health Coordinating Officer** LCDR Bob Curtis  
Ph: (07) 3346 4875 or 0412 158 159  
b.curtis@uq.edu.au

**Think Tank/Communications Officer** Mr Alan Pinsker  
Ph: (07) 3346 4903 or 0423 849 317

**Adelaide Liaison** SQNLDR Michel Devine  
Ph: (08) 8303 4426 or 0412 158 911  
Michel.Devine@adelaide.edu.au