



## LAUNCH OF NEW CENTRE HERALDS WIDER RESEARCH SCOPE

The University of Auckland’s Centre for Asian and Ethnic Minority Health Research was launched in October at the School of Population Health. This event presented an opportunity for the Centre to celebrate its name change and promote the subsequent widening of its research scope to include other ethnic minority communities, including those belonging to the Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African groups (MELAA).

The Centre was first established in 2004, and named the Centre for Asian Health Research and Evaluation. It focused on the current health issues of Asian communities in New Zealand. Through their work, the Director of the Centre, Dr Amritha Sobrun-Maharaj, recognised that there was a gap with some communities not being adequately catered to. This led to the decision to widen the research scope of the centre and change its name to reflect the new focus.

The keynote speaker at the launch was the Associate Minister for Health, the Honourable Tariana Turia. Minister Turia officially launched the event and acknowledged the importance of the work the Centre does and of its inclusion of these ethnic minority communities within their research scope. She also acknowledged the University for its commitment to working with the Centre to create a new opportunity and vision.

The Centre has already begun this inclusion process by inviting MELAA representatives to its Advisory Committee, changing the name of its upcoming conference – the 5th International Asian and Ethnic Minority Health and Wellbeing Conference 2012 (to be held 27-29 June 2012) – as well as strategic planning to begin to identify the health research needs of the wider ethnic minority community in New Zealand.



*Marking the change of name and scope for CAHRE are (from left to right): Anil Thapliyal (Advisory Committee), Head of School Professor Alistair Woodward, Associate Minister of Health the Honourable Tariana Turia, and Director of CAHRE Dr. Amritha Sobrun-Maharaj.*

## THREE KEEN STUDENTS JOIN AUDIOLOGY FOR THE SUMMER

The Department of Audiology has been awarded three Summer Studentships, and would like to welcome the new arrivals.

Johnny Wu recently completed his third year of Medicine at The University of Auckland. His project involves a questionnaire for over 500 participants who are experiencing or have experienced Tinnitus (a condition characterised by a “ringing” sound in the head or ears). The questionnaire focuses on potential sensory contributors to Tinnitus such as pain, vision, hearing and taste. Through this questionnaire, Johnny is hoping to establish connections between multi-sensory input and Tinnitus, and so ultimately contribute to ways of sub-typing tinnitus. This will provide a platform for further studies into the causes of Tinnitus, and open up new treatment options.



*Summer students Johnny Wu (left), Natasha Houghton and William Harris get organised.*

Natasha Houghton has just completed her third year of Medicine at the University of Otago. Natasha is doing an analysis of the prevalence of hearing loss in residents of Pacific Island nations, and the availability of hearing services for children and adults in these countries. The purpose of the study is to identify the extent of hearing problems and ear disease. She will also study the available services in these island nations, which will be useful for these communities to determine where there are research and service gaps.

William Harris has just finished his final year of a Bachelor of Science Degree specialising in Biomedical Science at the University of Auckland.

William is investigating the test-re-test reliability of a new method for assessing Tinnitus. He is very excited to be involved in this project as it is an excellent opportunity to gain research experience. The specific aim of his study is to compare recently developed Tinnitus diagnostic software with existing clinical methods, particularly focussing on their Tinnitus matching abilities and reliability, with the hope of subsequently improving the diagnosis and treatment of Tinnitus.

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## INNOVATIVE STEPS TOWARD A SMOKE-FREE NEW ZEALAND

The HRC and the MoH have made a joint investment in an innovative programme of research aimed at tackling the issue of smoking and tobacco-related harm in New Zealand.

The Tobacco Control Research Tūranga will be led by University of Auckland researchers Associate Professor Chris Bullen of the Clinical Trials Research Unit and Dr. Marewa Glover from the Centre for Tobacco Control Research, and will involve researchers and collaborators from a range of organisations across New Zealand.

The Tūranga has been awarded \$5 million to undertake a range of projects, representing a well-considered and comprehensive approach that addresses the broad range of factors influencing tobacco use in New Zealand. Projects to be undertaken initially include investigating the use of a group stop smoking contest run within Māori and Pacific communities, pre-testing a nicotine tax, modelling the economic effects of a sinking lid policy for reducing tobacco dependency in smokers, and investigating implications for tobacco control contained within international trade agreements.

“The Tūranga is innovative also in that it tests a new funding model that builds in ability to develop new projects in response to policy and programme developments or to address gaps in knowledge identified as research results emerge.” says Dr Marewa Glover, Joint-Director of the Tūranga.

The research will provide the evidence required to reduce tobacco-related harm, and to support the Government’s goal of a smoke-free New Zealand by the year 2025.

## LEAVING HEALTH SYSTEMS

Very soon, Health Systems will farewell two research associates – Tim O’Connor and Kat Cairns. Kat, a highly valued colleague who joined CHSRP in early 2008, has worked on a range of projects that draw on her psychology background. She has just been accepted to undertake a PhD in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne. “My primary supervisor will be Prof Anthony Jorm, and I will be looking at developing key mental health literacy messages for adolescents to support self-help behaviours,” Kat says. “It is very exciting, as it combines my interest in adolescent mental health with a public health approach, which I have come to feel very strongly about since working here at CHSRP. I am sad to be leaving everyone here, but it’s nice to have Tim coming over at the same time.”

As a BHSc and MPH graduate, Tim O’Connor has been with us for a long time, and we have watched him grow into a valued colleague, highly respected by the Pacific communities among whom he has conducted evaluation projects. He has been both a MAPAS and BHSc tutor, and has been a wonderful mentor to students and research assistants. Tim has also accompanied Alistair Woodward on his visits to Kiribati. (*see page 4*)

Tim will embark on a PhD at the University of Melbourne. “My topic at the moment is still not clear in writing” he says. “It makes sense in my head, but I’m not sure how to describe it without waffling on and on! It will be in the area of evaluation and programme development. I will start at Melbourne, but have my eyes set at going through the Universitas 21 programme so that I can do a shared PhD with the University of Auckland. I’d like to use the programmes I have evaluated here in New Zealand as well as programmes in the Pacific region as case studies for my PhD. So I will be returning again most likely at the end of 2013 if all goes well.

“Before I start my PhD though, I’ll be doing evaluation work with projects based in Australia as well as continuing some existing projects with Auckland University in the Pacific region. Other work will be writing up grants and proposals from that end to get more work in the Pacific. This is the most exciting for me as it’s always something I’ve wanted to do.”

## HERE COME THE HEALTHBOTS!

Professor Ngaire Kerse of General Practice and Primary Health Care has joined a multidisciplinary team of engineers, computer scientists and medical specialists in a project aimed at making robots into helpful assistants for older people and for their caregivers.



*When Dr. Who meets public health: robots are being studied for their effectiveness as assistants to the elderly in residential care.*

Healthbots is a joint project between the Korean and NZ governments and the University of Auckland. The large-scale study will evaluate five different types of robots that can perform tasks such as recording heart rate or blood pressure, playing music videos or games, or providing reminders about taking medication.

As reported in the UniNews recently, the robots are being trialled in various locations around Selwyn Village’s Pt Chevalier premises. “New Zealand is quite a useful test bed,” said Professor Kerse during a CloseUp interview earlier this month. “The Selwyn Foundation has been fantastic in facilitating technology in health care.”

Ngaire says that enhancing the environment with stimulating and interactive activities can improve the quality of life and relieve loneliness for older people. “Robots could provide an interesting option,” she says, “and also be an aid to communication and health monitoring.” She expects that the trials will reveal some significant benefits, and some downsides. “It’s working out exactly where and how they can be used for the best benefit of the older people.”

## FAMILY VIOLENCE CLEARINGHOUSE RELAUNCH

The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse celebrated its move to Tāmaki Campus on 10 November, with over 100 people attending, including many practitioners from the family violence prevention sector.

Social and Community Health's Dr Janet Fanslow is a co-director, and shared her vision for the Clearinghouse as a hub for family violence prevention research. Chief Families Commissioner, Carl Davidson said, "Better information means better results, and it's in the interests of all New Zealanders that our response to family violence draws on the best research from around the world."



*Visitors check out the new Clearinghouse.*

This event also marked the re-launch of the Clearinghouse website. The website was developed by Dr. Chris Paton and Debra Warren from the National Institute for Health Innovation. It provides access to the Clearinghouse Library and resources, and highlights news and events relevant to those working to prevent all types of family violence in New Zealand. Many guests took the opportunity to visit the Clearinghouse office.

Led by co-directors Dr Janet Fanslow, School of Population Health and Associate Professor Robyn Dixon, School of Nursing, the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse is the national centre for collating and disseminating research on domestic and family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand. The

Clearinghouse is operated by The University of Auckland under a contract funded by the Families Commission. Find out what the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse has to offer at: [www.nzfvc.org.nz](http://www.nzfvc.org.nz).

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## CLIMATE CHANGE IN KIRIBATI

Alistair Woodward and Timoci O'Connor traveled to Timoci's native Kiribati in November to participate in a summit on Climate Change and Health Adaptation. Climate change is a critical issue for this low-lying island nation.



*Alistair pictured at South Tarawa's highest point – only three meters above sea level.*



*(L to R) Ms. Beia Tiim (Chief health Inspector), Alistair Woodward, Dr. Revite Kirition (Director of Public Health) and Timoci O'Connor in front of the WHO office at South Tarawa hospital where most of the Climate Change and Health Adaptation meetings were held.*

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR PACIFIC STUDENTS

The Ministry of Health Kete Pacific Grant Fund opened in September 2011 with \$2 million of targeted funding to enable health and disability service providers to undertake initiatives that will lead to service and clinical quality improvement and innovation in service delivery for Pacific peoples.

*Kete Moui o Tāmaki: Partnerships in Innovative Primary Health Care Practice to Improve Health Outcomes for Young Pacific Peoples* is a proposal submitted by Dr Ofa Dewes on behalf of the School of Population Health. Pending final approval for funding from the Kete Pacific Grant Fund, the project will commence implementation from January 2012.

The project is designed to support a collaborative partnership to evaluate and present statistics of a successful service working to improve the health and wellbeing of Pacific teenagers. That practice can then be applied across the health sector or in other school settings. The five key aims of the clinic are to:

- Reduce acute rheumatic fever and the burden of future rheumatic heart disease
- Reduce teen pregnancy
- Reduce sexually transmitted infections
- Reduce sepsis (particularly skin infections)
- Reduce obesity prevalence

Ofa will lead the nine-month project in collaboration with Associate Professor Raina Elley and Dr. Sonia van Gessel of the Department of Primary Health Care and General Practice. They will work with the Principal of an Auckland decile 1 high school along with the school nurse and a GP from the local primary health care service.

“The task of addressing the health disparities that young Pacific people face is beyond the reach of the health sector. It is also beyond the reach of Pacific service providers alone,” says Ofa. “We need innovative and integrative approaches with the support of Pacific leaders and families, health professionals and those working with (and for the interests of) young Pacific peoples at the community, District Health Board, and Government ministry level, if health disparities are to be reduced.



*Dr. Ofa Dewes (left) and Associate Professor Raina Elley*

“The opportunity to present evidence of an innovative model of care in Kete Moui o Tāmaki, to enhance the traditional access to health care and improve health outcomes for an often sidelined (in favour of older adults) but important group of the Pacific population in New Zealand, is central to our services to the Pacific community.”

“The Kete Moui team feel passionate about the potential for this model and the success we have seen to date in the operations of the school-based clinic”, says Raina Elley. “We realise that there are many other communities and schools in New Zealand with high proportions of Pacific young people who do not have the benefit of such a collaborative medical service. This is a simple, and quite possibly highly cost-effective, model that could be replicated more systematically throughout poorly serviced areas.”

“This is a welcome opportunity to demonstrate our ability to deliver what we said we would do, and commitment to improve the health of our Pacific teens,” adds Ofa. “I would like to see Kete Moui o Tāmaki provide a strong foundation for future growth.”

## SCHOOL OF POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH SHOWCASE 2011

Time flies! A whole year has gone by since our first Research Showcase in December 2010. And this year's event sparked as much, if not more, enthusiasm and participation.

On track to becoming an annual tradition, the Research Showcase provides an opportunity to step away for a short time from our very busy end-of-year schedules and find out what is happening in the different Sections of the School. The day's programme included short talks by recently graduated PhD students Ruth Allen, Ruth Teh and Ofa Dewes. Inspiring presentations highlighting successes in contract and multidisciplinary research were given by Bridget Kool, Janet Fanslow, Tim Tenbenschel, Sue Wells and Priyesh Tiwari.

A fabulous selection of 45 posters on display in the Atrium fuelled much lively discussion. All posters entered were eligible for the "People's Choice" award, as viewers voted for their favourites.

Posters from postgraduate students and emerging researchers had an added bonus of a review by a team of excellent judges. The judges had the mighty

task of selecting the best poster presentations from the postgraduate student and emerging researcher groups. The 2011 winners were:

- Postgraduate Student Best Poster – Gavin Coad, Audiology
- Runner-up – Ravi Reddy, Audiology
- Emerging Researcher Best Poster – Jonathon Williman, CTRU
- Runner-up – Helen Eyles, CTRU
- People's Choice Best Poster – Raj Singh Shekhawat, Audiology
- Runner-up – Nicola Arroll, General Practice

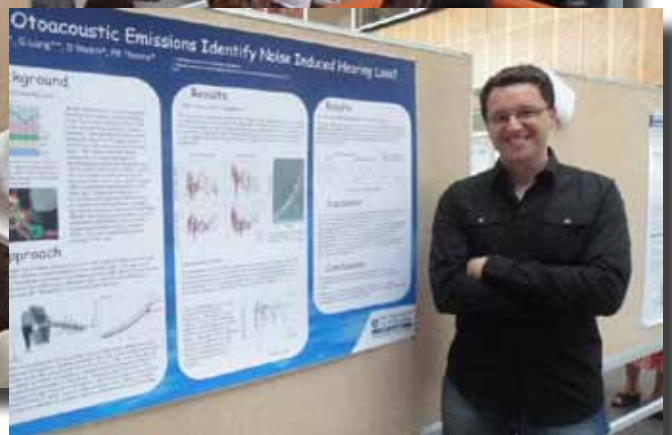
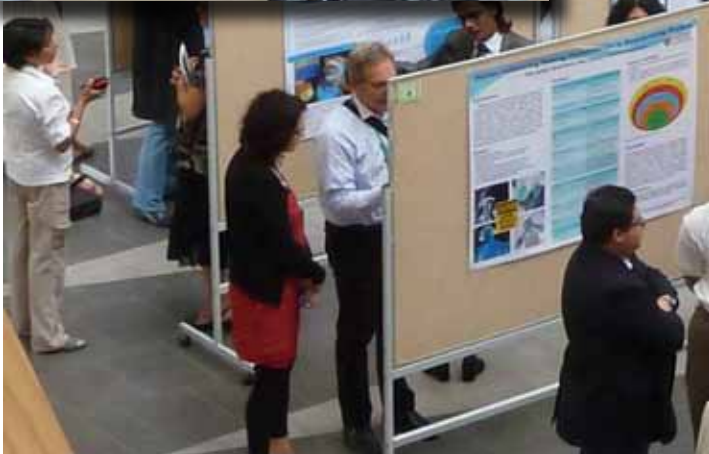
Congratulations to all our competition winners and to all who participated in the event.

Special thanks to Kerry Price and Uniservices for sponsoring the prizes and the catering, to our poster competition judges, the organising committee, to Head of School Professor Alistair Woodward for presenting the awards, and to all who dropped by to enjoy the posters.

*Postgraduate Student Best Poster winner Gavin Coad (below) with his winning poster:*

*Raj Singh Shekhawat (left) was the winner of the People's Choice Award.*

*The posters in the Atrium proved popular (back).*



## NEW FACES TO LEND A HAND



*(L to R) Tilisi Puloka, Rebecca Crichton, Liliani Momota 'Atiola, and Briar Warin.*

We are very fortunate indeed to have some keen new help with projects at the School. Tilisi Puloka and Aditya Basu are working on the HEHA workforce effectiveness project.

Liliani Momota 'Atiola has an HRC-funded Pacific Summer Scholarship focussed on ADHB's Healthy Village Action Zone Food goal awards for Pacific churches.

Briar Warin has a Summer Internship working on the WDHB Enea Ola project.

We also have Aditya Basu, who is working with Tilisi on HEHA in conjunction with his role as a casual research assistant.

Meanwhile, two visiting German students joined us at the beginning of October. Sonja Stender and Stefanie Koch are both from the University of Bremen, and are undertaking a three-month work placement as part of their Bachelor's Programme in Public Health. Sonja and Stefanie are working with Faith, Rob, Tim, Monique, and Ludger in Health Systems on various projects.

A very warm welcome to all of our new staff, and we wish them all the best as they settle in.

## LATEST PROMOTIONS IN SOPH

The end of year sees some well-deserved promotions within the School. We are very pleased to report that both Janet Fanslow of Social & Community Health and Ralph Maddison of CTRU have been promoted to Associate Professors.

Within the department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics, Karen Day has made Senior Lecturer 1, and Kim Dirks Senior Lecturer 6. Meanwhile over at Health Systems, Rob McNeill has also been promoted to Senior Lecturer.

And last but by no means least, there is the late-breaking news that Toni Ashton also of Health Systems has been appointed a full Professor. This tops off a very successful year for Toni, who also picked up the University's top teaching award.

Well done Professor Ashton, and our warmest congratulations to all.

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## GETTING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME



*At least one person picked the right outfit at the School's Rugby World Cup Day, which was held on October 13th. Participants enjoyed international food and drink, and prizes for the best dressed. And it was all for a good cause, with donations going to the Salvation Army.*

## SOPH NEWS BITES

Congratulations to Shane Scahill, who has submitted his PhD for examination. Lisa Walton confides that he was very quiet about this milestone, but now we can all join her in applauding a job well done.

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Heather Kongs-Taylor would like to thank everyone for the lovely tea and gifts received in celebration of her latest addition, Sebastian Theodore Burgess, born Thursday, 20 October at 8:03pm at home in the water! Sebastian is already much adored by both of his big brothers.

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Following the Black Caps recent victory, James Clark suggests that all members of the School will be yearning to throw their support behind another group of cricketing heroes! In 2011, the School of Population Health team won the first Tāmaki Cricket Challenge Match. Once again the challenge has been laid down to the rest of the Tāmaki Innovation Campus. In late in January, two teams will clash on the field of battle in a T20 game unlike any seen before. Please come out and enjoy the fresh air and some stunning cricket. And if anyone is keen to play, just let James know.

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Elizabeth Robinson, Senior Research Fellow in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, was farewelled at an afternoon tea on December 13th. "I would like to thank everyone with whom I have worked over the past twenty years" Elizabeth says, "for making this such an interesting, challenging and enjoyable time of my life. Thank you to those who have sent their good wishes and to the many of you who were able to come to my farewell, and for the wonderful gift of the Pounamu pendant. It is quite beautiful, and the meaning is very special."

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Alistair Woodward would like to announce that Professor Ngaire Kerse and Associate Professor Elsie Ho will take on new jobs in 2012 as Heads of General Practice & Primary Health Care and Social & Community Health, respectively. Also, Associate Professor Peter Adams will be Director of the Bachelor of Health Sciences, beginning in January 2012. "I know Peter will bring considerable energy and experience (and a trademark sense of humour) to this important job," says Alistair. "I would also like to acknowledge the great work that David Newcombe has done this year leading the BHSc - thank you David."

## Book Launch

Theresa Riley's Masters Thesis has been published as a book, and is available for purchase through Amazon at <http://www.amazon.com/Being-Childfree-New-Zealand-perceived/dp/3846540226>

Theresa is a PhD candidate in General Practice and Primary Health Care. Her book is the product of a qualitative study undertaken for a Masters degree in Social Science. It is based on the experiences of ten New Zealand couples who, by choice, do not have children. Strong social norms exist for couples to have children, and those who express a desire to do otherwise have been disbelieved, pressured, and stereotyped. Womanhood has continued to be associated with motherhood, and a maternal instinct is expected to drive women (in particular) to have children. This book shares the perspectives of both women and men, on how family members, friends, and complete strangers react to their choice to not have children. Stereotypes, assumptions, and various other responses faced by the couples (together and as individuals) are discussed from a critical, feminist perspective.



Theresa Riley

### Being Childfree in New Zealand

How couples who choose to not have children are perceived

Contributions to the School of Population Health newsletter can be sent to John Trevithick at [j.trevithick@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:j.trevithick@auckland.ac.nz). The SOPH news is a quarterly publication. The next issue will be published in March 2012.