

# Alchemy

Alumni Magazine Issue 06 May 2004

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Michael Nunan  
wins first Mathew  
Peck Travelling  
Scholarship

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*Alchemy*, the alumni magazine of the Victorian College of Pharmacy, is published twice a year. The next issue is due for publication in November 2004.

The magazine is published for the College community, which includes alumni (both pre and post the Monash amalgamation), current and former staff, students, friends and colleagues of the College.

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# From the Dean

Welcome to issue six of *Alchemy*, the Victorian College of Pharmacy's alumni magazine. I hope you have enjoyed reading in past issues about developments at the College, and news of staff, students and fellow alumni. I believe it is vitally important that the College stays in touch with its graduates so that they are informed and have the opportunity to be involved in our activities.



This issue heralds a new look for *Alchemy*, with full colour and a new design. It will continue to keep you up-to-date with advancements in teaching and research, staff and student activities, the achievements of our alumni and the very popular reunion program. I'm sure you will agree that *Alchemy* is a great forum in which to celebrate the successes of the College and its graduates.

This year is proving to be a significant year for the College. Now that the second group of Bachelor of Formulation Science students have graduated, the Bachelor of Medicinal Chemistry course has been introduced, new courses in wound care and clinical pharmacy have begun, and the Centre for Drug Candidate Optimisation has been established, our priority is to work towards being recognised as one of the best pharmacy schools in the world.

There is already a general acceptance that the College is in the top 20 or 30 schools worldwide thanks to its research strength and modern pharmacy curriculum, the double degree in pharmacy and commerce,

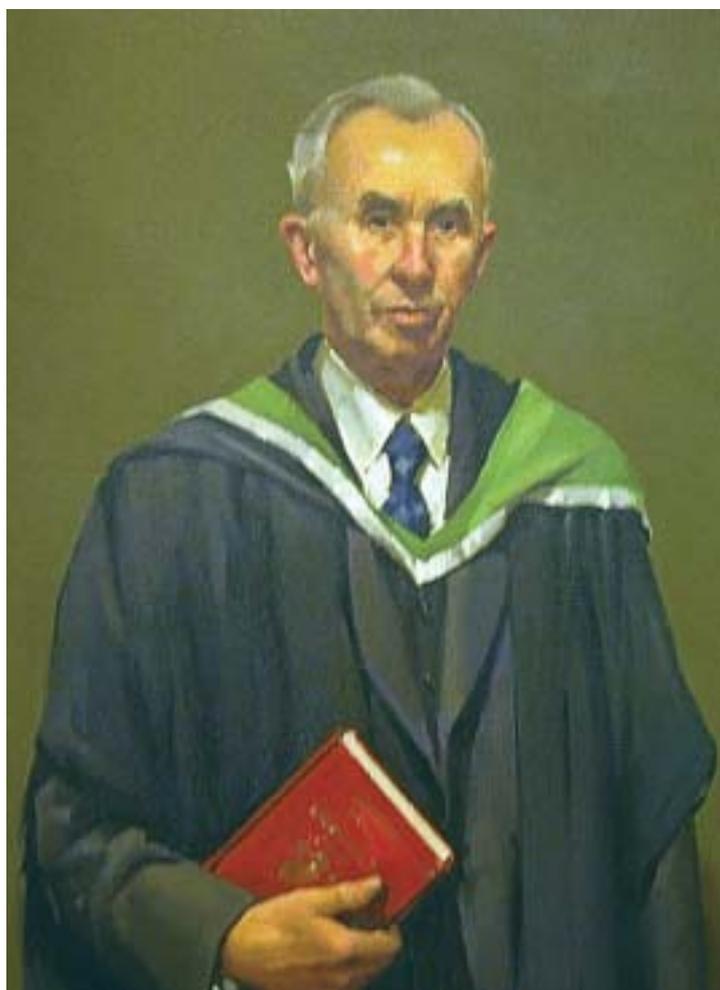
the Bachelor of Formulation Science course, the Bachelor of Medicinal Chemistry course and the MBA. But we need to further develop our programs to make us truly world-class and to enable us to respond more quickly to the changing needs of the profession and the industry. Some key projects in planning include the appointment of a professor of clinical pharmacy, the construction of the fourth building to house pharmaceutical research and establishing a National Centre for Pharmacy Management.

To assist us in achieving these objectives, the College's Foundation is launching an Annual Appeal. I do hope that all our graduates will support the Appeal, and become partners with the College in its future.

Professor Colin Chapman (1970)  
Dean

# A.T. Sissons

Past issues of *Alchemy* have looked back at the history of the College – not just the bricks and mortar, but the people who have made major contributions to its development. We have so far explored the life and careers of C. L. Butchers (issue five), Dr Geoffrey Vaughan (issue four) and Dr Cyril Tonkin (issue three). In this issue we ask ... who was A. T. Sissons?



Alfred Thomas Sissons was born on 22 April 1888, the same year that Brunswick, the suburb he grew up in, was proclaimed a town. His father was an established builder and real estate agent and the family was well known in the area. After completing secondary school, he attended the Victorian Teachers' College, graduating with a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma of Education in 1915. He won two prestigious Gladman Memorial Exhibitions – one for the greatest academic achievement and the other for excellence in practical teaching and class organisation.

Prior to his appointment to the College, Sissons worked at the Ministry of Munitions in Scotland as a research chemist and also as Science Master at University High School, Melbourne. During his service in the Ministry of Munitions he was seriously affected by the accidental inhalation of nitrogen peroxide gas, the results of which were to affect his health for the rest of his life.

The appointment of Sissons to the College in 1920 began a 40-year period of service as lecturer in chemistry, director of studies and finally Dean until 1962. He was the first head of school who was Australian born, and he exerted a profound influence on the development of pharmaceutical education in Australia. He was a gifted teacher and his advice relating to the subject matter of courses, examination conduct and general organisation of the teaching programs of the College was of great value to successive Boards and Councils.

'A.T.S' (or Sisso) as he was affectionately known was tireless in keeping up correspondence with innumerable students as they went into retail practice, hospital practice and other professional fields. During World War II he maintained contact with many men in the field. He was elected Honorary Member of the Victorian Chemists Sub-branch of the RSL as a token of gratitude from returned servicemen, for whom he did so much in assisting with their rehabilitation after the war.

The Sissons mural was commissioned by Eric Scott, president of the Pharmaceutical Society in 1962, to commemorate Sissons' 42 years at the College. In 1984 the Sissons building – the main administration building of the College which houses Cossar Hall – was also named in his honour.

"I remember 'A.T.S' as a great teacher and Dean of the College. He instilled in us all a great respect for the profession, and the need for us to have a thorough scientific background to our practice. He was passionately interested in the history of the pharmacy profession and was able to help us understand the historical context of the rapid evolution of the profession after the Second World War, with the growth of the pharmaceutical industry and its consequences on pharmacy practice."

Alistair Lloyd AO (1956)

# The first Annual Appeal

The College's Foundation is launching its first Annual Appeal in May, inviting all graduates and Victorian pharmacists to support the College and directly advance the needs of community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy and the pharmaceutical industry.

A great deal of the growth and success of the College to date has been due to the active involvement of Victorian pharmacists and the pride they take in its future. Several past one-off appeals have enabled the campus to expand and have helped the College to attract the best teachers, researchers and students.

The Foundation has been established to continue this tradition and make certain that, in the future, the College will have the financial flexibility it needs to improve on its already high standards and respond quickly to the needs of the profession and industry.

**For further information about the Appeal, contact the Foundation office on tel: 613 9903 9507 or email [foundation@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:foundation@vcp.monash.edu.au)**

## About the Foundation

The Foundation has so far funded:

- a new Professor of Pharmacy Practice
- the development of the Pharmacy MBA program
- a new postgraduate scholarship in Medicinal Chemistry.

Future projects that will be made possible by the Appeal include:

- establishing a Chair in Clinical Pharmacy
- supporting the new Centre for Medication Safety
- developing a National Centre for Pharmacy Management
- funding undergraduate scholarships to ensure equity of access to all courses
- providing postgraduate scholarships to further expand the College's research strengths in pharmacy practice, pharmaceutical science and formulation science

- establishing an Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the College to support the pharmaceutical industry and focus the College's expertise in this area
- supporting further campus development with state-of-the-art teaching and research facilities, particularly in the planned new building
- investigating the establishment of a pharmacy museum based at the College to display the College's substantial collection of pharmacy memorabilia and house other artefacts important to our history.

## Statements of support:



**Simon Yu (1972), Simon Yu Pharmacy Kilmore Victoria**

"There is a Chinese saying that states 'When you drink water, think about the source'. The profession has been good to me. In making this donation I am giving back to the source of my good fortune and supporting future generations of pharmacists, as my predecessors have."



**Bob and Val Constable (1957 and 1955), retired pharmacists**

"We have enjoyed our lives in a profession which has rewarded us both professionally and financially, and now we wish to give something back to help others do the same. Also, we would like to see the Victorian College of Pharmacy gain its due recognition worldwide."



**Michael Dooley (1987), Director of Pharmacy, Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute**

"I support the Foundation's goal to strengthen the College because, as a hospital pharmacist, I believe that clinical education and research into medication safety and improved therapeutics are vital."

# Opening of Academic Year and Presentation of Prizes Ceremony 2004

New students were welcomed and prize winners from 2003 honoured at the College's annual Opening of Academic Year and Presentation of Prizes Ceremony, held on 17 March.

Professor Ian Rae, Honorary Professorial Fellow in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne, and Technical Director of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, delivered an inspiring occasional address, an excerpt of which is featured below.

"I got an email last week advising me that I could contact any person in the world by a chain of just five emails. 'Any person', I wondered? Of course it had to be a person with email access, and it's sometimes hard for someone who has email access to remember that most people in the world don't enjoy this privilege.

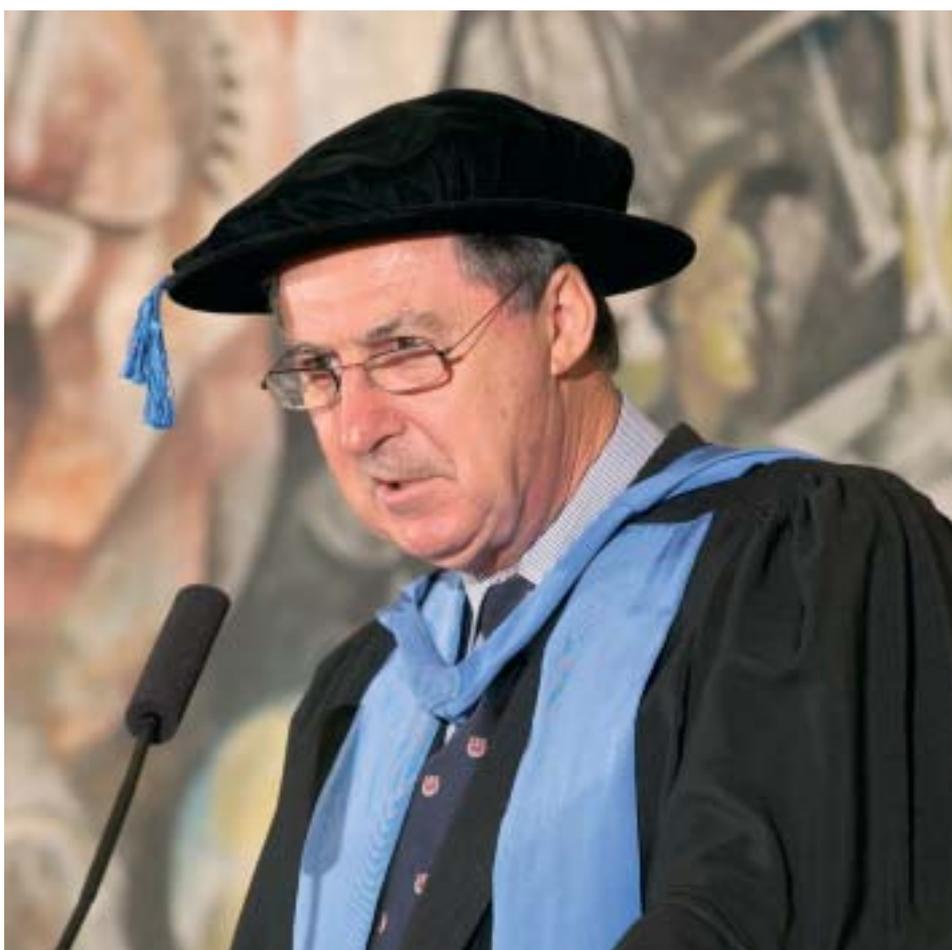
I first heard that 'five degrees of separation' claim a few years ago, when it was couched in terms of telephone calls. Want to call George Bush? Easy – I know the Director of the Bureau of Meteorology, Dr John Zillman, and he advises the Prime Minister on climate change issues, so in two calls my message could be with John Howard. Prime Minister Howard is personally known to President Bush and so in only three contacts I would have reached the most powerful man in the world.

**"I was given small lumps of sulfur to burn at home, and I was occasionally allowed to make up solutions of copper sulfate ..."**

Maybe telephone would be more certain than email, but then not everyone has a telephone number. It's OK for me, and for Dr Zillman, for Prime Minister John Howard and President George W. Bush. Where there's no telephone link in the chain, I might need to turn to face-to-face communication, or maybe a good old-fashioned letter. In some chains I could expect to use SMS messaging, while in others it would mean people getting together over a beer ... or a campfire.

Once the first step is taken I'd be relying on my friends to carry the message along, and that's an important observation because these fantasies of communication all suffer from a fatal flaw – I never know whether the people further down the chain will pass on my message. In other words, it's all right in theory, but does it work in practice?

That connection between theory and practice is one that you are going to encounter in your professional life. It's the job of the College to



introduce you to both of these components, theory and practice. I found when I finished my degree at the University of Melbourne that there was a third thing, something that brought theory and practice together. I had been well schooled in theory and I had lots of practical experience, particularly when I started research in my honours year. It was only when I started as a demonstrator in undergraduate practical classes that I realised there was something missing. The students I worked with uncovered difficulties in many things that I had thought were perfectly straightforward. I learned a lot ... and I'm still learning. I'm told by those who are good at interpreting Latin mottos that this is what the Monash motto means – still learning.

When I stopped actually doing chemistry I started writing as a historian, and among other topics I have turned my mind to something that has puzzled me for years, and that is the difference between a chemist and a pharmacist. You all know that in the general community the pharmacy is known as a chemist shop, and the person in the white coat is a chemist.

Chemists – real chemists, that is – have tried for years to stop pharmacists calling themselves chemists. My experience leads me to say that pharmacy includes chemistry among the many skills that make up the repertoire of a pharmacist. My experience comes in a number of ways. In the first, I have used my skills as an organic chemist to collaborate with pharmacologists in developing new drugs. Secondly, when this College ceased to be an independent institution in the early 1990s and became affiliated with Monash University, I was for a short time a Board member here and I learned a lot about what went on.

**“That connection between theory and practice is one that you are going to encounter in your professional life.”**

Thirdly, my introduction to chemistry took place in a pharmacy, although everyone else in my family called it a chemist shop. That included the pharmacist, my great aunt Hilda Groening! Aunt Hilda was a graduate of this College, one of the very early women to qualify in pharmacy, roughly a hundred years ago. Her father had founded the shop in Newport where I started my chemical career, and before that her grandmother and grandfather had practised as pharmacists in Bendigo.

I was allowed very few privileges in Aunt Hilda's shop, but unlike in the present-day pharmacy there were actually bottles of chemical substances on the shelves. I was given small lumps of sulfur to burn at home, and I was occasionally allowed to make up solutions of copper sulfate (pale blue) and potassium permanganate (deep purple).

To return to my original theme, I can track my connections with this College along a number of chains, none of which involves so many as five degrees of separation. Here are some more samples. Professor Chapman, and I were both Deans at Monash University. I was also a colleague of one of his predecessors, Professor Geoffrey



**Professor Rae presenting Formulation Science student Justin Peters with the First Year Exhibition for Physiology.**

Vaughan, and I am a Fellow (together with Professor Vaughan and several members of the present staff) of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute, which provides a node in many of our networks.

These are connections that I know will work for me, not just romantic theories about degrees of separation between me and public figures in the worlds of politics, sport, finance or performance arts. What I'm talking about is my network – something that is absolutely invaluable in my personal and professional life. My network has grown as I have aged, and email has helped me to keep in touch with its members. I suppose there will come a time when my network will begin to contract ... for reasons that most of us don't care to talk about. I think I'm in equilibrium at the moment, somewhere near the point where I am losing old members at about the same rate that I am adding new ones.

At present my network includes a couple of graduates of this College who work at the pharmacy where I get my prescription drugs. It's possible that you will become part of my network, and I part of yours, just a few years from now. The demographic predictions for the Australian population show a steady increase in the proportion of those 55 years and older, and we all know that older Australians are great users of prescription drugs and other nostrums available over the counter.

So, no need to send an email ... just look out for me at the chemist shop.”

## Gold Medal winners

Congratulations to Frances Peach, winner of the Pharmacy Gold Medal 2003 presented by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Vic branch), and Yee-Voon Yap, winner of the Formulation Science Gold Medal presented by the Australian Consumer and Specialty Products Association (ACSPA). Both accepted their awards at this year's Opening Ceremony.

The Gold Medals are awarded to the dux of each course on the basis of academic results over the four years of the Pharmacy course and three years of the Bachelor of Formulation Science Course. Previous winners of the Gold Medal include Dr Cyril Tonkin (1910) and Muriel Witt (1927).

Frances Peach also received the Fourth Year Exhibition award for Pharmacy Practice IV with Marijana Putnikovic, while Yee-Voon accepted the Third Year Exhibition award for Toxicology and Industrial Experience II.

Frances is currently completing her traineeship at the Alfred Hospital and on weekends is working at a community pharmacy in Middle Park. Yee-Voon is currently studying honours in Pharmaceutics with Dr Pranker here at the College. Her studies include looking at DNA and its interaction with aspartame. She plans to focus on study at present and is keeping her options open regarding a career in the diverse field of Formulation Science.



Frances Peach and Yee-Voon Yap with Professor Ian Rae.

## Introducing a special admission test for pharmacy

A new admission exam for pharmacy will test the aptitude of applicants for a health related career, and ensure that they have an ability to communicate and relate to the public in vastly different practice environments.

Previously, applicants for the Bachelor of Pharmacy program have not been required to sit a test for aptitude. But with demand for entry to the College's pharmacy course so high, there are now many academically qualified applicants missing out on places. While academic ability is essential to the course, entry based solely on this may also discriminate against applicants from particular groups or areas and does not measure their passion to help people on a daily basis.

To address this issue the College will be introducing UMAT (Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test) as a secondary entry requirement in 2005 and beyond. Although great emphasis on teaching communication and clinical skills occurs throughout the pharmacy course, all applicants (except international

students) who wish to be considered for admission to the Bachelor of Pharmacy (or Bachelor of Pharmacy/Commerce) must now complete UMAT to demonstrate their ability to reason, make logical deductions and form judgements.

UMAT has been developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), an independent, not-for-profit organisation, on behalf of UMAT consortium universities. It is used specifically to assist in the selection of students into health science degree programs at undergraduate level.

Several Australian and New Zealand universities currently use UMAT in their selection process. They include the University of Auckland (medicine), the University of Adelaide (medicine, dental surgery, oral health) and the University of Melbourne (medicine, dental science, physiotherapy, oral health therapy).

**For further information about UMAT, visit [www.acer.edu.au/umat](http://www.acer.edu.au/umat)**

# Mathew Peck Travelling Scholarship first recipient

Michael Nunan, third year Bachelor of Pharmacy student, has been awarded the inaugural Mathew Peck Travelling Scholarship.

Mathew Peck was a Bachelor of Pharmacy student at the College, between his first and second years of study, who passed away tragically in an accident while travelling in South America in January 2003. The scholarship was established to honour Mathew's life and to continue his ideals and commitment to international health issues.

Applications were opened on the first day of term. All second, third and fourth year pharmacy students were eligible to apply. The scholarship, valued at \$3000 in 2004, is for participation in an international health development program in a developing country. The chosen recipient will be mentored in the field with a pharmacist and will make a contribution to the program. Applicants could suggest a program, or could participate in a program devised by the College anywhere in the developing world, but they were encouraged to consider projects in the Asia/Pacific region.

Selection was based on academic merit and also personal attributes and the past community participation of applicants. Students applying also needed to demonstrate an understanding of international health issues and a motivation to make a contribution in the area of international health.

The selection panel, which included staff at the College, a student representative and Mathew's parents, was very pleased at the calibre of all the applications and had difficulty making their decision. All applicants demonstrated a strong commitment and enthusiasm for humanitarian aid and were very active as volunteers in their communities.

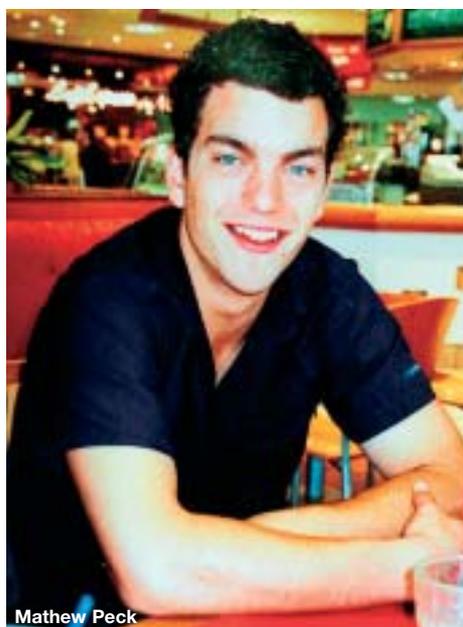
Michael's win was announced at the College's Opening Ceremony. His travel program will be developed throughout the year with the assistance of staff and will occur in the summer of 2004-05. Michael is hoping to travel to Cambodia or India to participate in a Jesuit program.

"I am honoured to accept this scholarship that has Mathew's name. He had a keen sense of what was right and wrong – of what community involvement actually meant," said Michael.

"I can think of no better tribute to his memory than this program. I am proud to undertake an international tour in his name as a badge of inspiration."



First scholarship recipient, Michael Nunan with his parents Tony (1976) and Genny (1976) Nunan at the presentation ceremony.



Mathew Peck

## Scholarship fundraiser

Family and friends held a very successful fundraising evening in 2003 to raise funds for the scholarship to honour Mathew's life.

Second year pharmacy student Susie Rudd was instrumental in this first event. With help from Mathew's family and friends, plus College staff, Susie organised a second fundraising event, which was held on Friday, 21 May. It was a great night which included a DJ, with all the money raised from the tickets going to the scholarship.

For further information about the scholarship and fundraising events, visit [www.vcp.monash.edu/students/mpeckscholar/](http://www.vcp.monash.edu/students/mpeckscholar/)

To make a tax-deductible donation to the scholarship fund, contact the Foundation office on tel: 613 9903 9507 or email [foundation@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:foundation@vcp.monash.edu.au)

# A pharmacy pathway to the prestigious Monash MBA

The Monash MBA via the Pharmacy Management Program (PMP) provides new areas of study and business opportunities for pharmacists and senior pharmaceutical industry managers who work in an increasingly challenging business environment.

The Monash MBA, with a Pharmacy professional track, is a joint project of Monash University's Faculty of Business and Economics and the Victorian College of Pharmacy. In the future, MBA students will be well positioned to capitalise on new business opportunities in areas including pharmaceutical care, wound management, information technology and e-commerce.

Due to increasing demands for management and business skills, health professionals are pursuing postgraduate education in growing numbers. The PMP recognises this need with a flexible learning program that allows participants to select a range of skill development units to suit their career needs.

Participants can either undertake single subjects to enhance a particular skill area, complete the full program with a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma in Pharmacy Management, or progress through to the prestigious Monash MBA. Many units are available online and there are now 30 participants from hospital pharmacy, community pharmacy and industry in the program.

Karen Honson (1989), a hospital pharmacist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, has been with the program for two semesters and is the first PMP participant progressing through the MBA pathway. Karen found the exposure to the general management disciplines such as marketing most valuable.

"The MBA allowed me to broaden my skills and operate far more effectively in a business environment. I was looking for a challenge," Karen said.

Amanda Galbraith, a community pharmacist in the ACT, found the financial management and marketing subjects very useful and said they helped her significantly in her recent purchase of a pharmacy.

"I felt the need to ensure I had sound business skills before buying a pharmacy," she said. "After the financial management and marketing units I felt confident to go ahead and buy a pharmacy".

Amanda is in the process of completing her final unit in the Graduate Certificate in Pharmacy Management this semester. "The online network was great support, I didn't feel lost in a huge university," she said. "I felt the staff dealt with me and my particular concerns individually."

It is envisaged that students can achieve graduate diploma level in two years by part time off campus mode, allowing rural interstate and international candidates to undertake the program.

**For further information about the Pharmacy Management Program contact Bill Suen, tel: 613 990 39054, email [bill.suen@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:bill.suen@vcp.monash.edu.au)**



Left: (left to right) Professor Rob Willis Associate Dean, MBA & DBA programs, Professor Colin Chapman, Dean of the College, MBA student Karen Honson and Professor Peter Reed, Director MBA Operations.

Above: Pharmacy Management Program student Amanda Galbraith.

# Pharmacy Practice Symposium in Melbourne

The Department of Pharmacy Practice recently hosted a successful international symposium that looked at the challenges faced by modern pharmacy education.



The department held its first symposium in Prato, Italy, in September 2002, with a theme of 'Experiential Teaching and Learning in Pharmacy'. This was so successful and had such international support that a second symposium was planned for Melbourne.

This year the theme was 'Innovations in Teaching and Learning'. Seventy participants, mainly from Australia and New Zealand but also from the UK, the USA, the Middle East and Malaysia, attended the symposium. The program looked at innovative ways of delivering education across the spectrum of pharmacy settings including undergraduate, postgraduate, continuing education and registration programs.

Specific topics included the University of Newcastle's experience in developing Australia's first graduate entry pharmacy degree, a novel program at the University of South Australia in which students undertake their course across two universities (one in Australia and the other in Malaysia), teaching in a wound clinic as a model for patient based teaching and the experience of the University of Sunderland (UK) in developing,

delivering and managing a completely online Masters program in clinical pharmacy.

College presentations included a discussion by Dr Jennifer Marriott (1971) and Kirstie Galbraith (1988) on the delivery of an online preceptor education program to improve the experience of both preceptors and students during experiential placements. Rohan Elliott (1991), Pre-registration Program Manager at the College, explored the development of online discussion groups using case-based problem solving as a major component of the College's pre-registration pharmacist training program. This included a student in the program explaining his experience of utilising these discussion groups.

Academics, preceptors and students were encouraged to explore and share the experience of novel teaching in pharmacy around the world, and to address the range of goals and challenges they have experienced. International speakers presented their experiences and shared some of their insights into dynamic and flexible teaching in pharmacy. From this, supportive networks were created that will be useful for future research and teaching.



Left: (left to right) Dr Leigh McKauge, University of Queensland, Kirstie Galbraith (1988) and Dr Alan Worsley, University of Sunderland, UK.

Above: Associate Professor John Rovers, Drake University, Iowa (left) with Len Levy (1960), Honorary Treasurer of the Pharmacy Board of Victoria at the symposium.

Greg Duncan (1985), a lecturer in the Department of Pharmacy Practice and one of the organisers of the event, was pleased with its success.

"The symposium was about sharing resources and experiences to improve outcomes in teaching and learning in all aspects of education in pharmacy," he said.

The symposium took place at the Royal Melbourne Zoo from 15–16 April.

**For more information on previous and future symposia, or to view presentations from the Melbourne symposium, visit [www.vcp.monash.edu.au/practice/symposia/](http://www.vcp.monash.edu.au/practice/symposia/)**

## The \$13m spray-on drug deal

Acrux has secured a multi-million dollar deal to develop its drug delivery system for treating female sexual dysfunction and menopause.

Acrux Pty Ltd, a company created after researchers at the College invented a method for delivering drugs through the skin, secured the US\$13.3 million deal with VIVUS Inc, a world leader in the research, development and commercialisation of products to restore sexual function.

Under the terms of the agreement, Acrux will receive more than US\$13 million in licensing fees, as well as royalty payments, on the commercialisation of each product.

Dr Barrie Finnin (1967), a senior lecturer in the Department of Pharmaceutics and chairman of Acrux's scientific advisory board, said the deal was a significant achievement and had given Acrux access to the biggest world market for women's health – the USA.

Several years ago, Dr Finnin and Pharmaceutics Department colleague Professor Barry Reed (1963) discovered that sunscreens increase the penetration of compounds through the skin. This knowledge led to the development of a device that, with a simple squirt, allows drugs to be delivered through the skin.

In 1998, Acrux was established so that the transdermal spray technology could be licensed from Monash University.

"Acrux's Metered Dose Transdermal Spray technology is the next generation of drug delivery," said Dr Finnin. "Using this spray is as easy as taking a pill with all the safety advantages of transdermal delivery."

A phase two clinical trial is under way in Melbourne, where the transdermal spray is being used to deliver replacement hormones to women with low testosterone levels. Research has indicated that testosterone is effective in treating women with low sexual desire.

For further information, visit [www.acrux.com.au](http://www.acrux.com.au)



## Foundation scholarship for PhD research

The Foundation has awarded a scholarship to Fadi Ayad, a PhD student with the Department of Medicinal Chemistry, who is conducting research into Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

Fadi has a background in biological science, organic and medicinal chemistry, and biochemistry. His Masters of Science at La Trobe University involved looking at the design and testing of novel anti-malarial drugs.

Fadi's current studies centre on research into 5-HT4 agonists for the treatment of IBS. IBS affects approximately 10% of people in most industrialised countries and is the most common functional gastrointestinal disorder. In the present study, five different series of novel compounds have been designed and synthesised. It has been shown that all these compounds have 5-HT4 activity. However, there is more biological and computation

research required to conclude the effect of all the compounds in treating IBS and other related diseases.

"The scholarship means a lot – without this it would be impossible to concentrate on my studies which means I'd have to work to support my financial needs," said Fadi. "This scholarship has allowed me to achieve a high level of qualitative research and study, and it has given me the opportunity to be here on a full time basis."

Fadi's research is being conducted within the Department of Medicinal Chemistry and is being supervised by Dr Ian Coupar, Dr Helen Irving, Professor Colin Pouton and Dr Magdy Iskander.

For further information on Fadi's research, visit [www.vcp.monash.edu.au/chemistry/researchcc.html](http://www.vcp.monash.edu.au/chemistry/researchcc.html)



# Clinical pharmacists improve patient care

Positive media attention was recently created by the release of the SHPA Clinical Pharmacy Intervention Study. Two of the study's authors, senior College lecturers Michael Dooley and Kirstie Galbraith, found themselves in the public spotlight when the findings ignited widespread interest in the role of the hospital pharmacist.

The independent study, conducted by a group of SHPA members, was funded by the SHPA and published in the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*. The study aimed to determine the cost savings of pharmacist initiated changes to hospitalised patients' drug therapy or management.

An independent clinical review panel was convened at each of the eight participating hospitals and they assessed all interventions over a one month period. The panels confirmed or rejected the clinical pharmacists' assessments of the impact of the interventions on length of stay, re-admission probability, medical procedures and laboratory monitoring, and quantified the resultant changes. These results were then costed, and the savings in dollars were remarkable, not to mention the savings in lives and improvements to patient care.

Of the 24,866 inpatient episodes identified during the study month, pharmacists initiated 1399 changes to medicines or patient management. Of those changes, 15 saved lives, 88 reduced the length of patient stays in hospital and 156 reduced the potential for the patient to be re-admitted to hospital.

"In financial terms, the study showed that for every dollar spent on a pharmacist for an intervention in medication management, the hospital saves \$23," said Michael Dooley, who is also the Director of Pharmacy at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

"Pharmacists can save lives, improve patient care and reduce the length of stay for many people. When annualised, the savings resulting from the interventions quantified at the eight hospitals was greater than \$4 million dollars," he stated.

Kirstie Galbraith reiterated the importance of the study as one of the first in Australia to quantify in economic terms the crucial role of the clinical pharmacist as a check and balance in the hospital system on all issues of medication. The study has confirmed the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Healthcare's viewpoint that the provision of clinical pharmacy services is a key strategy to reduce medication incidents.



Michael Dooley acknowledged that clinical pharmacy services are not just a simple double check of a doctor's prescription, but are delivered as part of the multidisciplinary approach to patient care. These services include:

- medication history assessment
- medication order review
- adverse drug reaction monitoring
- clinical review
- selection of medicine therapy
- therapeutic medicine monitoring
- provision of information on medicines
- participation in multidisciplinary ward rounds and meetings
- patient education about their medicines
- community liaison.

"The benefits of all of these services were not included in this particular study, but many are essential background work that enables the pharmacist to identify issues relating to the use of medicines," Michael stated.

**For further information about the study contact Michael Dooley, email: [mdooley@petermac.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:mdooley@petermac.unimelb.edu.au)**

**To read the full study visit [www.shpa.org.au/documents/bjcp\\_cpis.pdf](http://www.shpa.org.au/documents/bjcp_cpis.pdf) (with permission from the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*)**



Top: Kirstie Galbraith  
Bottom: Michael Dooley

# Brendan Johnson wins Mollie Holman Medal for Excellence

Brendan Johnson (1997) has been awarded the 2003 Mollie Holman Medal for Excellence in PhD thesis for his research into oral drug absorption.

The Mollie Holman doctoral medal is awarded annually for the best PhD in each faculty of Monash University. It is a prestigious award created in honour of Professor Holman's endeavours in postgraduate education.

Professor Holman joined the staff at Monash in 1963. She held a personal chair as Professor of Physiology from 1970 until her retirement in 1996. Now an Emeritus Professor, she is still actively engaged in teaching and research. Professor Holman was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in recognition of her significant contributions to science and education and was also awarded a Centenary Medal in 2002. She was a founding member of the Australian Physiological and Pharmacological Society, and served as its president for several years. She is also a Fellow

of the Australian Academy of Science and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Physics.

The College's Mollie Holman Medallist for Excellence in a PhD thesis for 2003 is Brendan Johnson. Brendan's thesis title was: 'Intestinal Efflux and Metabolism Processes as Biochemical Barriers to Oral Drug Absorption'. Brendan's PhD was supervised by Associate Professor Chris Porter.

Brendan's study examined the complex biological processes that govern drug absorption into the body after oral administration. To further elucidate the factors that limit oral drug absorption, his thesis specifically addressed the interaction between drug transport proteins and drug metabolising enzymes within the cells lining the gastrointestinal tract.

This is not Brendan's first accolade. In 2001 he shared the prize for best poster presentation in pharmaceuticals at the Australasian Pharmaceutical Science Association (APSA) conference. In 2002 Brendan received travel awards from the Globalization of Pharmaceuticals Education Network (GPEN) and the Takeru Higuchi-Nigel Manning Intersearch Program to conduct part of his PhD studies at the University of Kansas under the guidance of Dr Ronald T. Borchardt.

Brendan graduated with a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the College in 1997, and a Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science Honours degree in 1999. After completing his PhD in 2003, Brendan moved to the USA and is currently undertaking a postdoctoral fellowship at the

University of North Carolina in collaboration with GlaxoSmithKline. Under the mentorship of Dr Kim L.R. Brouwer, Brendan is designing, conducting and analysing clinical pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic studies, as well as being involved in basic research examining the functions of drug transport proteins in the liver. Brendan will also spend one year with the Clinical Pharmacokinetics/Modelling and Simulation group of GlaxoSmithKline, where he will gain an industry perspective on the analysis of data from larger pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic studies.



**Brendan Johnson in his laboratory at the University of North Carolina.**

# Grants success for research in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis

Congratulations to Dr Jalal Jazayeri, a lecturer in the Department of Pharmaceutical Biology and Pharmacology, and his team of researchers who have been awarded two research grants totalling \$160,000 for their work in the field of anticytokine therapy for the treatment of rheumatoid and osteoarthritis.



Dr Jalal Jazayeri  
and Dr Nicole  
deWeerd.

The first is a \$100,000 grant from the CASS Foundation (Contributing to Australian Scholarship and Science), a private Australian philanthropic foundation created to support and promote the advancement of education, science and medicine, and research in those fields. The second grant, awarded by the Monash Research Fund, is for a postdoctoral fellowship of \$60,000 for two years.

Dr Jazayeri and his team aim to develop a group of new agents that have the capacity to block the activity of such cytokines as leukemia inhibitory factor (LIF) and oncostatin M (OSM) and other Interleukin-6 (IL-6) cytokines, proven to contribute to inflammation and damage in rheumatoid joints.

These antagonists are being produced in the laboratory, having inserted the respective genes into bacteria and baculovirus for their expression in insect cells. After production and purification they will be tested in vitro to confirm that they can effectively block the inflammatory effect of the target cytokines. Antagonists with proven neutralising capability will then be produced in larger quantities and tested in vivo to ensure that they are effective at reducing joint inflammation and arresting damage and that there are no unexpected reactions. Ultimately, it is anticipated that one or more of these cytokine antagonists may be useful for therapy in rheumatoid arthritis and perhaps other diseases.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory illness that can be

debilitating and extremely painful. It is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks normal tissue components as if they were invading pathogens. This illness affects about one per cent of the world's population, with women suffering from it two to three times more than men. The inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis primarily attacks the linings of the joints. However, the membranes lining the blood vessels, heart and lungs may also become inflamed. The hands and feet are most often affected, but any joint lined by a membrane may be involved.

"The grants have enabled the extension of Dr Nicole deWeerd's postdoctoral fellowship and have also provided us with an excellent

opportunity to build up, continue and establish an active research team in the field of anticytokine therapy for the treatment of rheumatoid and osteoarthritis in the College," stated Dr Jazayeri.

**For further information contact  
Dr Jalal Jazayeri, email [jalal.jazayeri@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:jalal.jazayeri@vcp.monash.edu.au)**

## Promoting pharmacy as a career to Indigenous students in the Northern Territory

Fourth year pharmacy student Michael Frank recently travelled to the Northern Territory to talk to Indigenous secondary school students about pharmacy as a career.

The trip was organised by the Northern Territory Remote Health Workforce Agency (NTRHWA) with support from the Central Australian Remote and Aboriginal Health Club (CARAH), Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) and the National Rural Health Network (NRHN). It was an opportunity for university students studying medicine and other health courses around the country to visit rural high schools in the Northern Territory and promote health careers to Indigenous students.

The NTRHWA has been established by the Commonwealth Government to address the shortage of general practitioners in the Northern Territory. The Agency recruits general practitioners to areas of need, prepares them and supports them and their families while living in the Northern Territory. The school visits program also aims to address the shortage by encouraging local and Indigenous secondary school students to consider a health career.

The tour that Michael joined was based around the Alice Springs area and went from 17–24 April. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity for the students who were studying medicine, nursing, occupational therapy and pharmacy, to make a contribution while learning more about Indigenous and remote health issues.



“The visit has been an amazing experience for myself, and it seems like the students we visited have walked away feeling more confident about attempting university studies as a whole, and health studies in particular. Coming to terms with the disparity of living, health and education standards in the Territory has been a real personal challenge, leaving me with more questions than answers. However, I’m certain that the students who were lucky enough to go on the trip have walked away even more committed to rural, remote and Indigenous health, myself included,” Michael stated.

The NTRHWA contributed towards the cost of Michael’s trip and the College also made a contribution to Michael’s airfare. The NTRHWA is planning a second tour of areas in the Top End of the Northern Territory in July this year.

**For more information about the NTRHWA contact Project Officer Carita Davis, email [carita.davis@gpphcnt.org.au](mailto:carita.davis@gpphcnt.org.au)**

**(Left to right) Hayley Puckeridge (Medicine And Indigenous Health, University of Wollongong), Helen Walker-Carrol (Nursing, Charles Darwin University, Alice Springs), Meagan Post (Nursing, Charles Darwin University, Alice Springs), Angela Titmuss (Medicine, University of New South Wales), Christine Jones (Occupational Therapy, Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia), Carita Davis (Project Officer, NTRHWA, Alice Springs), Brendan Marshall (Medicine, University of Queensland), Dr Jim Thurley (Medical Advisor, NTRHWA, Alice Springs), Michael Frank (Pharmacy, Monash University).**

## Pharmacy highlighted in career workshops in Western Victoria



**Fourth year Pharmacy students Lauren Hitchens and Jack Sia, who are taking part in the program.**

Two fourth year students at the College are taking part this year in the Victorian Universities Rural Health Consortium (VURHC) Secondary Schools Project.

The project is a series of health career workshops for year 10, 11 and 12 students throughout country Victoria. More than 800 students have participated in the fun and interactive workshops. Students who already have an interest in health are given first-hand experience and information about health career options and pathways, with a view to encouraging them to return to rural areas once they are qualified.

Many health professionals take part in the workshops, in which they are presented as a team working together to care for the entire wellbeing of a person and their family.

Pharmacy students Lauren Hitchens and Jack Sia will participate in workshops, to be held in Horsham in May, that will be attended by more than 120 secondary students. Lauren and Jack

have already had a taste of rural pharmacy through their student placements at Rainbow and Ararat respectively.

The overall project runs for three years. It is funded by the Department of Human Services and supported by secondary schools, tertiary institutions, regional health services, divisions of general practice and local health care providers. The workshops are organised by the Monash University School of Rural Health on behalf of VURHC, which represents universities that provide health courses in Victoria.

**For more information contact the Project Coordinators, Annette Davey on email [annette.davey@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:annette.davey@med.monash.edu.au) or Cathy Pendergast on email [cathy.pendergast@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:cathy.pendergast@med.monash.edu.au) or visit [www.med.monash.edu.au/mrrh/education/schools/](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/mrrh/education/schools/)**

# Rural students mapping their way

Fifteen first year Rural Entry Scheme pharmacy students recently came together to meet each other and learn more about how the College supports rural pharmacy.



“I plan to travel overseas after graduation and then work in the city for a while. But I know when it’s time to settle down, I will head back to the country. I definitely want to go into community pharmacy.”

Clare Magree, first year student from Wangaratta.

“My mum is a nurse. I grew up hearing about how the hospital pharmacists had trouble taking holidays because it’s hard finding someone to replace them. I thought that there would be lots of opportunities in the country for me if I became a pharmacist.”

Leighton Delmenico, first year student from Swan Hill.

The College has introduced a range of programs to address the shortage of pharmacists in rural and remote areas. One of the most significant is the Rural Entry Scheme, which assists students from rural areas to enter the Bachelor of Pharmacy course.

This program was officially launched in 2003 but has been operating as a pilot program for several years, with many students returning to rural areas on graduation.

Professor Colin Chapman, Dean of the College, welcomed the students, who were from as far afield as Holbrook, Mirboo North, Moe South, Wangaratta and Nambrok, and explained the philosophy behind the Scheme.

“There is no pressure on you to work in a rural area once you graduate,” he explained.

“But we do know from research, not just of pharmacists but across the health professions, that rural students are much more likely to return to rural areas on graduation,” he added. “By encouraging more rural students into the course, the College is making a long term commitment to reversing the lack of pharmacists in country areas.”

Professor Chapman introduced Anne Leversha (1971), a senior lecturer at the College who is based at the Monash Medical Faculty’s Gippsland Regional Clinical School in Traralgon. Anne spoke to the students about Wildfire, the Monash University Rural Health Club, and encouraged them to join. Wildfire aims to foster and support both rural and urban students who have an interest in rural health and rural practice.

Katrina Fitzsimon then addressed the students. Katrina administers the pharmacy student placement program, which includes a compulsory rural placement. She described the success of these rural placements in giving positive experiences to students who have never lived in rural areas.

“I’ve had one metropolitan student ask if the road from Geelong to Hamilton was sealed,” Katrina laughed.

“This was an unusual enquiry, but an example of the kind of misinformation that some people have about rural living that this program aims to reverse,” she added.

**For further information about rural pharmacy programs at the College, visit [www.vcp.monash.edu/rural/](http://www.vcp.monash.edu/rural/)**

# Unveiling Remedy

by Jana Dostal and Dhineli Perera

Remedy is a new student group aimed at improving the standard of pharmacy in developing countries. It will also inform both the College community and the wider community about local and international health and pharmacy practice issues in underprivileged areas.

Jana Dostal and Dhineli Perera are the two main contacts for this group of very motivated and passionate students. Here are their thoughts on what Remedy hopes to achieve ...

“When a group of determined young people put their thoughts, feelings, desires and ambitions together, Remedy emerged. It was the start of an endeavour that will show our fellow students how they can make a difference to the standard of health services in less fortunate countries.

Ultimately, Remedy aims to improve the standard of Pharmacy in developing countries. This broad aim is broken down into two main goals.

Our first goal is to share our resources with Pharmacy colleges of underdeveloped countries, with the aim of improving their educational facilities and increasing their standard of Pharmacy education and Pharmacy practice.

Remedy, through working with Pharmabridge, has established a relationship with a Pharmacy college in India. We are liaising with staff and students to assess which materials would make a difference to student education (for example textbooks, journals and equipment) and are raising funds to provide these resources. Their availability will help to grow student knowledge, ultimately improving the standard of practice that graduating pharmacists will provide to patients.

Our second goal is to better educate ourselves and our community on health and pharmacy practice issues in underprivileged areas, both in Australia and on an international scale.

Remedy will invite guest speakers to the College. They will be individuals who have worked in the Pharmacy setting in underdeveloped areas of the world – people with first-hand experience in pharmacy practice of variable standards.

**“The outcome we strive for is to help others to help themselves.”**

Remedy is also sponsoring a World Vision Child named Jessica Etelv, a six-year-old girl living in Ecuador. Our ultimate desire is to help improve the quality of life for people in underdeveloped countries, and the sponsorship program is directly aligned with that goal. It is a part of Remedy that is close to the hearts of many students at the College, since it is taking place in memory of our fellow student and friend Mathew Peck, who passed away while travelling in Ecuador in January 2003.

Our main annual fundraiser brings these goals together into one grand evening. A gala dinner will involve guest speakers, raffles, prizes and a dinner ‘with a twist’. The money



raised during this event will head towards the Pharmacy college we are supporting in India.

Remedy cannot progress without support from fellow students and the College community, including alumni. It is still in its infancy, but we have a vision and the commitment to ensure that Remedy makes a difference. We hope that you will give us your support.

The outcome we strive for is to help others to help themselves. Helping to improve the level of education would result in a growth of knowledge within the system itself, reflected upon the group of graduates-to-be of the college we support. The drive comes from our acknowledgement that others do not have access to the benefits that we have, and we find it important to step forward and make a change.”

**For further information about Remedy contact Jana Dostal and Dhineli Perera, email [vcp\\_remedy@hotmail.com](mailto:vcp_remedy@hotmail.com)**



The Remedy booth at Student Orientation Week 2004

# Pharmacy students jump at the chance to travel the world

Every year students vie to take part in Pharmacy Abroad, a prestigious travel program, to experience how pharmacy operates in the USA, Asia and Europe. Entry to the program is highly sought after and a part of the College's commitment to producing graduates with a high level of maturity and communication skills.

Since 2000, 26 pharmacy students have been selected to travel overseas for these practical experience placements that take place over the summer break. In 2003–04, eight students travelled in pairs to the University of Kansas, Drake University at Des Moines Iowa, the University of Singapore and the University of Nottingham.

Pharmacy Abroad coordinates the entire placement process, including helping with visas, finding suitable accommodation and liaising with the larger Monash Abroad program and the host institution. During their three to four-week placements, the students were given the opportunity to gain experience in hospital and community pharmacy settings as well as attending lectures, hospital visits and other programs organised by the host universities.

Grace Wong and Caroline Chen travelled to the University of Kansas for their placements and were quickly struck by the differences between health care in the USA and Australia. The Kansas University Medical Centre Outpatients Clinic proved to be a highlight for both Grace and Caroline, as it gave them first-hand experience of patient care.

"We observed myriad infections, ranging from newly diagnosed HIV patients to hip replacement infections and motor vehicle accidents," they stated. "The doctors we observed were eager to allow us to understand their thought processes in determining treatment plans."

While at Drake University in Iowa, Alysia Thrasis experienced new affirmation of her choice to study pharmacy.

"I gained a different perspective on my role as a health care professional," she said. "Now I see myself as part of a well respected occupation of worldwide importance for our contribution to the community."

These overseas experiences are not all work and no play, as mixing with other students and experiencing the world from another point of view are all an important part of the program. While some were struggling with the cold in the USA and Europe, others found themselves fielding constant questions relating to Australia's crocodile hunter, koala 'bears' and Australian beer varieties.

Chris Tang, who visited the University of Nottingham in the north of England, found that the conversation quickly turned to Kylie Minogue when it was discovered he was Australian.

"If I had to choose one non-work highlight, it would have been watching Manchester United play at Old Trafford in front of 68,000 fans," he said. "The atmosphere was just amazing."

To visit other countries and gain a global perspective is the intended outcome of these practical placements abroad. Each participant has gained greatly from the program, learning about other cultures and practices in pharmacy as well as enhancing their further development personally and professionally.

"Pharmacy Abroad is a fantastic opportunity for our students. They come back brimming with confidence and with amazing stories to tell – it's a once in a lifetime experience," said Professor Colin Chapman, Dean of the College.

#### Who went where:

University of Nottingham:  
Chris Tang, Adrian Ma  
University of Kansas:  
Grace Wong, Caroline Chen  
Drake University (at Des Moines, Iowa):  
Raylene Kwok, Alysia Thrasis  
National University of Singapore:  
Aleksandra Stankovic, Ambrose Yuen

**For more information about Pharmacy Abroad, visit [www.vcp.monash.edu.au/students/pharmabroad/](http://www.vcp.monash.edu.au/students/pharmabroad/)**



**Top: Chris Tang at Old Trafford stadium.**

**Middle: Pharmacy Abroad students jump for joy.**

**Bottom: Alysia Thrasis on her pharmacy placement in Des Moines, Iowa.**

# Professor Peter Andrews recognised in the Australia Day Honours

Congratulations to Professor Andrews, who was recently made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the Australia Day Honours list for his service to scientific research, particularly drug design and to the development of an Australian research based pharmaceutical industry.

Professor Andrews was Dean (Chemistry) and Head of the School

of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and the Kansas Professor of Medicinal Chemistry at the College from 1980–1987.

“His leadership of the School of Pharmaceutical Chemistry certainly gave research here a great boost and set the foundations for a vigorous research culture across all departments,” stated Professor Colin Chapman, Dean of the College.

Professor Andrews is an eminent scientist with a distinguished career at the forefront of the development of the Australian biotechnology industry. He has an extensive understanding of the policy and economic development issues associated with science, research and innovation. Since 1985, he has founded, or co-founded, and been a director on more than 10 scientific companies. He now serves as a director on three Australian and two New Zealand companies, and is the author of more than 100 publications and inventor on two patents.

After receiving his Bachelor of Science with honours from the University of Melbourne in 1965, he completed his PhD in 1969 and then devoted himself to researching molecular design, intermolecular interactions, drug structure and activity relationships, and molecular diversity.

He established the first Australian laboratory in the field of computer-assisted drug design at the John Curtin School of Medical Research (Australian National University) in 1975. He came to the College in 1980, leaving in 1987 to take up the position of Dean of Science and Technology at Bond University. He then became the Director of the Centre for Drug Design and Development (3D Centre) at the University of Queensland, during which time he was also co-founder of the university's Institute for Molecular Bioscience and CEO of its commercialisation arm, IMBcom.

In 1995, Professor Andrews was one of the founders of Alchemia Pty Ltd, a Queensland based biotechnology company that specialises in the discovery, development and synthesis of carbohydrate-based molecules for pharmaceutical applications. The CEO of Alchemia, Dr Tracie Ramsdale, who was a Master of Pharmacy student in Professor Andrews' lab at the College, moved with him and several other graduate students and staff to Bond University in 1987. Professor Andrews has been a board member of Alchemia since the company's establishment, and has also served on the boards of publicly listed biotechnology companies Biota Holdings Limited and Agen Ltd.

In December 2003, Professor Andrews was appointed as Queensland Chief Scientist to ensure the state's investment in science pays dividends in terms of social well-being, economic growth and the protection of the natural environment.

He is also Chairman of the Queensland Biotechnology Advisory Council and a member of the Federal Government's IR&D Board. He is a board member of AgResearch, Celentis Australia Limited, Protagonist Pty Limited and Cleveland Biosensors Pty Limited. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. He is a past Chairman of the Australian Institute of Marine Science Council and past President of the Asian Federation of Medicinal Chemistry.



# Professor Val Stella wins UNICO National Marconi Science Award



Professor Val Stella (1967), a Distinguished Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the University of Kansas, has been awarded the ninth annual UNICO National Marconi Science Award. The award is presented to a full time resident and citizen of the USA, of Italian descent, who is involved in the physical sciences. It was established in 1995 to recognise a living scientist who exemplifies Marconi's vast scientific and creative accomplishments through their own life achievements.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the College, Professor Stella travelled to the USA where he obtained his PhD at the University of Kansas. His successful time at the University of Kansas (plus

that of others from the College) led Professor Higuchi, who was then at the University of Kansas, and Dr Nigel Manning, who was Dean of the College from 1963–78, to establish the Intersearch Program.

Now known as the Takeru Higuchi–Nigel Manning Intersearch Program in their honour, it is an occasional joint program that admits a graduate student of excellent quality from either institution for at least 12 months to either campus. Students undertaking the program engage in intensive training in research methodology within the Doctor of Philosophy program, as well as benefiting from an international experience. The training they receive is suitable to the needs of the pharmaceutical industry and institutions of higher learning in both countries.

On attaining his PhD, Professor Stella moved to the University of Illinois for two years, before returning to the University of Kansas to take up a position as professor. He loves to teach but also describes himself as a problem solver who, through the mentoring of the late Professor Takeru Higuchi, became an inventor and entrepreneur.

Professor Stella is the inventor, or co-inventor, of two drugs: fosphenytoin (Cerebyx®) for the treatment of epilepsy, Viread® for the treatment of AIDs, and a new solubilising agent, Captisol®, used to dissolve intractable drugs such as Vfend® (antifungal) and Geodon® (antischizophrenic) for injectable use. Both drugs are Pfizer products. Professor Stella also has a new anesthetic drug, Aquavan® in Phase II/III clinical trials. In addition, he has 33 patents and many publications and awards.

In his spare time he has helped found three new companies, CyDex®, Crititech® and ProQuest® Pharmaceuticals – all in the Lawrence/Kansas City area.

Says Professor Stella, “What am I most proud of? I love to teach and mentor young people. I am most proud of the likes of George Mooney (Pfizer), Bill Charman (Professor of Pharmaceutics and co-director of the Centre for Drug Candidate Optimisation at the College) and Serena Tongiani (Urbino), etc. They and my children are my lasting legacy.”

# Alumni profile: Marek and Libby Malter – a fortunate life

by Michael Berry

For a couple who've clearly achieved success in their working lives from pharmacy, Marek and Libby Malter (both 1969) have a very relaxed attitude to work. "It's not the be all and end all of life", says Marek. "Apart from work, you need to put effort into your partnership, your kids, your community and your environment."

That's not to say that the Malters have used pharmacy simply as a meal ticket. After more than 40 years as pharmacists, Marek and Libby were judged as running the best Australian retail pharmacy of 2003. And it's not in the big city, but in the

rural town of Maleny on the Sunshine Coast hinterland. The annual Quality Care Pharmacy Program (QCPP) of the Year competition is considered the most prestigious award in retail pharmacy and is a tough nut to crack.

Another interesting feature of the Malters' successful partnership is the mutual recognition factor. As Libby sees it, "our areas of interest have always been different. Mine were the dispensary and professional areas and Marek's have been the retailing and front shop aspects of the business. This is not to say we are always in agreement," she adds with a smile.

Marek and Libby met at the College in 1966, the year that Robert Menzies resigned from Parliament and the first Australian troops flew out to South Vietnam. In 1968 the two new graduates went into retail traineeship at different ends of Hawthorn.

Marek says it was the most informative experience of his life. "In Brendan Scalley's shop I learned the real values of pharmacy – a fantastic work ethic, good business sense and how to live a good life at the same time."

The Malters believe in the importance of a balanced partnership. Whether it's sharing their working lives, family commitments or outside interests, Marek says he and Libby have managed to achieve the successful balance learnt all those years ago.

After his traineeship, Marek had to do two years of National Service. He chose the army's officer training unit and graduated first in his class. With the Governor General's Medal on his chest, Marek then chose a posting in Papua New Guinea.

When the Vietnam conflict ended in 1972, Marek decided to stay on in New Guinea. Attracted by the relaxed lifestyle and tropical environment, he got a contract as the chief

pharmacist at the Port Moresby Hospital, but by the end of 1973 he was on his way to England to pursue his girlfriend, Libby.

After her own traineeship, Libby had leapt on a boat for the UK. She'd always wanted to travel, and is still the one with itchy feet. Whether it's skiing in Canada, working the markets of Hanoi or tramping the cemeteries of Ireland, it's usually Libby who's collected the travel guides and mapped out the route in advance.

Libby's training helped her to combine work and travel and this included a stint as a volunteer pharmacist in northern India. Marek caught up with Libby in London where they got married in 1974 and they were soon heading south, eventually moving to New Guinea where they stayed for four years.

Libby worked part-time in retail pharmacy while having their two boys, young Marek and Ollie. Marek took charge of importing and distributing medical supplies for the PNG Government.

"That job helped us to really enjoy New Guinea," says Marek. "It's a visually stunning country and the people are just great."

Again, they set about combining work and lifestyle, taking every opportunity to explore the country as Marek visited the various distribution centres to train local staff in how to handle medical supplies.

With their children's future education in mind, and Libby pregnant with daughter Hannah, they returned to Australia. After a couple of years running his father's travel goods import business in Melbourne, both Marek and Libby realised they were missing the close personal interaction with retail pharmacy customers. They also missed the tropical lifestyle of PNG, so they went looking for alternatives up the east coast.

Graduating pharmacists Marek and Libby in 1968.





**Left: Marek Malter in the highlands of New Guinea, 1975.**

**Bottom left: Marek and Libby and their pharmacy partner, Samantha Duggan, receive their QCPP Pharmacy of the Year 2003 award on the Gold Coast.**

**Bottom right: Marek, Libby and the staff of Maleny Pharmacy at the QCPP Awards, 2003 Gold Coast.**



Ever the cool-headed planner, Marek set his boundaries between Eden in NSW and Noosa on the Sunshine Coast. "I got in the car and eventually found the perfect spot in Maleny," says Marek. "It is so like New Guinea with its sub-tropical climate and small, friendly community spirit."

"We looked for a country rather than a city pharmacy," says Libby, "because we wanted the children to grow up in a rural environment. This had been a very positive experience for me as a child because my father owned the pharmacy in Koroit for 25 years."

Eighteen years ago, Maleny was a small dairy town of about 1200 people. Today, it's become a magnet for semi-retirees and e-commerce based professionals working out of their rural offices.

Marek and Libby bought the local pharmacy and over the next 18 years they turned it from a tiny, 80 square metre chemist's shop into the most modern concept of 'forward pharmacy' in the country. They totally rebuilt the pharmacy in 1995 and now, working within the spacious 410 square metre store, they have two pharmacy partners, a full time manager and 28 full time and part time staff.

When they bought the Maleny Pharmacy, the Malters were in their late thirties. It was the first pharmacy they had ever owned and they set about copying and adapting some of the best features of retail pharmacy in the country.

"Working as locums for several years had exposed us to a wide variety of business practices," explains Libby. "We had worked in pharmacies where bosses had been less than generous with their staff and miserly with their expenditure in creating a professional and pleasant working environment."

However, in 2002 the Maleny Pharmacy almost went up in smoke – literally. After hours, an electrical stapling machine self-ignited, causing extensive smoke damage. A total re-fit was immediately underway, enabling the Malters to fine-tune their dispensary.

There was barely a ripple in service to the locals, and the pharmacy went on to win the QCPP Pharmacy of the Year, the top retail pharmacy award and \$10,000 from the Guild, Pfizer and the Australian Institute of Pharmacy Management.

Maleny was only meant to be a 10-year plan for the travelling

Malters. However, they've come to realise that the town is perfect for them. With younger son Ollie already a pharmacist in Cairns, and young Marek and Hannah through tertiary education, the Malters have no wish to move from Maleny.

"Pharmacy has been good to us," says Marek. "You have to be sharper in business today and, while you always have to keep up, the rate of keeping up has accelerated," he says. "And if we're going to combat the onslaught of supermarkets into retail pharmacy we must maintain our professionalism and high level of service to our customers."

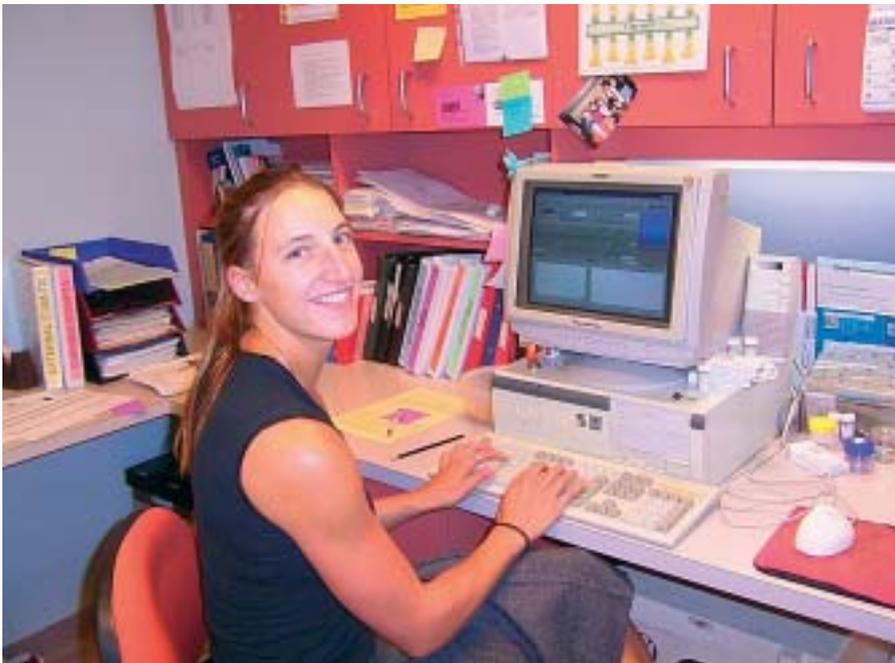
Success, they say, is in the eye of the beholder and the Malters have always measured success by how well they combine their working lives with lifestyle.

"I believe that retail pharmacy in a small community is a very rewarding experience," says Libby. "You can take a more holistic approach to customers and the concept of forward pharmacy works particularly well in this environment."

"We've had a really good life out of pharmacy, but it hasn't been at the expense of our personal lives,"

Marek insists. "Sure, there are threats, but there are heaps of opportunities too. It's as good as you want to make it, especially if you go out into the country. You might even find it's better out there. We've certainly had a fortunate life."

# Tonkin Scholarship winner to investigate drug dependency treatments



Suzanne Nielsen has been awarded the Cyril Tonkin Scholarship to conduct research into the effects of the concurrent use of two commonly prescribed drugs – benzodiazepines and buprenorphine – in people who are drug dependent. This study is the first of its kind in Australia.

Suzanne graduated from the College in 1998 and was registered as a pharmacist that year. Before leaving for the UK, she worked as a community pharmacist in a pharmacy with a large methadone program.

In the two years spent in the UK, Suzanne did locum work in addition to working in a specialist drug clinic in London. On her return to Australia she wanted to get involved in research. She undertook her honours at the College part time, on a project with a similar topic to her current research but focused on animal pharmacology. She also began her work at the Melbourne-based Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre during her honours years.

Turning Point is a specialist centre for the treatment of drugs and alcohol. It has a threefold approach that includes education and training, research and a treatment clinic.

The centre is dedicated to providing a range of responses to alcohol and drug use. Its mission is to be a community leader in policy and programs that deal with reducing the related harm associated with dependency. Their professional staff members include doctors, psychiatrists, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, psychologists, welfare workers, researchers and educators.

Suzanne is now undertaking a three-year research project that asks the clinical question 'What is the safest opioid substitution treatment of heroin dependent people with benzodiazepine dependency?' The scholarship offers Suzanne the opportunity to have time to conduct her research. She is being supervised by Dr David Taylor at the College, and at Turning Point by Dr Nichole Lee, Dr Adrian Dunlop and pharmacist Peter Muhleisen (1971).

Suzanne is enjoying being involved in both clinical and research work. "I'm lucky to have the opportunity to focus on my research and clinical interests," she said.

**For more information on Turning Point, visit [www.turningpoint.org.au](http://www.turningpoint.org.au)**

## The Cyril Tonkin Scholarships

The Cyril Tonkin Scholarship was first awarded in 1976. It was established by Miss Sarah Amy Lloyd, and administered by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Vic branch), to honour Dr Tonkin (1910), a graduate and long time lecturer and examiner at the College. He had been a family friend to Miss Lloyd as well as her family's doctor. Miss Lloyd believed that the scholarship should assist students to aspire to the highest professional standards.

Two Cyril Tonkin Scholarships are awarded by the PSA (Vic branch):

- the \$18,000 Annual Cyril Tonkin Scholarship to support a pharmacy graduate from the College in pursuit of a higher degree in pharmacy
- the \$70,000 Triennial Cyril Tonkin Fellowship to enable a Victorian pharmacist to undertake a major educational or experiential project over three years and, in so doing, to make a significant contribution to pharmaceutical science or practice in the future.

**For more information on Dr Cyril Tonkin, see issue three of *Alchemy*.**

**For further information on the scholarships contact the PSA (Vic branch), tel: 613 9389 4000.**



# Women in pharmacy

Women pharmacists received workforce equity well before many other professions in Australia, thanks to the work of several groups and a willingness in the profession and industry to embrace change. We look at the history of these groups and what they achieved.

Today there are slightly more female students studying pharmacy than male students, but it wasn't always the case. When the College opened in 1881, all the apprentices and staff were male. The first female student graduated from the College in 1897.

In 1943 the College appointed its first woman staff member, Miriel Witt, who was recruited by A.T. Sissons, the Dean of the College, during World War II. She worked as a demonstrator in Pharmaceutical Chemistry to help replace the male staff who were overseas. The Dean and the Council also thought it was time they appointed a woman, as there was by then a large number of female students. Miriel was a popular lecturer who stayed on staff until she retired at the age of 65.

Several groups have formed over the past century to help advance the case of women in the pharmacy profession. The Victorian Women

Pharmacists Association (VWPA) existed from 1905 to 1913, and was disbanded after achieving improved status and remuneration for women pharmacists.

The Women's Section of the Pharmaceutical Society of Victoria was founded in 1933, evolving into the Women Pharmaceutical Chemists Association of Victoria. Other states followed suit and eventually an Australian federation of women pharmacists' organisations was formed. The Victorian group disbanded in 1979, having succeeded in reaching its goals. Its achievements included equal pay, establishment of the 'Continuing Education' lectures, representation on major industry bodies and formation of a national body.

A current initiative in this area is the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Women & Young Pharmacists' Committee, established in 1997 to promote

ownership and leadership for women and young pharmacists in community pharmacy. The Committee's activities include the production of a pharmacy owner's business kit, conferences, seminars and social events.

A group of Victorian women pharmacists still meet twice a year at the Hilton Hotel to catch up and reminisce about their journey through life and pharmacy. Miriel Witt is a regular attendee. Others in the group include Margaret Barker, Beverley Frame, Beverley Gorr, Dawn Sayers, Dot Pettit, Marion Dickinson, Nola Cuthbertson, Ruth Mercer, Margaret Timbury, Norma Long, Kath Johnson, Margaret Lancaster, Vivien Wills and Clare Hicks.

**For more information about the Guild's Women & Young Pharmacists' Committee, visit [www.guild.org.au/public/wypc.adp](http://www.guild.org.au/public/wypc.adp) or contact Anna Tsoukatos, tel: 613 9810 9999.**



## The Chemists' Interstate Cricket Shield Challenge, NSW vs Victoria Sunday 4 April 2004

by Bernie Borg, Captain for Victoria

The Sir Donald Bradman Oval in the Southern Highlands of NSW would seem to be the perfect place for a cricket match. In summer the answer would certainly be yes, but with fog on the hills and rain steadily falling it was hardly the place for a cricket match.

NSW won the toss and batted – and why wouldn't they take advantage of a perfect deck that had been protected by covers before the start of play? The Vics – through the bowling of Paul Wickham (1997) (3–16 off 6 overs) and Steven White (1988) (1–21 off 9 overs) – restricted NSW early to a 2 for 25 off 10 overs. The NSW batsmen gradually got on top and if it wasn't for some excellent fielding

(3 run outs) and some steady bowling (David Ford 1–31 off 9 overs), NSW would have posted more than 8 for 162 off their allotted 45 overs.

Unfortunately the rain (which was steady all day) and the players' spikes had chewed up the pitch. The once-pristine pitch which NSW had started with now resembled a quagmire. Victoria opened with Divesh Sanghvi (2002) and Jeff Facey (1997), who did their best to defy the conditions. Despite a committed effort, we struggled to make inroads into the NSW total. The batsmen continually had trouble with their footing and the ball jaggling around on a cut up pitch: we steadily lost wickets. Paul Wickham (top score 16) was hitting the ball

well and although victory was highly improbable, it became less probable with his LBW dismissal. The Victorians were all out for 103.

Despite the disappointing loss, I encourage all pharmacists and pharmacy students to participate in next year's match. I made a suggestion to our NSW counterparts that the match be played on Australia Day to reduce the likelihood of rain.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the match sponsors, including Pfizer, American Express, GlaxoSmithKline, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the PSA (NSW branch). I would also like to thank Mayne Health, who sponsored the Victorian team, and PDL for donating caps.

**For information on the 2005 Challenge and about joining the Victorian team contact Geoff Crisp, email [GMSBJ@telstra.com](mailto:GMSBJ@telstra.com)**



Mayne Health, sponsor  
of the Victorian team.



## Four big reunions for 2004!

So far there has been a formal dinner (1970–1972), a cocktail party (1983), a lunch (Latvian pharmacists) and an afternoon tea (1952) organised by graduates for their fellow alumni. Four reunions are planned for 2004.

**1994** 10th anniversary reunion on Saturday 12 June at the College.  
Organised by Suzanne Caliph and Dan Malone. Contact Suzanne on 613 9903 9625 or [suzanne.caliph@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:suzanne.caliph@vcp.monash.edu.au)  
Dan can be contacted on 613 9903 9576 or [dan.malone@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:dan.malone@vcp.monash.edu.au)

**1979** 25th anniversary reunion organised by Ingrid Norton and Diana Nowak. Diana's phone number is 613 9844 5055 and email [martin@redcentre.com](mailto:martin@redcentre.com)

**1969** 35th anniversary reunion organised by Bev Baxter. Contact her at work on 613 9568 5126 or email [bhb3006@aol.com](mailto:bhb3006@aol.com)

**1954** Golden anniversary reunion luncheon organised by Beverley Gorr and Bryan Casey on Sunday 27 June at The International of Brighton. For further information contact Beverley Gorr, tel: 613 9509 6427 or email [ericandbev@netspace.net.au](mailto:ericandbev@netspace.net.au) and Bryan Casey, tel: 613 9830 0489 and email [bcasey@ihug.com.au](mailto:bcasey@ihug.com.au)

**For further information about reunions, contact the alumni office on tel: 613 9903 9507 or email [alumni@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:alumni@vcp.monash.edu.au)**

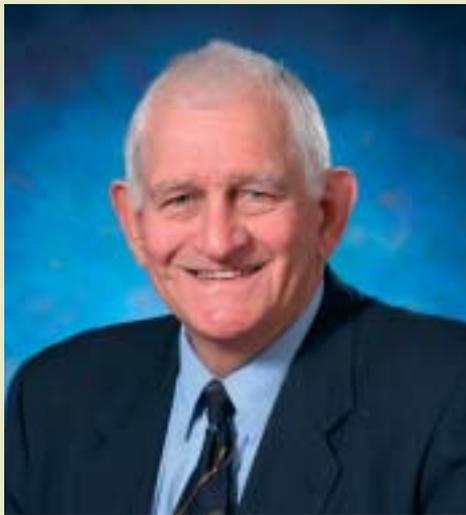
## Centenary Medals continued ... Dr Geoffrey Vaughan



In issue five of *Alchemy* we highlighted the Centenary Medals that had been awarded in 2003 to members of the pharmacy community. With the help of the Victorian branches of the Guild, PSA and SHPA (and the winners themselves) we profiled 11 individuals who had been rewarded for their significant contributions to the profession, the pharmaceutical industry and their local and sporting communities.

Unfortunately we missed one high profile former staff member ... Dr Geoffrey Vaughan, who joined the staff at the College in 1961 as a lecturer and was Dean 1979–86. Dr Vaughan was honoured for his outstanding service to medical and pharmaceutical research. Congratulations to Dr Vaughan and to all our Centenary Medal winners.

For a biography of Dr Vaughan, see issue four of *Alchemy*.

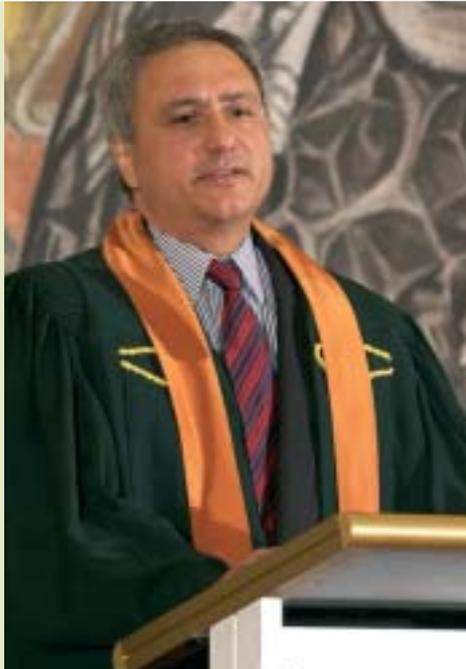


## Congratulations also to ...

Joe Demarte (1973), who has been elected as the new President of the PSA (Vic branch), replacing Valda Comber (1971) who retired at the end of 2003.

### AND

Peter Ball (1956), honoured as a life member of the PSA (Vic branch). Peter served his apprenticeship with William Wishart at Bull & Owen's in Geelong. He and his wife, Jeanette, and her father, Campbell Fewtrell, owned and managed the Geelong West pharmacy business before selling it in 1998, after 70 years in the one family.



Joe Demarte (1973) at the Opening Ceremony where he presented the pharmacy Gold Medal on behalf of the PSA (Vic branch).

## Let us know your news!

Please help to keep us – and your fellow alumni – up to date with your latest news. Fill in the update form, tear it off and send it to:

*Alchemy*  
Victorian College of Pharmacy  
Monash University (Parkville campus)  
381 Royal Parade  
Parkville Vic 3052 Australia  
Or fax to: 61 3 9903 9058  
(confidential fax).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Business address \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone (H/B) \_\_\_\_\_

Email (H/B) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax (H/B) \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation year \_\_\_\_\_

News about yourself  
(Please send separate sheet if required)

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Have you received any postgraduate or additional professional qualifications since graduating?

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Would you like further information on ...

organising a reunion for your year?

going on a tour of the College?

postgraduate study at the College?



# Come and see the College on Open Day Saturday July 31, 2004 10am – 4pm



On Open Day, the College welcomes secondary school students who wish to explore the wide range of study options and career paths our industry and profession offers.

This year, we would again like to extend an invitation to all our alumni and their families. You can

visit the alumni stand in Cossar Hall to find out about reunions, go on a tour to see the changes that have happened to the campus, visit the postgraduate booth for information about postgraduate study, chat with some of your old lecturers and maybe even meet up with old classmates.

Open Day 2004 coincides with the Guild's Community Pharmacy Southern Convention and Exhibition, so if you are visiting the Exhibition, why not come and see the College too? Or if you are interested in postgraduate and alumni information, visit the College booth at the Exhibition.