



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH ALUMNI MAGAZINE 2020



Flinders
UNIVERSITY

College of Medicine
& Public Health

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The University acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands where Flinders University conducts teaching, research and operations (Arrernte, Boandik, Bungarla, Dagoman, Gunditjmarra, Jawoyn, Kurna, Larrakia, Nauo, Ngarrindjeri, Peramangk, Ramindjeri, Wardaman, Warumungu, Wurundjeri, Yolgnu) and honours their Elders past and present.

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All enquiries please contact Alumni & Advancement:
alumni@flinders.edu.au | +61 8 7421 9758

Editing/Production: Jane Russell, Simon Behenna. **Writers:** Tania Bawden, Simon Behenna, Jane Russell, David Sly, Karen Smart. **Design:** tif.image DESIGN
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Prepared for challenge



Professor Jonathan Craig
Vice President and Executive Dean
College of Medicine and Public Health

2020 is a year that we are unlikely to forget.

No-one wants a pandemic. The scale of the direct and indirect health impacts has been enormous. Faced with these challenges, staff within the College of Medicine and Public Health have responded with speed, ambition and excellence to ensure our students have been supported, and educational and research programs maintained, albeit in different forms.

The extent of continuity, despite the uncertainty and understandable anxiety has been extraordinary. Our students have been understanding and responsive. Research has pivoted to COVID-19 with unprecedented speed.

Care, continuity, and 'no-one left behind'. These principles have underpinned our communications and actions at every turn. This pandemic has served to drive our ambition to transform the health of our communities, through education and research, and to increase our endeavour for excellence.

With a pandemic that spreads with such alarming speed, there is no simple formula for success. There is no ready equivalent to 'social isolation' and 'track and trace'. There is, however, great opportunity for our professions to lead, advise and innovate, and I am sure that has been the instinctive reaction of our College graduates in Australia and around the world, matching the actions of our staff.

In the College, I have been very proud to work with a wonderfully diverse range of staff and students who responded to the pandemic with resolve and purpose. Without a simple formula, we harnessed a mixture of elements including logic, professionalism, creativity, camaraderie and collective purpose to serve our communities, to continue our business (often in novel ways), and to support each other.

We were determined that everyone and all groups within the College felt supported and communicated with – 'no-one was to be left behind'. As such:

- our actions remained consistent with the University and Health authorities
- clinical placements for our MD students continued successfully
- we worked in close partnership with external stakeholders
- we supported our students with emergency financial help, and support for their learning and mental health
- we supported our staff with regular communications and supportive communities of practice to enable them to move quickly to online delivery.

Within the College, there is a heightened sense of responsibility because COVID-19 emphasises the importance of the work that we do, and the fragility of our communities.

Our vision to make a difference to the health of the communities we serve through the transformative power of research, education and healthcare has been brought into sharp focus: it can no longer be solely a vision. It is now an imperative.

So while a purpose of this Alumni magazine is to celebrate our collective achievements, it might also give us pause to reflect on the responsibility that behoves each of us, and the vital role that we play in our communities.

Best wishes for your excellent, ongoing work – the sustainability of our efforts is critical. If there was ever a time to be especially proud of our alumni, it is now.

Professor Jonathan Craig
MBChB, DipCH, FRACP, M Med (Clin Epi), PhD, FAHMS
Vice President and Executive Dean
College of Medicine and Public Health



Disruption to education provides unique learning opportunity

When COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and health authorities introduced restrictions, Flinders University responded quickly, transitioning to online learning, working from home, and implementing financial and wellbeing support for students.

‘From an education perspective the pandemic has been one of the most significant disruptions I have seen.’

Associate Professor Alison Jones, Dean (Education)

‘We moved quickly to working from home arrangements where possible and, importantly, we made decisions to continue placements. Our students are the future science and healthcare workforce, and the College remains steadfastly committed to that important workforce pathway continuing uninterrupted,’ says Associate Professor Jones.

‘We also very quickly moved to online learning. The speed with which this happened was astounding, and a demonstration of how dexterous we can all be when faced with adversity. It is a credit to the staff who made this happen so successfully, and also to the students who adapted to new ways of learning in a short space of time.’

The importance of clinical placements for almost 300 Flinders University students in their final two years of the University’s Medical Program has been summarised in *The Medical Journal of Australia* article ‘Clinical placements for medical students in the time of COVID-19’.

Co-author of the article is final year medical student Liam Ramsey (BMedSc ‘17), who is working in paediatrics at Flinders Medical Centre and is President of the Flinders Medical Student Society.

Liam strongly believes students are essential to the longevity of the workforce. ‘It’s therefore imperative to nurture and empower them, no matter the uncertainty in the clinical environment.’

‘There has been widespread support from the College of Medicine and Public Health and the local health networks. Further, there has been sincere inquiry and support of student wellbeing during times of large uncertainty,’ says Liam.

Above: Paramedic students learning appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Catherine Nacey from the Barossa Valley Parallel Rural Community Curriculum delivering COVID-19 care packages for students on placement in the region.

Dr Julie Halbert (BParamedicSc ‘15, PhD(Med) ‘02, MSc ‘96), Flinders University Heaslip Fellow, with medical students **Matilda Smale** (BNutDiet(Hons) ‘17), **Pamela Gebrehiwot** and **Liam Ramsey** (BMedSc ‘17), and **Associate Professor Rosalie Grivell** (BMBS ‘98), Director of the Medical Program.



On the frontline in Hong Kong

Currently on the frontline of his country’s response to COVID-19, Dr Kwan Leung Chia (MD ‘16) is a member of the Home Quarantine Taskforce at the Centre for Health Protection in Hong Kong’s Department of Health, where he is a Specialist Trainee in Public Health Medicine.

‘The Home Quarantine Taskforce ensures that people under home quarantine orders are medically well, compliant with the requirements, and able to access round-the-clock medical attention via a telemedicine service that informs clinical decision-making,’ says Dr Kwan.

Dr Kwan Leung Chia (MD ‘16) in Hong Kong

Sounding the COVID-19 warning in Texas



Dr Mark Escott (BMBS (GradEntry) '03)

The responsibility for making pivotal public health decisions in the heat of the COVID-19 crisis has been taken with aplomb by Dr Mark Escott. As Emergency Medical Services Director for the City of Austin and Travis County in Texas, USA, the Flinders University medical graduate provided the critical advice that closed down Austin's gigantic South by Southwest music and technology festival in mid-March to help contain the spread of COVID-19.

It stands as a telling example of decisive leadership. Computer modelling suggests Austin could have suffered as many as 10,000 deaths if the city did nothing in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. Instead, by mid-April, Austin had recorded nine deaths from 700 confirmed cases, with new cases rising by only single digits each day.

Stepping out from the shadows of the oft-overlooked domain of public health, Dr Escott has become a

respected public face of the crisis in his region, making tough decisions that have placed the health of the broad community ahead of fiscal interests.

Despite the complexity of such a situation, Dr Escott says he's fortunate that politicians and business interests in Austin have deferred to his knowledge and accepted his judgements. 'It's gratifying that we are being trusted to make informed decisions and that our political leaders are relying on our expertise,' says Dr Escott. 'We must let the science drive us, not just our desires.'

In the case of South by Southwest 2020—one of the first major festivals in the world to be cancelled due to COVID-19—the decision was costly. The annual 10-day event brings more than 200,000 visitors and \$350 million into the Austin economy, which equates to large-scale local employment and wages to sustain food and housing—but Dr Escott maintains that closing the event down a week before it commenced was the right decision.

'We knew it would be difficult to mitigate, but we had to keep the wellbeing of the local community at the forefront of our thinking,' says Dr Escott. 'Providing clear information to the public was crucial to the decision's success.'

'If we are not completely transparent in the information that we put out, then suspicion builds in the community that perhaps we are hiding things. Therefore, we have to ensure a very accurate flow of data at all times.'

'We pay close attention to social media and react to misinformation being spread. Through this, we can see what people are concerned about, and we can make moves to address it.'



Dr Mark Escott on standby for a COVID-19 media conference.

Dr Escott sees his role in public health as being ever vigilant, which led to his early assessment of the COVID-19 threat. At home over Christmas with his family, he watched initial news reports about the virus emanate from China, and he sensed danger. He immediately began reviewing the earliest World Health Organization advisories and discussed worst-case scenarios with Austin's chief epidemiologist, Janet Pichette.

'I didn't buy the initial theory that COVID-19 wasn't being spread person to person,' says Dr Escott. 'I knew it would reach Austin at some time, and that we had to be ready.'

Dr Escott says he trod an unorthodox path to reach his current dual roles of medical director for Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services and interim health authority for Austin Public Health. Having worked in emergency rooms before moving to public health leadership roles, he believes such

broad knowledge provides the necessary perspective to make balanced, considered decisions in a time of crisis.

'Public health usually lives in the shadows, and struggles to attract the attention and funding it deserves and needs,' says Dr Escott. 'This terrible situation is a stark reminder that public services are an essential part of our health system. I'm confident our efforts in the current crisis will aid our future efforts to bolster public health, and attract more of the very best people into public health roles.'

His office oversees a joint information system that shares information across a dozen emergency services and policy-sharing stakeholders in Austin, which have teamed together to deliver optimal results. 'We are sharing our problems immediately and reacting quickly. In these circumstances, everyone has to make good decisions at every step along the way.'

While he continues working at the daily threat of containing COVID-19, Dr Escott is also looking a long way into the future, to formulate public health recovery strategies. 'I have to start planning now: what will the rest of 2020 look like? What will 2021 look like?' To find answers, he is involved in combined medical school and business school think tanks within the University of Texas.

'There will be substantial modifications of how we conduct ourselves in the future, so we have to make decisions now about what strategies need to be put in place,' says Dr Escott.

'We cannot afford to get tired of this situation, to become mentally jaded. It will remain our job to ensure everyone remains focused on what is at stake—because it can and will come back stronger.'

Pandemic drives medical innovation

While Australia's early response to the COVID-19 pandemic was encouraging, the second wave is creating new challenges and the urgency remains high to build our knowledge and understanding of this deadly virus. Multiple projects are underway at Flinders University to progress the quest for better treatments and to ensure we are even more prepared for pandemics of the future.

Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute (FHMRI) Point of Care, headed up by Professor Mark Shephard OAM (MSc(Med) '82) has partnered with the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney to establish a rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) Remote Point-of-Care Testing Program for remote and rural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The project utilises existing point-of-care testing technology, developed to rapidly test for sexually transmissible infections, to deliver COVID-19 test results within 45 minutes instead of within two weeks.

In April, FHMRI established the Flinders University College of Medicine and Public Health COVID-19 Research Grant scheme (co-funded by FHMRI, the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Flinders NT and the Flinders Foundation) to support projects related to any health and medical aspects of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Eight new projects have been funded, including the further refinement of diagnostic tools, the development of antibiotic strategies for reducing the duration of invasive mechanical ventilation, and the creation of 3-D printed facial guards to protect frontline workers.

Flinders researchers are seeking funding for many more medical projects to help us learn from the pandemic and to be better prepared for future health crises, including a study of how we can better address emergency care, the relationship and impacts of hypertension and cardiovascular disease in COVID-19 mortality and recovery rates, and the health and wellbeing impacts for refugees and asylum seekers.

Pivotal to all of this research is the creation of FORCE: the Flinders cORonavirus CollectivE, a collaboration between the University and Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN), bringing together clinical and research expertise across Adelaide to establish a South Australian COVID-19 virtual patient registry and biobank.

This platform collates information on all South Australians who tested positive for COVID-19 and is an essential resource for researchers. It will enable the rapid generation of local knowledge, while providing an evidence basis for the characterisation of COVID-19 in South Australia — including spread, severity and survival — and adding to national and global understanding of the virus.

Professor Claire Roberts (BA '85), Matthew Flinders Fellow in the College of Medicine and Public Health, heads the team responsible for managing FORCE.

'Because we know so little about this virus, we need to go right back to basics. One of the aims of the registry is to characterise people who have had mild or severe disease, compared to those who have died,' she says.

'The other key objective is to provide a data resource for researchers,' says Dr Erin Morton, BBiotech(Hons) '99), Manager of Health Data Science and Clinical Trials in the College of Medicine and Public Health, and Liaison and Project Manager for FORCE.

'We have never initiated a registry this quickly — FORCE broke all our previous speed records in setting this up. But Flinders University has a long and strong reputation for running registries of this nature. We have the know-how to develop and work with this.'



**Professor Claire Roberts (BA '85),
FORCE Research Team Lead**



**Dr Erin Morton (BBiotech(Hons) '99),
Liaison and Project Manager, FORCE**



Antibody research turned on its head in hunt for COVID-19 vaccine

**Dr Jing Jing Wang
(PhD(Med) '12)**

Both good and bad antibodies must be understood to combat COVID-19 — and this is central to Dr Jing Jing Wang's groundbreaking research that rides at the forefront of international scientific efforts to find a successful vaccine for COVID-19.

Dr Wang (PhD(Med) '12) is being supported by Flinders University's COVID-19 Research Grant scheme, as she works on antibody research with other leading Flinders University medical researchers in three laboratories — Professor Tom Gordon (immunology) (PhD(Med) '87, DM '96), Professor David Gordon (microbiology and infectious diseases) (PhD(Med) '87), and Dr Tim Chataway (proteomics) (BSc(Hons) '87, PhD(Med) '95).

Together they are focusing on finding the 'good guy' antibodies that help individuals recover from the potentially deadly coronavirus caused by SARS-CoV-2.

'Once we understand the body's immune response to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, we will make progress towards producing the best vaccine and treatments to support resistance and patient responses to the disease,' says Dr Wang.

'When we identify the specific 'good guy' antibodies that are helping most people recover from the disease, it will greatly help the work being done to find a vaccine for COVID-19, being led by the Doherty Institute and others in Australia.'

Dr Wang's ability to isolate molecular markers in good and bad antibodies is central to a stream of high-impact journal articles, and is influencing both clinical practice and improved future treatments for some of the world's most debilitating conditions.

Her novel work in proteomic autoantibody technology has resulted in Dr Wang winning a series of University and national awards, and the 2019 South Australian Winnovation Award for Emerging Innovator.

Much of Dr Wang's research has focused on 'bad guy' antibodies that attack a patient's tissues in systemic autoimmune conditions such as lupus, Sjögren's syndrome and rheumatoid arthritis (studied in conjunction with Dr Mihir Wechalekar's (PhD(Med) '16) laboratory).

Recently, she switched to work on 'good guy' antibodies, which protect a patient from virus infection in infectious diseases such as flu and hepatitis HBV/HCV — work done in collaboration with Professor David Gordon's microbiology team at Flinders University and Dr Rowena Bull from UNSW.

Dr Wang came to Australia in 2004 as a researcher, having graduated in Inner Mongolia, north China. Her PhD within the Flinders University College of Medicine and Public Health was supported by an Australian Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholarship, and her recent work has included international collaborations with the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and Radboud University in the Netherlands.

Her work has been presented at scientific conferences — such as the American College of Rheumatology Annual Meeting, the International Congress on SLE (Lupus), and the International Congress of Immunology — and her research focus on mass spectrometric sequencing of human antibody repertoires and the related bioinformatics has been supported by a five-year NHMRC Peter Doherty Early Career Fellowship.

Dr Wang says her next goal is to sequence anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibodies from larger cohorts of naturally infected COVID-19 patients and vaccinated subjects. From this, she will develop a large reference database of anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibodies for identification of predictive biomarkers in individual patients, and identify the best antibodies for vaccine development.

Help combat COVID-19
and its impact on all our lives.
Donate online via
flinders.edu.au/thrivetogether



Leading by example—generosity inspires support for future Indigenous health professionals

Recognising the serious economic hardships inflicted by COVID-19 restrictions and a need to foster the next generation of health professionals through difficult times, Professor Michael Kidd AM FAHMS has proudly decided to support a second student through the annual Michael Kidd AM Scholarship.

The Professor Michael Kidd AM Scholarship was established in perpetuity to support the retention and successful graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as health professionals.

‘Flinders University has always had a strong focus on social justice and supporting more people to have access to university education. I did my public health training at Flinders specifically because of this strong social justice ethos, and I felt it even more strongly when I was Executive Dean at the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, from 2009 to 2016.’

Together with his life partner Alastair McEwin AM, Professor Kidd provided funds to establish a scholarship in 2013 specifically supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their studies. Their strong leadership has inspired others to donate funds to establish further scholarships, signalling a new gateway of opportunity for Indigenous health students at Flinders University.

‘When I arrived there was only a handful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people studying health at Flinders, and by the time I left eight years later, there were almost 80.’



Professor Michael Kidd AM FAHMS
(DipComChildHealth '89)

Photo: courtesy AAP

Standing at the pivot of Australia's public health responses in his role as Australia's Deputy Chief Medical Officer and the federal Department of Health's Principal Medical Advisor, Professor Kidd has been commended for taking swift and decisive action to implement the national primary care policy in response to COVID-19. This includes the rollout of telehealth, establishing a network of general practice-led respiratory clinics, and introducing online training on infection control that has been used by 500,000 healthcare workers.

Professor Kidd has acknowledged the need to foster the next generation of health professionals, especially through these difficult times, and has increased his support for students by awarding a second scholarship this year.

He hopes it will provide additional relief to a student studying a health profession at Flinders, who is experiencing financial challenges as a result of the pandemic.

The scholarship was boosted two years ago when Professor Kidd and Alastair McEwin married. Instead of receiving gifts they asked guests to contribute to one of two meaningful scholarships — one of them being the Professor Michael Kidd AM Scholarship at Flinders University.

‘If people really want to make a difference to something that stretches far beyond their lifetime, then I would urge them to endow or support a scholarship like this,’ says Professor Kidd. ‘It not only helps students through their journey, but ultimately it touches the communities they go on to work with. These health professionals serve as great role models for the next generation of Indigenous kids who look up and say, wow, if uncle or aunty from our community can become a doctor or a nurse or an optician or a dietician, then I can do that too.’

The two Indigenous students who will benefit from the Professor Michael Kidd AM Scholarship in 2020 are Sarita Richards and Melissa Rosas, who are both second year medical students within Flinders University's Northern Territory Medical Program in Darwin.

Your support will make a difference

Scholarships play a fundamental role in enabling students like Sarita and Melissa work towards a brighter future.

Join others like Professor Michael Kidd AM and support Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students to become health professionals, donate online flinders.edu.au/michaelkidd

Or for more information contact
Bonnie Allmond +61 7421 9995
bonnie.allmond@flinders.edu.au

What the scholarship means to me

Wuthathi and Torres Strait Islander woman Sarita Richards is in the second year of her medical degree within Flinders University's Northern Territory Medical Program and one of the two recipients for the 2020 Professor Michael Kidd AM Scholarship.



With three young children and an intense study workload, Sarita faces major challenges to achieving her dream of becoming a doctor and improving health practices for Indigenous Australians.

‘Receiving this scholarship is an honour. I know that Professor Michael Kidd and his husband Alastair McEwin are great supporters of people from diverse backgrounds achieving in tertiary education and beyond. I am deeply grateful for this scholarship, especially as I am aware that there are many other students worthy to be recipients, who would also benefit from such support. Receiving this scholarship takes some of the financial pressures off around ensuring that I have the resources, both at home and for my studies, needed to work towards completing my MD.’

‘This semester has been steep learning curve in terms of making adjustments to my family life and study techniques due to the university and societal restrictions associated with COVID-19.’

‘With regard to my studies, I am a very practical and visual learner and I find learning much easier with face-to-face and hands on content delivery. Obviously, such teaching has been strictly reducing this semester. Thankfully, with the help of family, friends, tutors, colleagues and mentors as well as being able to access additional resources through the University — and with many of our lecturers using feedback from students to continually modify their teaching whilst we all adapt to these new ways of learning — I have been successful thus far this semester in terms of my new approach to study.’

‘To Professor Michael Kidd, I offer my sincere thanks for your ongoing support in helping me become a doctor.’

Flinders Rural and Remote Health

Flinders University is recognised for making a difference locally and globally in rural and remote health.

Our College's vision is to be recognised as the global leader in rural and remote health research, and as a global leader in the development of a committed and highly skilled rural and remote health workforce.

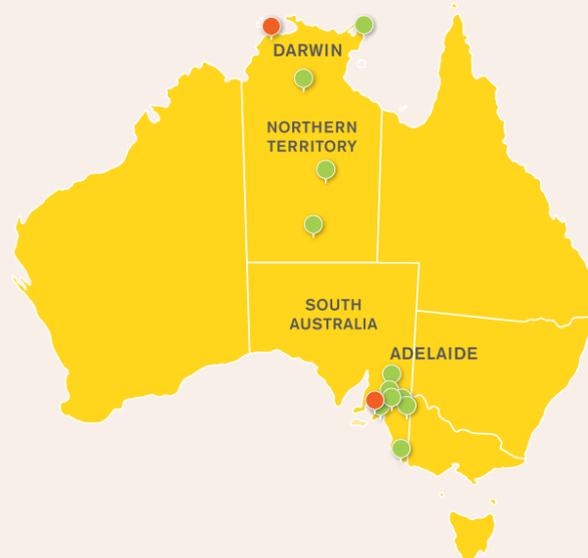
In short, our work must ensure better outcomes for our communities. We believe in the transformative power of education and research to benefit our communities – we are here for the people who aren't.

Our staff and students demonstrate excellence, passion and commitment to our rural and remote activities; this is evidenced by the close connections that Flinders University has with communities, and the positive effects of our work on the people we serve.

We have a considerable presence in rural and remote communities throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory (NT). This geographic footprint throughout the 'Central Australian Corridor' is a defining feature of the University, and our rural and remote academic programs and research positively impact some of the most under-served communities in Australia.

The Discipline of Rural and Remote Health (encompassing Flinders NT and Flinders Rural Health SA) affects and engages rural and remote communities in a range of ways. One of our most innovative strategies is to co-create curricula with students and communities.

Our work is not limited to the vast expertise and skills in the College. We regularly partner with the Colleges of Nursing and Health Sciences, and Education, Psychology and Social Work to develop collaborative solutions that promote and improve health communities. In the NT, for example, we support nursing students on placement - it's all part of our dedication to fostering a sustainable rural and remote workforce for the future.



flinders.edu.au/flinders-nt
flinders.edu.au/flindersruralhealthsa

Where are we located?

Northern Territory: the College has an extensive presence across the NT, and in true Top End style, our activities are well spread out: there are 100 staff across our five locations in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek.

As well as delivering the Flinders NT Medical Program (NTMP), Flinders NT provides student placement and workforce capacity support through the Remote and Rural Interprofessional Placement Learning (RIPPL), manages the Centre for Remote Health, and the Flinders NT Regional Training Hub, focussed on the rural medical training pipeline.

South Australia: Flinders University Rural Health SA facilitates high quality multidisciplinary health education and research across rural communities in South Australia including the Parallel Rural Community Curriculum (PRCC) program, and the Rural Junior Doctor Program.

Our Flinders University Rural Health SA campuses are located in Mt. Gambier, Victor Harbor, Murray Bridge, the Barossa and Renmark, but we do also accommodate medical, nursing and allied health students on placement in some of the more remote regions of South Australia, including Coober Pedy, Roxby Downs and Ceduna.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

The University's first *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)*, was released on 1 June. The RAP contains an extensive set of goals and deliverables to foster deeper engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, and to strengthen external connections.

A recent initiative has been to employ Elders on Campus. The Elders will contribute to the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance structures and help shape fresh initiatives, while enhancing Aboriginal perspectives, staff recruitment and student support.



Auntie Pat Miller, an Arrernte Elder from Alice Springs, and Uncle Richard Fejo, based in Darwin and from the Larrakia Nation, began this year. We are planning for a Kurna Elder on Campus to begin at the Bedford Park campus this year.

Welcome to Professor Robyn Aitken



Professor Robyn Aitken recently commenced as Deputy Dean, Rural and Remote Health in the College.

Robyn has a long association with the University, having previously held the Deputy Director position from 2008–2012 at the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs, a joint centre of Flinders University and Charles Darwin University. During that time she also played a leadership role with the Northern Territory and Australian governments to establish the Northern Territory Medical Program.

Our staff and students eagerly anticipate her contributions to our extensive rural and remote activities.

Parallel Rural Community Curriculum

Flinders University awards up to 24 places each year in the Doctor of Medicine for students from a rural background who are able to demonstrate commitment to a career in rural practice. Central to this rural stream is the internationally recognised Parallel Rural Community Curriculum (PRCC), which enables students to complete their entire Year 3 studies in a regional area.



One of the students who received this year's Doctor of Medicine (Rural) PRCC Student Scholarship is **Lori Aitchison** (BPsychSc '19) who grew up in a small, tight knit community in a rural farming town north of Adelaide.

'When I found out I got the scholarship I could not get the smile off my face, I was completely over the moon for a whole week!'

'I remember the GP in my hometown telling me about the PRCC program when I first started talking about applying to medicine. I went home, read all about it and something just stuck. I have always loved the small, community lifestyle and to be able to give something back to these communities sounded amazing.'

'In the PRCC program, knowing that I will be spending my entire third year in rural and regional towns learning to be a medical professional, is kind of like the light at the end of the tunnel. I enjoy studying but I cannot wait to get out and start helping South Australian communities, ones much akin to the town I was born and raised in.'



Championing the rights of the silent: exposing ethical failures in organ transplants

Professor Wendy Rogers (PhD(Med) '98, BMBS '83, BA(Hons) '95)

Photo: courtesy Chris Stacey

The shocking truth of human organ transplant abuse, revealed in the 2015 documentary *Hard To Believe*, spurred Professor Wendy Rogers (PhD(Med) '98, BMBS '83, BA(Hons) '95) to take action.

The former staff member at Flinders University Medical School and current Professor in Clinical Ethics at Macquarie University in Sydney had long held an interest in medical ethics, but the horrors of organ harvesting prompted her to become a leading activist in calling out organ transplant abuse occurring in China.

Through establishing and chairing the International Advisory Committee of the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China (endtransplantabuse.org), Professor Rogers began drawing attention to scientific research that used organ transplants from executed prisoners of conscience in China – and her investigations have gained international traction by shedding clear light on a controversy that has swirled for two decades.

'Watching the facts laid bare in that documentary, I was taken aback,' Professor Rogers admits. 'It was something I should have known about, but didn't. I needed to take action.'

Through examining research publications by Chinese transplant scientists, her team's investigation has prompted scientific journals to retract at least 20 transplant reports, after authors couldn't prove that donors gave consent.

Her work also led to the establishment of the China Tribunal, an independent tribunal into forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience in China that was chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC. Its judgement, released in March 2020, vindicated the scientific whistleblowing that Professor Rogers and the Coalition has undertaken.

Professor Rogers' work saw her recognised by leading science journal *Nature* as one of the 10 most relevant scientists of 2019. She also received the 2019 NHMRC Ethics Award, and was named among Medscape's 2019 Physicians of the Year (the only woman awarded, and the only Australian) – but Professor Rogers concedes that her work is far from complete.

'While this recognition in the scientific community is gratifying, the issue still needs to be elevated to the broader public domain and onto political agendas, so that governments can bring pressure to put an end to this issue,' says Professor Rogers.

Secondment is a great two-way street



Hannah Caon (BParamedicSc '14) and **Sarah Rech** (BParamedicSc '15)

When SA Ambulance Service on-road paramedics Sarah Rech (BParamedicSc '15) and Hannah Caon (BParamedicSc '14) returned to Flinders as tutors, they got more than they bargained for.

While students have always benefitted from the clinical skills and on-road perspective that working paramedic tutors provide, this year Flinders entered into an arrangement with SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) to release two on-road paramedics each semester to take up five month fixed-term teaching appointments with the Paramedic Degree.

'Teaching across all clinical topics and year levels allows us to provide consistency, as well as keep up with students' development and the stage that each student is expected to be at,' says Hannah, who understands the importance of helping students transition to the workforce.

'Lateral thinking is one of the key things that ambulance services look for when they're selecting staff. You can be the smartest person in the world, but if you don't have that actual practical thinking, you struggle to apply that knowledge to such a dynamic role.'

When Hannah, who works with an ambulance crew in southern Adelaide, and Sarah, who works in the north, signed up for the roles last year, they were not expecting the transformation that the COVID-19 pandemic would bring.

'The switch to online teaching posed a significant challenge for us in terms of content delivery, especially as the paramedicine degree involves such a large amount of practical teaching, and introduces many specialised devices and techniques,' says Hannah.

They seized the opportunity to convert the usual in-class clinical demonstrations into more than 30 detailed videos for students at all year levels.

For Hannah and Sarah the secondment provided an alternative professional development opportunity. Both acknowledge the demanding and unpredictable nature of the paramedic role, and see benefits in growing their knowledge base and expanding their future career opportunities by diversifying their skill set.

Looking to the future, Hannah is interested in exploring academic roles in SA and at interstate universities. Sarah, who spent eight months last year working as a relieving clinical instructor in SAAS, enjoys teaching and mentoring, and is contemplating a leadership pathway.

Hannah and Sarah both agree that it is a privilege to be a paramedic. They will return to SAAS bringing new perspectives to their on-road jobs.

'The trust that the community places in us allows us to help them in their times of need. It is such a dynamic job - you can go from being at a roadside motor vehicle accident, to sitting in a home providing comfort and reassurance to an elderly patient.'
Sarah Rech

'Paramedicine offers real job satisfaction as well as constant problem solving and clinical challenges. On the other side, it takes a significant amount of personal sacrifice, like missing out on social and family milestones. It's definitely a lifestyle choice, and takes an emotional toll — but ask any of us, we love our job!' Hannah Caon

Where are they now? Flinders University Alumni



Ray Krai (second from left) with fellow team members from the Aerial Health Program

Ray Krai

Master of Health and International Development 2013

When Ray Krai was young, he wanted to be a doctor or a pilot. As the Health Service Manager for the Aerial Health Program for Papua New Guinea's Sustainable Development Program, he has a foot in both sectors.

'Now, I manage a program that works with doctors and pilots who use small aircraft to undertake remote health outreach programs.'

One of his career highlights to date is his role in the first revision in 20 years of a vital resource for community health workers in PNG's isolated mountainous region: the Health Care Manual for Community Health Workers in Papua New Guinea (3rd Edition), published in 2019.

'I contributed many chapters in the book, as well as being part of the technical review panel at a national level.'

Inspired by his father, who was a community health worker in some of the remotest places in PNG, Mr Krai came to Flinders on an Australia Awards Scholarship in 2012.

'Flinders has a strong public health standing. The course focused on health systems and how they can accommodate development in social, economic and political contexts — I was given the right tools.'

After graduating, Mr Krai went to work for a health program in a remote community in the Fly River delta in western Papua New Guinea, doing health promotion work. He can see how his time at Flinders has helped him in his current role.

'Professionally, it helped me recognise that dealing with health issues is complex and challenging. You have to uncover the layers of systems, policies and contextual issues before you can even start to address a problem.'

He maintains a clear direction for his future in health promotion.

'My goal is to develop and deliver a program that can be used to help alleviate poverty and improve health and educational outcomes, particularly for rural and remote communities.'



Dr Sanjay Joseph

**Bachelor of Clinical Sciences 2013,
Doctor of Medicine 2017**

Dr Sanjay Joseph has had a stellar start to his medical career, having been awarded National Junior Doctor of the Year 2019 at a ceremony in Canberra last October. He jointly runs a not-for-profit organisation, Healthy Start Darwin, which hosts workshops to help improve the health literacy of newly-arrived refugees.

'Healthy Start Darwin has been a fantastic opportunity to improve cross-cultural communication between health professionals and our participants, as well as empowering refugees to have a more comfortable transition into the Australian healthcare system.'

Graduating in 2017 from Flinders University's Northern Territory Medical Program, Dr Joseph was first attracted to training in the Top End because of the dynamic benefits it offers.

'Flinders gave me a unique opportunity to study in Darwin, and to explore and work in rural and remote areas,' he says. 'I've really enjoyed the mix of culture, demographics, and outdoor lifestyle opportunities that Darwin provided.'

The small group aspect was another enticement to rural learning. 'We built on a culture of mateship and collegiality that makes learning much more fun. Local lecturers knew us by name, and we built many lasting relationships and gained great mentors along the journey.'

After graduating, Dr Joseph split his internship year between Royal Darwin Hospital — where he is now based — and Katherine District Hospital, spending six months in each location.

Humbled by his National Junior Doctor of the Year title, Dr Joseph nevertheless remains focused on his fellow junior doctors.

'As I embark on my third year of being a doctor, I look back and think about the opportunities I've been given to make a change in my field, especially in junior doctor welfare and advocacy. Being able to be involved in stakeholder meetings and create changes to improve junior medical officer experiences at the Top End has been both a rewarding and inspiring journey.'

'Every day is a great learning opportunity... that's the beauty of medicine.'

Share your story

Flinders alumni are doing amazing things all over the world. Your experiences inspire others. We'd love to hear from you. Email alumni@flinders.edu.au with My Story in the subject line.



Dr Amalia Dwi Susanti

Master of Public Health 2019

Dr Amalia Dwi Susanti's dream of making a difference to public health in Indonesia led her to Flinders University in 2018 on a National Population and Family Planning Board of Indonesia (BKKBN) Scholarship to study a Masters of Public Health.

Dr Susanti undertook her medical training at the University of Brawijaya in Malang, East Java, graduating in 2009. She worked as a general practitioner for several years before taking up a position as a Medical Doctor and Family Planning Analyst for the BKKBN in Central Kalimantan.

After graduating from Flinders in December 2019, she returned to Indonesia to BKKBN where she and her team work to ensure that family planning services and education can be accessed by the community, particularly those who are most disadvantaged.

'In my studies at Flinders, one of the most fundamental skills that I learnt was critical thinking. The academic staff encouraged us to analyse scenarios in different perspectives and from a range of viewpoints. I learnt to think more broadly and apply outcomes from previous cases

with practical knowledge and considered theory. This is already a significant attribute for me professionally, and an asset for my employers.

'Studying in Adelaide was a great experience for me and broadened my horizons. I was able to immerse myself in a new culture, socialise with friends from other countries and cultures, and learn from people with a range of different perspectives and experiences.'

A valuable lesson from her time at Flinders was that education gives you the power to dream and to succeed.

'I want to make a difference in public health in my country, particularly in the areas of family planning, reproductive health, and mother and child health.'

'I would like to become a university lecturer. And, if I have the chance, I one day hope to return and undertake my PhD in public health.'

Find out more about Public Health degrees at flinders.edu.au/study/courses/postgraduate-public-health

Paramedic swaps London for Waikerie

In the four years since graduating, Gabriel Hicks (BParamedicSc '16) has spent 12 months with the London Ambulance Service, completed an intern year with SA Ambulance Service in Adelaide, a stint with a suburban crew, and began work as a casual tutor at Flinders University. Late last year he moved to Waikerie on the Murray River in South Australia to crew on the only paramedic ambulance within a 50km radius.

'We still perform the same kind of emergency response as in the city but, due to our isolation, we often cannot rely on additional ambulances for support. Instead, we regularly work with our local volunteer fire brigade to assist us on scene or on the way to hospital, and we consult with senior paramedics or ambulance service doctors in our control centre.'

'We are also on a first name basis with the staff at our local hospital, which is a nice difference to the city.'

Growing up, Gabriel always had a social conscience but never considered a career in healthcare.

During his high school gap year he made a snap decision to volunteer with the State Emergency Service and Country Fire Service, a move that 'inspired a passion in me that has really driven the direction of my life since.'

'As paramedics we are welcomed into people's homes, and lives, during very intimate moments of crisis. This is a responsibility that I always keep in my mind, but also a privilege that makes it an extremely rewarding career.'

Gabriel's year with the London Ambulance Service was a real eye-opener.

'The service is extremely busy, and it can sometimes feel relentless, but with this has come a lot of innovative ways of working and delivering ambulance services. The role of the paramedic is also quite advanced in the UK, and it's common to have paramedics with Master's degrees working in GP clinics, urgent care centres and emergency departments.'

'Now that paramedics are registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), it's exciting to think of the similar ways we will be able to support the health system more broadly.'

Find out more about studying Paramedic Science at flinders.edu.au/study/courses/bachelor-paramedic-science

Gabriel Hicks (BParamedicSc '16) at the Murray River, Waikerie



Reunions & celebrations



BMBS class of 1989

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had implications across all of our activities, especially face-to-face alumni gatherings. It is with regret that we were not able to celebrate four medicine reunions planned for this year for classes of 1980, 1985 and 1989-1999. The organisers are monitoring travel restrictions and once lifted will set new dates and contact each group.

Stay in touch

For help with organising your own reunion, contact the College Alumni Partner, Jane Russell, via alumni@flinders.edu.au or +61 8 7421 9758

To make sure we invite you to events, keep your details up to date via www.flinders.edu.au/update



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