



# News from the School of Optometry and Vision Science

Never Stand Still

Faculty of Science

School of Optometry and Vision Science



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## GREETINGS FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



As 2011 rapidly comes to a close, we can reflect on the significant milestones for the School in the past 6 months.

In August, we reopened our clinic following major refurbishment. We now have more consulting rooms to support increased student teaching clinics, plus much needed redevelopment of clinical teaching, dispensing and laboratory

areas. Staff, patients and students alike are enjoying the new clinic and we look forward to welcoming alumni back to experience the new teaching space for continuing education events. During 2011, the undergraduate programme underwent accreditation by the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand. The outcome was very successful and reflected the hard work and dedication of all the staff involved. The first cohort of optometrists completed the postgraduate ocular therapeutics degree offered by the School in Western Australia and South Australia. We congratulate all the graduates and thank the OAA for their partnership and support in this venture. We also thank OAA NSW act for their continued funding of the clinic development manager position.

This year our staff have been recognised nationally for their teaching contributions and internationally for their research efforts. Once again we have enjoyed tremendous support from the industry and the profession, with our industry mentors from ODMA enhancing dispensing skills and 'visiting optometrists' who have volunteered to mentor and supervise in student clinics. Along with the dedicated team of staff and supervising optometrists, these volunteers have considerably improved the clinical experience of our student practitioners.

I wish you all an enjoyable and peaceful festive season and I look forward to another year of success for the School in 2012.

Yours sincerely,  
Fiona Stapleton

## EVENTS

The postgraduate course, Business Skills in Optometry will commence on 27th February 2012 with an introductory seminar and reception in the UNSW Optometry Clinic. Enrolments are now open and further information is available from Paul Knopke, [p.knopke@unsw.edu.au](mailto:p.knopke@unsw.edu.au)

Professor Bruce Evans will present about Optometric uses of precision tinted lenses, hosted by the OAA at the School of Optometry and Vision Science, at UNSW on Wednesday 29th February 2012

Graduation ceremony and the annual graduation dinner and prize presentation is on Tuesday, 13 March 2012

## CONTACT US

E: [optometry@unsw.edu.au](mailto:optometry@unsw.edu.au)  
T: +61 2 9385 4639

## DONATIONS TO THE SCHOOL

- This year the contact lens industry supported the Express Contact Lens Clinic which aimed to increase student exposure to contact lens fitting. Daily disposable contact lenses were supplied by CIBA Vision, Johnson and & Johnson and Cooper Vision.
- The OAA, CIBA Vision and Rodenstock joined previous donors towards the refurbishment of the UNSW Optometry Clinic. They include: BOC Ophthalmic Instruments, CooperVision, Designs for Vision, Essilor, Hoya, Johnson and Johnson VisionCare, Luxottica Australia, ODMA, Optical Manufacturers, Specsavers and Carl Zeiss Vision.
- Brien Holden Vision Institute (BHVI) has been recognized as a major donor to UNSW for its support of a Professorial Chair in Experimental Optometry.

## UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING UPDATE



2011 BOptom BSc Graduates Celebrate.



Head of School, Professor Fiona Stapleton, with 2010 Prize winners.

### GRADUATION DINNER AND PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON 8 MARCH 2011

Congratulations to our graduating class and prize winners. Jennifer So was the most distinguished student, winning the BOC Head of School's Prize for distinguished performance throughout the undergraduate program, the Optometrists Association Australia Prize for outstanding academic performance and a University Medal. Ramanan Chandrabalan was awarded the best overall performer in contact lenses and colour vision and had the highest average result in 5<sup>th</sup> year clinical ocular therapeutics. Amy Fortescue was the best performing student in binocular and children's vision, primary care optometry and in 5<sup>th</sup> year overall.

Deborah Narunsky won an award for dispensing and Jenna Owen and Kelly Hye Ji Oh also won prizes for performance in clinical optometry.

In the non-graduating years, Jemima Go won 3 awards for best performance in 3<sup>rd</sup> year, the Faculty of Science Vacation Research Scholarship and the David Bard Scholarship. Daisy Shu also won a Faculty of Science Vacation Research Scholarship. In 4<sup>th</sup> year, Megan Tu received an award for best performance and the highest average result in ocular therapeutics. Emily Chen won the Hoya Prize for best performance in Vision Science in Stages 1 and 2.

# OPEN DAY



## RESEARCH NEWS

**Professor Mark Willcox** has been awarded the 2011 Max Schapero Memorial Award from the Section on Cornea, Contact Lenses & Refractive Technologies of the American Academy of Optometry. This is a lecture award which is given to a clinician, researcher, or scholar who has made a significant contribution to the cornea and contact lens field by virtue of his or her publications, lectures, or research efforts. Professor Willcox was recognised for his prolific research and publication history. He received a plaque at the Section Award's program on Friday, October 14th 2011 and presented a lecture highlighting his contributions in research. The Cornea and Contact Lens Research Unit was also recognised with the Founders Award of the Academy. The American Academy of Optometry is an organisation committed to "Enriching Lives Through Vision". Professor Willcox was awarded the British Contact Lens Association Medal during their annual meeting in June 2011. Professor Willcox presented a lecture entitled "Increasing the safety and comfort of contact lens wear". Professor Willcox is the 19th recipient of this award

since its inception in 1993. The British Contact Lens Association mission is "to promote excellence in research, manufacture and clinical practice of contact lenses and related areas". Professor Willcox also was awarded the Cornea and Contact Lens Society of Australia, Distinguished Service Award for 2011 on 11th Sept 2011 and gave a presentation of his research on improving the safety of contact lenses. The Cornea and Contact Lens Society of Australia is dedicated to promoting research, professional development and networking in the cornea and contact lens field. Also in 2011, Professor Willcox was elected as a Fellow of the American Association of Optometry (FAAO). We congratulate him on his achievements.

### **Professor Fiona Stapleton**

was recognised for her research contributions through the University of Houston Award for Distinguished Research in Cornea and Contact lenses in December 2011.

**Professor Helen Swarbrick** delivered the Alan Bott Memorial Lecture at the October New Zealand Optometrists Association annual meeting.

Congratulations to **Dr Michele Madigan** for her publication in Nature in 2011. This represents the highest level of achievement in a research publication and this is a fantastic outcome for Michele's hard work. Kaneko, H, [Madigan M](#), *Et Al* 2011, 'DICER1 deficit induces Alu RNA toxicity in age-related macular degeneration', *Nature*, vol 471, no 7338, pp. 325-332

**Professor Stephen Dain:** The national Conference of the Colour Society of Australia was held in Launceston Tasmania in the first week of September. At the meeting, Professor Dain was recognised as a founding and active member of the society and has contributed to the success of the society and to the general well being and health of the nation, with respect to the areas of colour vision, eye health and safety. In recognition, it was the unanimous decision of the national executive committee of the Colour Society of Australia to award an Honorary Life Membership of the Colour Society of Australia to Professor Stephen Dain. Please joins us in congratulating him.

## WHAT IS FUTURE SUPPLY LIKE FOR OPTOMETRISTS INTERESTED IN LOW VISION CARE OR RURAL OPTOMETRY?

By Associate Professor Barbara Junghans.

Were you one of the 359 optometrists that filled in the Low Vision Practice Survey, or one of the 546 optometrists that completed the Rural Practice Survey conducted by a joint group of academics from all schools of optometry in Australia and New Zealand? If you were, firstly a big thank you!

The report has now been published and the feedback from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) that peer reviewed the report before allowing publication has been very positive. We have also had some excellent positive feedback from low vision educators of high repute about the value of both the research component and of the Compendium of Low Vision Learning Activities that was created as a side activity during the research of teaching low vision.

The documents are available at the following web site.  
<http://www.altc.edu.au/project-delivering-optometric-graduates-ready-unsw-2007>

Although the prestigious ALTC is currently being disbanded and subsumed within the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations as part of the money saving strategies of the current government, the ALTC website is proposed to remain indefinitely. However, it would be wise to download these reports immediately and not rely on infinite access via the internet.

One of the key features of the project was the strong collaboration between key academic staff at QUT, University of Melbourne, University of Auckland and UNSW. The friendships and trust generated during this project has now been extended to further projects on use of evidence-based learning in undergraduate optometric education (also funded by the ALTC) and use of simulated learning environments in optometry (funded by Health Workforce Australia).

## CURRICULUM RENEWAL FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE IN AUSTRALASIAN OPTOMETRY

A grant of \$217,000 over two years was awarded to the School by the ALTC for a project called "Curriculum Renewal for Evidence-based Practice in Australasian Optometry". The project is led by Dr Isabelle Jalbert and Dr Catherine Suttle and will be a collaborative project involving all of the Schools and Departments of Optometry in Australia and New Zealand. The project team includes representatives from each School/Department as well as two experts in learning and teaching for evidence-based practice from the University of Sydney and the Faculty of Medicine at UNSW. The project will review and renew the optometry curricula at all schools/departments in Australasia with the aim of ensuring that the curricula include effective strategies for the learning and teaching of skills and knowledge needed for evidence-based practice, and will develop online resources to support those strategies. Kirsten Challinor has been appointed as the project manager.

## HIGHLIGHTS IN POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

- Students attended the Cornea and Contact Lens Society Meeting, the Australasian Ophthalmology and Vision Science meeting (Canberra), the European Conference of Visual Perception (France) and the 16th European Conference on Eye Movements (France) and the American Academy of Optometry Meeting (Boston) including a number who became Ezell Fellows
- We have 3 new students starting a PhD this year and 3 have submitted their PhD theses for examination.
- We congratulate William Lau, Angela Lai and Siti Abdullah, Terry Nguyen, David Wilson, Yvonne Wu and Kalika Bandamwar as they have been awarded their PhDs.
- We congratulate the following students on their graduations: Ravi Bakaraju, Shamila Khan, Vilas Kovai, Fabian Conrad, Jeet Ale, Srinivas Marmamula, Riaz Rasul, Cathleen Fedtke, Manjula Marella
- We congratulate the following students on their Awards: Nicole Carnt, Ezell Fellowship. Kalika Bandamwar Best Poster BCLA conference, Nicole Carnt, Kalika Bandamwar and Eric Wei CCLSA grant, Nicole Carnt NHMRC fellowship, Yvonne Wu NHMRC Fellowship, Nicole Carnt Maki Shiobara Scholarship, Negar Babei, Eric Wei and Roopa Reddy AAO Travel Grants, Eric Wei represented UNSW in I2P Commercialisation Grand Final Stockholm, coming first runner up. Eric Wei also won the ASB Peter Farrell Cup Business Plan Trophy. David Mann won the U-committee prize and the best PhD thesis prize in Science UNSW in 2010. Edward Lum won the Faculty of Science 3 minute thesis competition.
- Rebekah Hanna won the Graham Peachey Prize for the best performance in postgraduate studies in Behavioural Optometry.

## MEETING A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT:

### Tell us a little about yourself and why you decided to do a PhD.

I am an optometrist trained from India (L.V. Prasad Eye Institute). Having worked in the clinics, I was inquisitive to learn and explore research. The best option seemed to be a higher research degree.

When opportunity knocked, UNSW- School of Optometry and Vision Science known for its resources was an ideal choice.

### Tell us about your research and why you decided to go into this area.

My research is to understand dry eye syndrome that affects contact lens and non lens wearers. The causes of dry eyes are many ranging from pathology, environmental, and nutrition. I am trying to evaluate the different tests (clinical and laboratory) for dry eyes, the combination of which, I hope one day will help in diagnosing this condition better. My research is also evaluating if consuming Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) like fish oil capsules is able to control dry eye syndrome.

Whenever I used to examine patients at L.V Prasad Eye Institute, they always complained about "dry eyes" or "burning eyes" alongside other major problems. After the regular slit lamp examination, the patients would ask "did you see anything?" or "so why are my eyes dry?" Not being able to see any signs of dryness on their eyes, it was difficult for me to explain to them, the cause of their symptoms. My explanation for their condition used to be along the lines "I cannot see anything, but probably it is dryness". And the patients would have a look on their faces that read "Didn't I just tell you that my eyes are dry?"



Moneisha

This funny situation repeated many times and with the opportunity given to understand dry eye better, I hope to have a better answer to the patients after the completion of my degree.

### Has doing research affected the way you practice optometry?

Yes, definitely. It has made me aware of not only the amount of knowledge there already is, but also, how much we still don't know. Many a times in the clinics, I ended up doing things "just the way they are" without questioning. I now realise that research is the building block of clinical practice. And most importantly, that ideas and theories are always evolving.

A clinician needs to understand research in order to incorporate it into clinical practice. The topic (dry eye syndrome) of my research is only a tool for me to understand and interpret research which I can then use for any of the other conditions that I may see while practicing clinical optometry.

### Any advice for anyone thinking of doing a research degree in optometry (MSc or PhD)?

My only suggestion would be to choose a topic that one finds really interesting. It is better to wait for one than to rush into something unknown. I recommend a research degree (MSc or PhD), because it is a platform for us to ask the question WHY.

It will change your homepage from "Facebook" to "Google". 😊

# OPTOMETRY CLINIC UPDATE:

## ESTABLISHING AND MANAGING AN OPTOMETRY PRACTICE

Once again our Stage 5 students took part in the tutorial series on “Establishing and Managing an Optometry Practice” This very popular course was once more made possible by Sydney optometrist Tony Simon who generously volunteered his time. The students gave some very entertaining and impressive presentations outlining how they would set up an optometric practice using a variety of business models. The winning groups (pictured) were presented with a \$200 gift voucher sponsored by the OAA NSW Division.



### DAVID MANN

After almost a year as the UNSW Optometry Clinic Director, David Mann has taken up a post doctoral position in Hong Kong and he will follow this with a 2 year post doctoral position in the Netherlands. David made a huge contribution to the clinic with his strong focus on delivering excellent clinical teaching and patient care. We wish him all the best in his new position and for his recent marriage.



### O-WEEK

This year, the UNSW Optometry Clinic took an exciting new approach to their participation in O-Week. As part of the Introduction to Clinic Program, stage 5 students raised the Clinics profile by discussing the importance of vision testing and eye health with fellow students. The optometry students enjoyed bouncing around campus on bright red space hoppers while learning marketing and communication skills. This ‘eye catching’ event successfully recruited many new patients to the clinic.

## CLINIC REFURBISHMENT

The UNSW Optometry Clinic has completed a refurbishment which includes the addition of 6 new consulting rooms and a multifunctional reception area that can be converted into a seminar space. A dispensing lab has also been added to facilitate the teaching of students in practical dispensing skills. The refurbishment was possible due to the generous support from both corporate and private donors. An official morning tea launch took place on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2011. *Photographs courtesy of Lewis Williams.*



## ABORIGINAL HEALTH CARE WORKERS

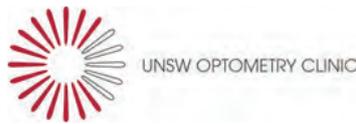
As part of their week long education training with ICEE, Aboriginal Health Care workers experienced a comprehensive eye examination in the UNSW Optometry Clinic by stage 5 students. This collaboration benefitted both the students and the health care workers to better understand the role of eye care in the community.

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VISIT

The Faculty of Science organised a group of high school students to discover the potential of a career in Optometry. Students of a number of local high schools were given a tour by Staff Optometrist Lily Ho of the UNSW Optometry Clinic. This was followed by an introductory presentation given by Professor Barbara Junghans. There was an enthusiastic response from the students who gained further insight into our profession. Indigenous high school students also experienced the School during the UNSW Nura Gili Winter School Program.

## NEW CLINIC BRANDING

The UNSW Optometry Clinic has introduced a new logo which has been incorporated into all Clinic materials to establish a strong clinic identity. The new students uniforms also features the logo.



## VOLUNTEER SUPERVISORS

Session 1 saw the commencement of the Visiting Supervisor Program in the UNSW Optometry Clinic. Over 20 Optometrists volunteered their time to supervise students in clinic and participate in Grand Rounds. This has proved incredibly successful with positive feedback from both students and optometrists. The Clinic continued this program in Session 2 with a view to expand in 2012.

## CLINIC STAFFING

We are delighted to welcome Kath Watt to the position of clinic director. Kath has taken over from David Mann in this position and she has made a fantastic start with implementing several new initiatives in clinical teaching.

Vanessa Honson was appointed this year as a part time senior staff optometrist. Vanessa has made a significant contribution to colour vision teaching and service to the clinic over many years and we are delighted that she has elected to join us permanently.

Maria Bui was until recently the resident optometrist in the clinic and she has now taken up a staff optometrist position to become more involved with student teaching. Gurdeep Bidhesha joins us from the UK as the resident optometrist.

Sharon Oberstein, our senior staff optometrist in low vision, has recently started her PhD on the topic: "Can Bioptic Spectacles or 'Driving Accompanied' improve the Driving Performance of Australian Conditional Licence Holders with Reduced Central Vision?" Fortunately she continues to oversee the low vision clinics and has particularly been instrumental in setting up multidisciplinary low vision clinics at the School to provide an excellent patient service and learning experience for our students.

Rosemary Paynter, our senior optometrist in the area of paediatrics and vision training has increased her time with the clinic to 4 days per week, which has significantly expanded the students clinical experience with children and providing an excellent service for children referred by local optometrists.

## ALUMNI NEWS:

BHVI's Professor Brian Layland has been named as an Honorary Fellow of UNSW in March 2011, for his outstanding contributions to tertiary education at the University of New South Wales.

### MEETING AN ALUMNUS:

**Tim Thurn, Director Technical Education & Professional Services, Essilor Asia Pacific, Middle-East, Russia and Africa**



The Cape of Good Hope is where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet at the very tip of South Africa. I am standing here and looking at one of the most spectacular views that I've ever seen. As I reflect the thought pops into my head, 'I can honestly say that my career has taken me to the ends of the earth'. If not for my degree in optometry I wouldn't be standing here over 11,000kms from Sydney.

Optometry served as the launch pad for my career and the basis for much of my day to day activities. After graduation from UNSW I went to South Australia to practice and immediately got involved in the politics of the profession. Working in a busy private practice, there were few optometrists in my area, and I soon learned about the need for being totally organised. Working with a group of partners also taught me about the importance of the business aspects of optometry.

In 1986 & 87 I served as the President of the OAA South Australian Division and almost as soon as I took up the role; the Government put forward a bill to deregulate optometry; a local pharmacy chain started selling 'ready-mades' and the profession was pushing for the use of diagnostic drugs. All these matters were referred to a Select Committee of the Upper House of the Parliament. This baptism of fire exposed me to the difficulties of dealing with government. In addition I learned a lot about the optical market in Australia and worldwide. It was after this experience that I wanted to move more into the realm of marketing and management and through a great coincidence, Essilor was looking for someone for their new Australian subsidiary and I got the job.

After 3 years with Essilor Australia, I lived and worked in France for 7 years as an International Product Manager for Essilor International. My optometry degree was invaluable in letting me get to grips with working with our R & D teams as we developed and launched new products globally. It wasn't the only degree that I needed; I did my graduate business studies at the American University in Paris to give me a formal background in marketing. In addition, I used my optometric practice knowledge and experience to help others in our team to understand practitioners and the patients that they see.

In the last 10 years, as I have travelled the world, I have met and trained more than 7,500 practitioners and 1,000 optometry educators. My background in optometry has always been essential in defining and delivering key messages to improve, not only the knowledge of practitioners and students, but also the quality of eye-care for their patients.

## STAFF NEWS:

### Ben Ashby



Since graduating from Optometry UNSW in 2000 Ben has practiced across Australia, managed stores and served on the NSW Laubman & Pank leadership team as professional services manager. Recently he has been completing a PhD at the Brien Holden Vision Institute investigating the corneal epithelial wound healing structures on the bovine lactoferrin protein. Ben has now joined the School of Optometry and Vision Science academic team to teach Ocular Therapeutics and pursue research interests in tissue repair, ocular pharmacology and pathophysiology.



*Dr Isabelle Jalbert gave birth to her beautiful baby daughter, Justine, in early January of this year.*

## CFEH NEWS

### MEASURING IMPACT, TWO YEARS ON.

The Centre for Eye Health (CFEH) combats vision loss from eye disease through the provision of advanced imaging and diagnostic services to the general community. The unique model is a new approach to healthcare delivery, leading efforts towards improved management of patients with possible or actual eye disease across optometry, ophthalmology and the vision sciences.

The ultimate objective is an improvement in the quality of life for people with eye-disease and a decrease in the economic impact of vision loss nationally. To date, more than 7,500 people have been seen at the Centre with more than 42,000 occasions of service performed. There are 887 optometrists and 55 ophthalmologists registered to use the Centre's facilities.

The Centre also provides continuous professional development opportunities for practising optometrists. To date, 14 CPD events have been held at the Centre, with over 500 registrations and around 19,000 hours of eligible CPD points. Fifth year optometry students benefit from practical training via the CFEH clinical rotation program, and staff also provide specialist lectures and mentoring to undergraduate and postgraduate students at SOVS.

Most recently, a \$1.1M National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant has been awarded to a UNSW/Guide Dogs partnership project which will take place at CFEH. The project will investigate practices for the early detection

and management of glaucoma and includes staff from SOVS, a number of academic ophthalmologists from UNSW and the University of Sydney as well as academic staff from the School of Public Health, University of Sydney.



### NHMRC PARTNERSHIP GRANT SUCCESS

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) and Guide Dogs NSW/ACT (Guide Dogs) are two partners in a successful National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) partnership project. The award of \$1.1 million will fund research over five years at the Centre for Eye Health (CFEH).

Various Australian models for managing glaucoma have been proposed, but their effectiveness has been largely unexplored. Using CFEH referral information and clinical data, this research project will determine current glaucoma practices, effectiveness in clinical diagnosis, referral quality, appropriate utilisation of new technologies and integration with complementary facilities and services.

The project involves a multi-disciplinary team of experts from optometry, ophthalmology, visual science and public health, and will ultimately lead to more cohesive patient management, with an improvement in the quality of life for patients and a reduction of the economic burden of eye disease nationally.