



CEO's Update

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The CRCAA completed the third year of its second term last June and we underwent an independent Third Year Review in November. These reviews are carried out as part of the Commonwealth Government's oversight of the CRC Program. The reviewers examined the overall performance and strategic direction of the CRC and assessed the performance of individual programs. Face to face meetings were held with the research leaders, PhD scholars as well as representatives from our industry partners.

The overall findings of the review were very positive. The reviewers were pleased with the high quality of the research programs and reported that the CRC had met all major scientific milestones. The collaboration between the various research nodes was highlighted. The reviewers also noted that the CRC had developed an extensive patent port-

folio and that the initial commercialisation targets were being met. The engagement of the PhD scholars also received positive comment.

The report of the review panel was tabled at the February meeting of the Board and submitted to the Commonwealth in March. The positive outcome of this review is a testament to the commitment of all the partners in the CRC and we are now looking forward to delivering even greater outputs in the next few years.

There have also been changes to the Board over recent months. Prof Lou Landau and Prof Carol Armour have joined the Board as representatives of the research partners. Ms Kristin Leece has retired as an independent director and has been replaced by Dr George Moore.

Philip Bert

CRCAA conference 2009



The next CRC conference will be held on the 18th and 19th June at the Sebel Pier One in Sydney. The program being developed will inform and stimulate delegates and involve presentations from all projects. A planning day and a PhD student workshop are planned for day two of the programme.

We are looking forward to another productive meeting.

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Established and supported
and supported under the
Australian Government's
Cooperative Research
Centres Programme



A/Prof Jo Douglass



Prof Michael Abramson

New Project - Characterisation of Lung Health in Older Australians

Ageing well and ageing productively is a National Research Priority. Respiratory disease is the third most common reason for a general practice consultation in people over 65 years. In Australia, despite substantial public investment and improvement in overall mortality, people older than 65 constitute 64% of those dying of asthma. Over half a million Australians suffer from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and this burden will increase with our ageing population. Respiratory function in older age groups is very poorly understood with resulting poor precision of the diagnosis of respiratory disease in older age-groups.

Professors Jo Douglass, Michael Abramson, Bruce Thompson and Greg King are conducting an epidemiological study to define normal respiratory function in Australians aged over 65. The study will provide normal

values for use in calculation of spirometry, gas transfer and static lung volume measurements, and determine the prevalence of respiratory symptoms and abnormal lung function in this age group.

Overall, this study will provide an internationally robust framework to assess lung health and disease in older Australians. The findings will inform health policy and the planning of health care services. The study will also demonstrate the utility of the forced oscillation technique in this age group and obtain normative data for future clinical applications.

New Government Policy

The CRC Program has recently been thoroughly reviewed as part of the broader review of the National Innovation System. The CRC component of the review was led by Prof Mary O'Kane and her report was submitted to the Government late last year. Whilst broadly supportive of the CRC concept the review panel made a number of recommendations to improve the performance of the Program.

The Government considered these recommendations and released new Program Guidelines in December. These guidelines incorporated a number of the recommendations made by the O'Kane Review. The following are some of the key elements of the guidelines as they relate to the Asthma CRC:

- The CRC Program will continue to provide funding to build critical mass in research ventures between end-users and researchers which tackle clearly-articulated, major challenges for the end-users.

- Public good has been re-introduced as a strategic goal. CRC's will be required to provide enhanced education programs (in addition to the PhD component).
- Funding rounds will be held annually and the assessment process will be streamlined.

The Asthma CRC is eligible to apply for one additional term of up to five years. In order to be competitive we would have to demonstrate a solid track record of achievement and propose a compelling new research program. The feasibility of applying for a third grant is currently being assessed by the Board and the research leaders. The positive outcomes of the recent Third Year Review place the CRC in a strong position should a decision be taken to prepare a new bid in either 2010 or 2011.

Scholarship News

GSK Scholarship

Dr Justine Lau from the University of Sydney has been awarded a scholarship to undertake post doctoral research at GSK. She will carry out this work at the GSK laboratories in Stevenage in the UK. This scholarship is jointly funded by GSK and the CRC.

This opportunity will provide Justine with an insight into the world of commercially driven research and will provide her with invaluable experience for her future career.



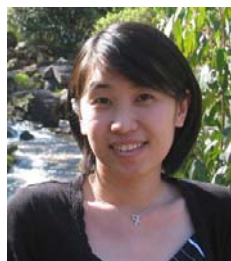
PhD Scholarships

We would like to welcome the following successful scholars to the CRCAA for the 2009 scholarship round.



**Jessica Kermode
(Woolcock)**

Title of Project: The effect of airway wall properties on airway hyper-responsiveness in respiratory disease



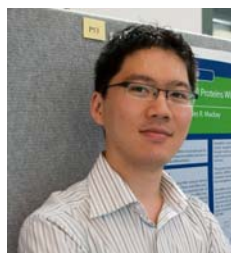
**Li Ping Chung
(University of WA)**

Title of Project: Pharmacogenetics of severe asthma



**Doris Shim
(Garvan)**

Title of Project: Suppressor of cytokine signalling and their role in allergic airway inflammation



**Louis Tsai
(Garvan)**

Title of Project: Novel mechanisms for the control of B cell differentiation and function



**Malcolm Starkey
(University of Newcastle)**

Title of Project: Early life chlamydial infections and asthma

Executive Update



Prof D'Arcy Holman is the new Node Leader for the Air Quality program in WA.

Professor Holman holds the Foundation Chair in Public Health at the University of Western Australia and was responsible for establishing the WA Health Data Linkage System in 1995, which is being replicated by other Australian states as a network of national health research infrastructure.

Professor Holman's research interests focus on the evaluation of health care and his published works number well over 400.

He was recently appointed to the international panel for review of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and was awarded Permanent Guest Professor status at the School of Medicine at Zhejiang University in the People's Republic of China.

Professor Holman has received the Centenary Medal of Australia for his services to the Australian health system. In 2006, Professor Holman was awarded Australia's highest professional award for lifetime achievement in his field, the Sydney Sax Public Health Medal.



Dr George Moore is a new member of the CRCAA Board. Dr Moore gained an MSc and PhD from the School of Pharmacy, University of Sydney and has completed the Programme for Management Development, Harvard Business School. He began his industry career in 1978 in the Medical Department of Astra Australia and from 1983 undertook various overseas assignments.

Most recently, he was Associate Director Scientific Affairs at AstraZeneca Australia until he retired in 2006.

Dr Moore is currently a member of: the Pharmaceuticals Committee of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research; the Business Development Advisory Council, Garvan Institute of Medical Research; Scientific Advisory Board, The Eskitis Institute for Cell and Molecular Therapies, Griffith University.



Associate Professor Shyamali Dharmage has recently joined the CRCAA Scientific Review Committee. She is a Principal Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne. She has coordinated a range of undergraduate and post graduate teaching programs during her academic career. Currently, she coordinates and teaches Epidemiology in Practice subject in Masters of Public Health and Masters of Epidemiology courses.

She has extensive experience in the design, conduct and analysis of large epidemiological studies. She currently leads the Research Program in Allergy and Respiratory Diseases in the Centre for MEGA Epidemiology that includes two of the world's key longitudinal studies in

allergies i.e. Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study (TAHS) and Melbourne Atopy Family Cohort Study (MACS). Both TAHS and MACS are currently funded by the NHMRC and the team includes doctoral students and post doctoral fellows working at the forefront of allergy and airway disease research. In addition she is a co-investigator of other NHMRC funded epidemiology studies in allergies including Health Nuts and Melbourne Asthma Pollen study in Childhood.

She is also a collaborator of the European Community Respiratory Health Survey that is being conducted in 28 countries including Australia and the co-chair of the Early Life Risk Factors Working Group within this international study.

Congratulations



Prof Charles Mackay has been elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science for his work on immunology: chemoattractant receptors and inflammatory therapy. This is a great achievement as only sixteen Fellowships are awarded annually.



Jenny Rolland from Monash University has been promoted to Professor of Immunology.

Publication Update

Chapman DG, Berend N, King GG, Salome CM. Increased airway closure is a determinant of airway hyperresponsiveness. *Eur Respir J* 2008, 32: 1563-1569.

Ljung K, Torin A, Smirk M, Maley F, Cook A, Weinstein P. Extracting dust from soil: A simple solution to a tricky task. *Science of the Total Environment* 407: 2008, 589-593.

Davies JM, Mittag D, Dang TD, Symons K, Voskamp A, Rolland JM, O'Hehir RE. Molecular cloning, expression and immunological characterization of Pas n 1, the major allergen of Bahia grass *Paspalum notatum* pollen. *Molecular Immunology* 2008, volume 46, issue 2, pages 286-293.

CRCAA moves to new premises



After six years, the CRCAA is now back working alongside the Woolcock staff. We are now located on Level 3, 431 Glebe Point Road, Glebe. The Woolcock Building houses state of the art research and education facilities.

In addition to the new location providing sophisticated business resources, the CRC staff have been also pleased to note the better quality of local coffee.