



# School of Physiotherapy



Newsletter

August 2009 Issue

## Awards in the School of Physiotherapy

On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2009, The Faculty of Health Sciences held the annual awards ceremony in the John Scott Meeting House. The School would like to congratulate the following recipients.

**Katherine Ng** (Aquatic Physiotherapy Group Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Andrew Nawrocki** (Brooks Running Award).

**Beth Neyland** (Cardiorespiratory Physiotherapy Australia Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Sophie Rothen** (Constance Read Memorial Prize).

**Beth Neyland** (Continence and Women's Health Special Group Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Sarah Malone** (Eliza McAuley Memorial Prize).

**Audrey Day** (Elsevier Australia Book Prize - First Year).

**Sophie Wathen** (Elsevier Australia Book Prize - Second Year).

**Rachel Mether and Stephanie Napolitano** (Gerontology Special Group Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Sarah Malone** (HNA Physiotherapy Award).

**Clare Ardern** (Josephine Jennings and Edith Pratt Memorial Prize).

Kay Spencer Memorial Award  
**Fiona Willis** (Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Madeline Lindquist** (Neurology National Group Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Alexandra Armstrong** (Paediatric Special Group Prize, Australian Physiotherapy Association).

**Lily Lui and Stephanie Napolitano** (Patricia Cosh Award).  
**Rebecca Harford and Emily Watterson** (Physiotherapists Registration Board of Victoria Award).

**Karen Tyedin** (Physiotherapy Research Foundation Research Prize). Thesis titled 'The influence of very early mobilisation on the quality of life of stroke patients'.



Karen Tyedin with Supervisor Julie Bernhardt

## Memorial for Damon Bonney

Damon Bonney graduated from La Trobe University and commenced his physiotherapy career in 2008. Sadly Damon passed away suddenly on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2008. To commemorate Damon's life and the first anniversary of his death, a small group of Damon's family, friends and LTU staff gathered to remember how Damon touched their life and unveil a memorial plaque on the wall of Health Sciences 3 building at LTU. The plaque will be an eternal reminder of both how La Trobe University influenced Damon's life and how Damon touched so many at La Trobe.



Damon C. Bonney  
28<sup>th</sup> July, 1983 – 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2008

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## Megan's Memo...

This year has certainly been full of interesting developments for physiotherapy and other health disciplines at La Trobe. The University has been successful in obtaining major grants for the development of health science facilities and education on the regional campuses. Wet anatomy facilities will be established in Bendigo later this year, and from 2010 all four years of the physiotherapy program will be delivered in Bendigo. Dr Kerry Baker, who has a physiotherapy background, has been appointed as a full-time Senior Lecturer in anatomy at the Bendigo campus.

From 2011 a small number of students in the Bendigo physiotherapy program (40 students) from the Shepparton and Wodonga regions and will be able to complete their first year at their local campus. This is possible because students in many health science courses do a common set of subjects in their first year.

Another major development is the Faculty of Health Sciences comprehensive Clinical Schools model that in future years will see more entry-level health professional education occurring in clinical settings, with greater opportunities for clinicians to be involved in teaching, and for academics to maintain clinical skills.

A grant of \$14 million dollars was allocated in the 2009 Federal Budget, Health and Hospitals Fund – Translational Research and Workforce Training towards the development of a research and education precinct at Northern Health. This precinct is a collaborative project with La Trobe University, Northern Health and the University of Melbourne. The



**Dr Megan Davidson**  
Head of School  
School of Physiotherapy

development of the Faculty of Health Sciences Clinical Schools model will see the development of further infrastructure in the clinical schools.

We are really pleased with the results of the 2008 Course Evaluation Questionnaire that show La Trobe Physiotherapy is ranked second of ten 4-year entry-level programs in Australia on graduates' overall satisfaction with their course (see next article). We believe that the physiotherapy Clinical Schools model has contributed substantially to student satisfaction with their undergraduate experience.

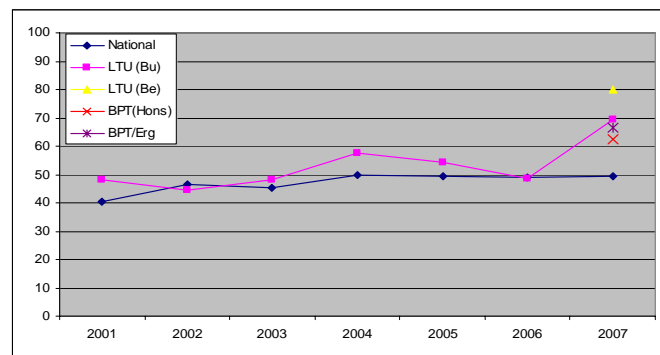
An application has recently been submitted to the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) for provisional accreditation of the new double degree Bachelor of Health Sciences and Master of Physiotherapy Practice. Provisional accreditation is granted around the time the first cohort graduate, and full accreditation about 12 months after the first cohort complete their course.

Full accreditation of the Bachelor program has been extended by the APC to 2012. This program has been replaced by the new double degree program and the last students in the Bachelor program will complete their course in 2011.

## Course Evaluation Questionnaire Scores Even Better

Each year all new graduates from Australian tertiary institutions are surveyed on their university experience. The Course Evaluation Questionnaire (CEQ) results for 2008 (of 2007 graduates) showed a sharp improvement in graduate ratings of the La Trobe physiotherapy program across the Generic Skills Scale (increased 20 points to 53), the Good Teaching Scale (increased 10 points to 35) and the Overall

Satisfaction rating (see graph). Each scale has a possible score ranging from -100 to +100. Scores greater than +30 are considered good. Bendigo graduates rated their experience more positively than other cohorts. The increase in the mean overall satisfaction score jumped the La Trobe physio ranking amongst 4-year entry-level programs across Australia from fifth to second place.



**Figure: Overall Satisfaction Ratings for graduates 2001 to 2007**  
Note: Bu = Bundoora, Be = Bendigo, Hons = Honours, BPT/Erg = Bachelor of Physiotherapy/Bachelor of Ergonomics double degree

## Churchill Fellowship awarded to La Trobe University Physiotherapist

Anne Holland, Associate Professor of Physiotherapy at Alfred Health, was recently awarded a Jack Brockhoff Foundation Churchill Fellowship. The fellowship will enable Anne to investigate new ways to deliver pulmonary rehabilitation to Australians with chronic lung disease using broadband technology. She will travel to Norway, Spain, Scotland, Canada and the USA to visit world leaders in the provision of remote pulmonary rehabilitation via the internet. Anne's project aims to address the shortage of

pulmonary rehabilitation programs in regional and rural areas of Australia and to improve access to this essential service using new technologies. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowships were presented at Government House by Governor de Kretser on 31<sup>st</sup> July.



**Professor David de Kretser, Governor of Victoria**  
presenting award to Anne Holland.  
Photo by Tegan Ringin.

## La Trobe Rural Health School Established

A very large injection of funding has been achieved for expansion and innovation in health sciences education at La Trobe, including the development of the La Trobe Rural Health School to be based at Bendigo.

Funding from the Commonwealth Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund will allow the appointment of four professors, one each in Allied Health, Nursing, Paramedical Studies and Public Health. A grant of \$59.5 million dollars allocated in Federal Budget from the Education Investment Fund will provide funds for the development of wet anatomy facilities at the main Bendigo campus, a new Health Sciences building on the Bendigo hospital site, and student accommodation at

Bendigo, Wodonga, Shepparton, Echuca and Swan Hill in regional Victoria. The latter facilities are to provide students with appropriate accommodation while undertaking clinical placements in regional hospitals. Victoria needs more healthcare professionals, particularly in rural areas.

The Rural Health School aims to improve the participation of rural students in tertiary studies, and improve the recruitment and retention of health professionals in country Victoria. Nursing and Social Work is already available at the regional campuses at Mildura, Shepparton and Albury-Wodonga. Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Social Work, Oran Health, Dentistry and Pharmacy are

offered at the Bendigo campus, with Podiatry and Speech Therapy commencing in 2010. Within a few years students from the region will have the opportunity of undertaking the common first year of their Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Podiatry, Speech Therapy or Paramedical course at any of the regional campuses.



View of the Wodonga Campus.



Drawing of the planned Shepparton Campus building.



View of the Bendigo Campus.

## Career Development Award, from the National Heart Foundation

Julie Bernhardt leads the Very Early Rehabilitation Research Program, a key aim of which is to determine the efficacy, cost effectiveness and mechanisms of very early (<24 hours) and intensive exercise for people following stroke. The National Heart Foundation Career Development Awards are highly competitive. Julie was delighted to receive an award, "to be named as the top ranked fellow for Victoria was incredibly

exciting, particularly given that my research field is in the less prominent area of stroke". Professor de Kretser presented Julie with the award at ceremony held at the National Heart Foundation head office in Melbourne. "Professor de Kretser is an enthusiastic medical scientist and having him present the award and show interest in my research was a real thrill" Julie said.



Telmo Languiller, Parliamentary Secretary (left), and Professor David de Kretser, Governor of Victoria (right) with Julie Bernhardt

## MUEC Winner : our Mark Alexander

Physiotherapist Mark Alexander has experienced a full career. He's felt the patriotic roar of an Olympic crowd after walking in the Athens 2004 closing ceremony, chewed the fat with billionaires like Richard Branson, spent a year drinking with the world's most energetic Irish dance troupe, Riverdance, and rubbed shoulders with elite international athletes.

Now Mark has won this year's Melbourne University Entrepreneurial Challenge (MUEC), the annual business plan competition developed by Melbourne Business School and designed to showcase and commercialise innovation.

MUEC is Australia's largest business plan competition organised and run entirely by students. MUEC provides student entrepreneurs the opportunity to commercialise their business ideas and receive real-world development guidance from top Australian business leaders.

Four years ago Mark started his own business. "My company, BakPhysio develops self-treatment products for back pain. It empowers back pain sufferers to manage and treat back pain at home".

His second product, BakRest, a back support device for the car or office, just won first prize in the MUEC — \$8k cash and \$15k professional services with Pitcher Partners. BakRest prevents slouched sitting postures and back pain, and is expected to revolutionise future chair design. Ken Niere, an APA specialist musculoskeletal physiotherapist and fellow La Trobe Physiotherapy staff member, was also involved in the winning team.

Mark's first product, BakBalls, attracted media interest after winning the 2004 University of Queensland's \$100,000 Enterprise business plan competition and an International Innovation Award in Physiotherapy in 2005.

Mark said that winning the MUEC has given him the impetus and exposure to attract investors and expand the business so it can realise its full international growth potential.

### MBA at MBS pays for itself in second term

Aside from studying and running his own business, Mark also spends three days a week lecturing on and co-ordinating the La Trobe University Postgraduate Sports Physiotherapy program. And he is the Victorian representative on the National SPA Committee.

His dance card is certainly full, but he believes he's ready to manage a business career as well as lecturing part-time and is currently studying part time for his MBA at Melbourne Business School.

He cites two reasons for doing an MBA. The first is that he has achieved all of his physiotherapy goals. The second is that he wants the business skills, experience and knowledge to apply to his own business.

"The course is based on case work and experiential learning. There's lots of discussion in the classroom and because my colleagues come from a wide variety of backgrounds, there's a range of views and different learning opportunities."

Mark's business is already benefiting from MBA principles. He applied evidence-based decision making to negotiate a better licensing deal with a multinational company. "I looked at the best and worst case scenarios, then negotiated a deal that was better than my current position even in the worst case so I couldn't lose," he says. "If I didn't have that education I would have just signed on the dotted line and been in a worse situation."

### A busy career

Mark joined the workforce after graduating from University of Queensland with a Bachelor in Physiotherapy (Hons) in 1995. After working in hospital and private practice settings for two years, he went to the UK on a working holiday, where he worked for the Richard Branson-owned Virgin London Broncos Rugby league team.

When his work visa expired two years later he spent six months backpacking around Europe before returning to Australia to work at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. "It was the opportunity of a lifetime working there as a locum for a year. I was one of a big team of physiotherapists servicing athletes training for the Sydney Olympics and I learnt so much under all the great physiotherapists there," he said.

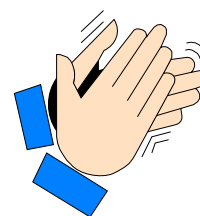
After the Olympics, Mark relocated to the Olympic Park Sports Medicine Centre in Melbourne and shortly after that started working with the Australian Triathlon team. This role took him to the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 and Melbourne in 2006; the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004 and Beijing in 2008; and world championships in Mexico in 2002, New Zealand in 2003, Spain in 2004, Switzerland in 2006, Germany in 2007 and Canada in 2008.

After the Manchester Commonwealth games Mark won a gig working with the Irish dance company, Riverdance, while they toured Europe and Australia.

"Working with the dancers was the best job I ever had," he says. "I only worked at night when the shows were on. So my job required going to the arena each night, watching the most amazing show in the world, then having every day off to sightsee or play golf. We were put up in great hotels and had no expenses. It was fantastic."



Mark Alexander



Mark now juggles his responsibilities between running the master of sports physiotherapy degree at La Trobe University and taking his business to the next level reaching into the European and US markets.

### Full Accreditation of La Trobe Physiotherapy Programs Extended

The Australian Physiotherapy Council has advised that full accreditation of the La Trobe Bachelor of Physiotherapy programs at Bundoora and Bendigo had been extended to 2012. The Accreditation Panel report commended the School on many aspects of the accreditation submission and the quality of the physiotherapy program.

**For further information :**

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