

President's Report

A/Professor Deborah Colville

With three VMWS events, one each in the months of March, April and one planned for May, and other activities of interest in between, the VMWS year has well and truly started.

Thanks are due to our Social Secretary team, led by Dr Zoe Dorevitch, for a great start to the year. VMWS held a successful dinner at nearby Peko Peko restaurant on March 19th after the excellent Shrine of Remembrance talk by historian Dr Heather Sheard about Victorian female surgeons who served overseas in World War 1.

With Dr Heather Sheard from Melbourne making a significant contribution to this historical work, it is now documented that a significant number of women doctors contributed greatly to the surgical workforce in the war effort in Europe and the Middle East during and after the 1914-18 war. Since they were not officially part of the Australian Armed Forces, it appears to be a historical fact also that these same women doctors were sidelined from receiving some war medals concordant with their service, and were thus not entitled not only to any such official recognition, but also to the other rewards that returned soldiers were otherwise due on their return to Australia, such as support for further study, and grants of land. Of poignant interest to me was that one source of these women doctors' motivation into war service is said to be that they saw war service as serving the cause of suffrage. Such war service, it was felt, would help to prove that female doctors were equal to male doctors in contributive capacity to the war effort, and therefore that women as a whole would naturally be judged to have earned the entitlement to vote.

VMWS also held a successful event for members on April 1st at St Vincent's Hospital. With the marvellous view high across the Melbourne skyline from this venue for inspiration as well, four of our members spelled out some of the highlights and the challenges of their own career decision making. The event was called "How We Do What We Do". There's a full report of this exciting event enclosed in this newsletter. Much animated discussion ensued for instance, on 'the right time' to have a baby during one's medical career.

Over this few months too we have seen a close to the celebrations of 125 Years of Women in Medicine at the University of Melbourne. Although on 5th April the Museum Display was taken down, we are fortunate to have at hand an excellent, very solid publication that is still available. This would make great Christmas or birthday present for anyone interested in the history of leadership in medicine, any woman doctor, and any aspirants to greatness!

I would encourage you all to attend our future VMWS events, such as the annual Lyceum lunch, and our Annual General Meeting to be held in Melbourne in November.

Deb Colville MBBS (Monash 1975)

President VMWS

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Upcoming Events:

Saturday 3rd May
Interview and CV Workshop
Michael Chamberlain Theatre
St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne

July - date TBA
Lyceum Luncheon
Guest Speaker - Dr Heather Sheard PhD

November - date TBA
Annual General Meeting

Committee Meetings:

Lyceum Club, Melbourne CBD

- **Monday 2nd June**
- **Monday 4th August**

VMWS Committee 2014

A/Professor Deborah Colville	President/AFMW Representative
Dr Rosalind Terry	Vice President
Dr Marissa Daniels	Treasurer
Dr Sarah Heynemann	Secretary
Dr Kate Duncan	Public Officer
Dr Desiree Yap	AFMW President
Dr Sarah Grigg	Newsletter Editor
Dr Skye Siskos	Newsletter Editor/ Social Media Liaison
Dr Marissa Daniels	IT Officer
Dr Sarah Lonie	Social Secretary
Dr Zoe Dorevitch	Social Secretary
Dr Lulusha Jayawardena	Social Secretary
Dr Magda Simonis	Immediate Past President/AFMW (VIC)
Dr Natalie Marijanovic	AMA Victoria Council Representative
Dr Jill Tomlinson	AFMW
Dr Raie Goodwach	AFMW (VIC)
Ms Hayley Roberts	Student Representative (Monash)
Ms Elysia Robb	Student Representative (Melbourne)
Ms Allison Hemenstall	Student Representative (Melbourne)
Ms Francesca Bridge	Student Representative (Deakin)
Ms Emma Downie	Student Representative (Deakin)
Ms Anna Krelle	Student Representative (Notre Dame)

Newsletter Editors 2014

Dr Sarah Grigg
Dr Skye Siskos

Please contact us if you have any feedback, articles, photos or advertisements you would like to contribute to the newsletter.

PO Box 202
East Melbourne
Victoria, 3002

vic@afmw.org.au



“How we do what we do”

The Victorian Medical Women Society's recent *'How we do what we do'* was a great success. The event allowed us to hear inspiring stories from prominent women within the medical community. Their presentations covered a variety of topics from women who are achieving great things at different stages of their personal and professional lives.

We heard from Dr Jacinta Halloran, an incredibly talented General Practitioner who has managed to incorporate writing fiction into her busy career. She encouraged us to explore our passions and to see the multitude of opportunities available for people who can combine a knowledge of medicine with an ability to write. Furthermore, she expressed how writing fiction helps her to appreciate her medical practice more. She emphasised the importance of understanding the psychological motivations of our patients and considering patients as protagonists of their own story.

Dr Maitreyi Modak gave us an insightful perspective into the life of a fourth year paediatric trainee at the Royal Children's Hospital. She encouraged us to consider the realities of paediatric medicine and some of the challenges such as considering the whole family in the clinical interaction. Despite its challenges she remains passionate that paediatrics is still more fun than the 'dreary adult world'. She also reminded us of the importance of achieving a good work-life balance and taking time for oneself through opportunities such as job-sharing. This time does not always have to be centred on motherhood and can also be a time for personal exploration through travel, writing, spending time with friends and exploring one's interests.

Dr Jill Tomlinson, a plastic, reconstructive and hand surgeon provided us with some important messages regarding challenging the pervasive medical and surgical culture that continues to exist. She encouraged us to get involved and was truly inspirational in the

breadth of her achievements, from running marathons, to advocacy roles for women's rights initiatives, amazing experiences of combining work with travel and fabulous pavlova decorating skills – plastic surgeon style!

Dr Desiree Yap concluded the event with a wonderful talk which captured the importance of making the most of all the unexpected opportunities that life offers you as you never know where you might end up – as an obstetrician and gynaecologist, you might even find yourself working for the Red Cross/WHO on the SARS epidemic in China. She encouraged us to do the things we want to, and love the things we do. Despite the innumerable number of babies she has delivered, each one remains a miracle.

We finished the night on a high as question time allowed the room to hash out some of the big issues for medical women including gender inequality, challenging the medical culture, managing families and life outside of medicine and considering the medical community as a mere microcosm or reflection of the broader community and the need for societal change and growth.

At the end of the evening as I was getting out of my car, I was greeted by an unwelcome wolf-whistle from a driverby. I thought to myself: 'Doesn't he realise I'm an empowered medical woman?!'. Alas, it seems that there's still some progress to be made.

*Written by Francesca Bridge
Deakin Student Representative for VMWS*

Welcome to our newest committee members

Join us in welcoming our newest and brightest VMWS members. With their varied experiences so far we are very excited to see what they will bring to the group.

Allison Hempenstall is a final year graduate medical student studying at the University of Melbourne. She has a keen interest in women's health and education particularly in a global setting. She strongly believes in promoting and advocating for equal professional opportunities for women throughout their medical career, commencing in medical school. Allison is currently undertaking a research project in antenatal HIV at Oxford University. In her spare time she enjoys hiking and last year trekked to the base camp of Mount Everest.



Position Available - VMWS Committee

Sponsorship/Publicity Officer

- Develop and maintain relationships with external parties, ie) sponsors, as well as key non-financial supporters of VMWS- to ensure adequate funding and support for VMWS events/ administration costs
- Encourage and support sponsors- by creating tailored sponsorship packages for interested parties; and ensure non-competitive sponsorship
- Liaise with other relevant committee members, in particular Publicity Officer and Newsletter Editors to ensure that sponsors are well looked after
- Ensure all committee members are aware of sponsor activities and rights, particularly at events; and ensure that sponsors are formally acknowledged during and post event
- Liaise with Treasurer on sponsorship invoices
- Issue invoices
- Follow up on sponsorship debtors
- Coordinate publicity for VMWS events- electronic and print media
- Liaise with other relevant committee members in confirming and publicizing events- including ensuring accuracy of event information

If you are interested please send an email, along with your CV to vic@afmw.org.au.



Victorian Medical
Women's Society

The Victorian Medical Women's Society

Internship CV & interview advice seminar 2014

Saturday May 3rd, 10am – 12pm

Michael Chamberlain Lecture Theatre

- Ground Floor, Mary Aikenhead wing, St Vincent's Hospital

Speakers:

Associate Professor Deborah Colville – Ophthalmologist

Dr Rosalind Terry – ED physician

Members \$5, non members \$40

Includes \$35 VMWS student joining fee

RSVP essential by April 27th

vicevents@afmw.org.au

Include name, university and clinical school, and date of transfer in email RSVP

Payment by EFT by April 27th

BSB 033 089 Account 297664

Include initial and surname in transfer reference

Why join the Victorian Medical Women's Society? There are many personal and professional benefits including regular networking and mentoring opportunities at meetings, guest speaker events and panel discussions. Receive a quarterly newsletter advertising events, scholarships and prizes, and updates on gendered socio-political issues. As a member you become part of the Medical Women's International Association, which has a voice at the United Nations and other global forums. Receive assistance with applications to training programs and advice on career development.

'Honour the Work: Australia's Women Surgeons of WWI'

As part of the Shrine of Remembrance talks and events program, the 'Honour the Work: Australia's Women Surgeons of WWI' public lecture was presented on the 19th March to acknowledge and inform the wider audience about the involvement and commitment that Australian female doctors played in the First World War. The speaker for the evening was Dr Heather Sheard, who has undertaken a PhD at The University of Melbourne focusing on the development of a state-wide Victorian system for maternal and child health care centres by a group of women in the early to mid 1900's. It was during her thesis research that she uncovered the history and many untold stories of women doctors in the First World War. From her research, Dr Sheard believes that at least twenty Australian women doctors served during the war, including in England and the Eastern and Western fronts. Throughout the talk, Dr Sheard recounted the stories of a number of these women doctors, including Dr Laura Fowler, Dr Clara Stone, Dr Margaret White, Dr Agnes Bennett and Dr Vera Scantlebury.

Dr Sheard began by highlighting the enthusiasm that doctors in general had for contributing their services to the war; evidenced by the greater than 33% enlistment rate of doctors compared to a general enlistment rate of 13%. Many of these enthusiastic doctors were women, who had been graduating from The University of Melbourne, The University of Sydney and The University of Adelaide for the past 23 years.

At the time, these women were facing battles in attempting to develop their careers. It was difficult for them to gain positions at many of the Australian hospitals; at the time the Alfred Hospital did not have a single female RMO. In particular, women were

particularly discouraged from pursuing the areas of emergency medicine and surgery. Female doctors therefore saw the war as an opportunity to gain invaluable experience to practise medicine and surgery in a way that they were currently clearly being restricted from doing in Australia. They could see the value that their particular skills in medicine, surgery, and management and organisation, could contribute to the war effort. However, women's services in the war were generally not welcomed.

Nonetheless, it soon became apparent that the need for medical practitioners was immense and had been greatly underestimated. It was recognised that the urgent demand for medical skills was unrelenting, due to the scale of the battles taking place, and in particular due to the advancement in weaponry that was leading to more complex and serious injuries. Seizing these opportunities, a group of women doctors organized their own medical units and transported them over to the battle fields and began to serve. The service that these women subsequently provided in many parts of the world was outstanding and lasted the duration of the war. The stories and photos that Dr Sheard shared about the efforts of these individual female doctors throughout the presentation were inspiring.



Dr Heather Sheard and her husband Rod, Elysia Robb - Student Representative and her 8-week-old baby, Golden Jubille awarded-VMWS member Dr Heather Peden, Golden Jubille awarded-VMWS member Dr Rosalie Cooper and her husband John and VMWS President A/Prof Deb Colville.

To this point, the contribution that these women doctors made to the war effort has not been given its deserved recognition. As Dr Sheard highlighted, we will probably never know the full extent of their contribution or the exact number of female doctors who served. The actions of these women remains inspiring today. Dr Sheard is aiming to publish a book of these unique stories, which will hopefully aid in securing appropriate recognition for the commitment of these women not only to their country in time of war but to their contribution as women in the field of medicine.



Anna Krelle and Elysia Robb- Student Representative Notre Dame and University of Melbourne respectively

Historian Dr Heather Sheard addressing the audience at the Shrine of Remembrance. Dr Sheard's talk is currently available for download on the Shrine of Remembrance website.

For the diary.....

Women in General Practice Committee Conference 2014

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 August 2014

The Como Hotel, South Yarra, Melbourne.

The 2014 conference will cover women's health topics including genital dermatology, libido, issues for men and women, young Australians and chlamydia infection, risk taking behaviour, abuse and adolescent dating and conflict resolution. There will also be practical skills stations that have a women's health focus.

This conference will be accredited for 40 category 1 points for the 2014-16 triennium along with meeting the requirement for Women's Health points.

To register your interest for this conference, please email Victoria Faculty Events at vic.events@racgp.org.au or call [03 8699 0488](tel:0386990488).

For more information please visit <http://www.racgp.org.au/education/courses/racgpevents/vic/>

Medical Women's International Association

Upcoming meetings

April 24-25, 2015, Taipei, Taiwan

Western Pacific Regional Meeting Evergreen International Convention Centre

July 28-31, 2016, Vienna, Austria

International Congress of MWIA



Women's Reproductive Rights

Women's reproductive rights are once again topical – in the past three months, “Zoe’s Law (NSW) (foetal personhood from 20 weeks), Doctor’s Conscience (VIC) and the legalization of abortion (TAS) have been hotly debated across Australia.

The AFMW Council debated in 2013 and put forward the following statements for discussion:

1. AFMW upholds that every woman in every country should have the right to decide if she wishes or not to become pregnant.
2. Reliable information and safe means to prevent pregnancy should be available to all women.
3. AFMW recognizes that termination of pregnancy is requested by some women.
4. AFMW believes that safe and legal abortion services should be available, affordable and accessible. In worldwide promotion of women's health, access to safe abortions is seen as an important issue.
5. AFMW recognizes the autonomy of women and upholds their right to choose to undergo lawful medical and surgical treatments, including abortion.
6. AFMW upholds women and girls' right to seek and obtain unbiased information about healthcare, including abortion.

We are now inviting your comments and feedback on these six items.

Reminder
VMWS Newsletter is going GREEN and moving towards an electronic newsletter platform. If you opt to still receive your VMWS newsletter via post please contact us at vic@afmw.org.au

In the news.....

The Victorian Government is revisiting Abortion Law Reform. The VMWS is concerned that this will significantly change the status quo which is as follows. The Act:

1. Removes abortion from the Crimes Act 1958;
2. Outlines the grounds on which abortion may take place; and
3. States the obligations of registered health practitioners with a conscientious objection to abortion.

There have been several adjustments to this act suggested in Parliament including removing the obligation of doctors to refer patients for termination of pregnancy even when they have an objection. We ask you to read and support a letter (page 9) that was sent by and on behalf of VMWS supporting Section 8 of Abortion Law reform.



*Victorian Medical
Women's Society*

25 November 2013

Dr Stephen Parnis
President
AMA Victoria
293 Royal Parade
PARKVILLE VIC 3052

(By Email: judithc@amavic.com.au)

Dear AMA Chair (Vic)

RE: Abortion Law Reform Act 2008 – Section 8

The VMWS is writing to ask the AMA to publicly support Section 8 of the Abortion Law Reform Act 2008.

We understand the AMA is once again looking at Section 8 of the Abortion Law Reform Act 2008. You will notice that the VMWS is a signatory to the Women's Health Victoria (WHV) Media Release attached and the VMWS agrees with its contents.

The VMWS is in favour of Section 8 as it stands, as we think this best allows for consideration of both the Doctor's Rights and Responsibilities and the Patient's rights to receive balanced medical information.

We would ask that the AMA supports Section 8 as it stands and existing AMA policy regarding signage in the waiting room for Doctors who conscientiously object.

Your Sincerely

(By email)

Dr Rosalind Terry
MBBS BSc (Hons)
Vice-President, VMWS

CC Dr Lorraine Baker, AMA Board Member (by email: lorretb56@gmail.com)

ATTACHMENT: Women's Health Victoria (WHV) Media Release, 28 October 2013

VIC@AFMW.ORG.AU WWW.AFMW.ORG.AU

VMWS Secretariat, 201 Bury St, EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002 +61 3 9421 1875

Student Elective Experience

Every newsletter we invite you to join our student members as they recount varied, fascinating and often confronting medical electives.

A tough road: the life of a medical student in Fiji

In 2013, I joined the medical students of the Umanad Prasad School of Medicine (UPSM) in a medical camp visiting the rural villages of mainland Fiji. My colleagues are compassionate, intelligent individuals, who will soon become excellent clinicians dedicated to improving health in Fiji. Their skills are hard won from their tough journeys as medical students. Whereas I have had well-resourced anatomy labs and endless online textbooks, they struggle to source basic equipment such as tourniquets and penlights. As doctors in a country with limited health resources, they will meet future challenges. They will have little access to specialists and specialist training; in a country where diabetes is so prevalent that a below-knee amputation is referred to as a 'minor operation', there is one endocrinologist. High numbers of their colleagues will leave for Australia and New Zealand in a massive healthcare 'brain drain'. For many of their patients, simple health education and basic medications will be out of reach.

Female doctors and nurses play a central role in Fiji's health system. However, reproductive, gynaecological and domestic violence issues continue to result in poor health outcomes for women across the South Pacific. Every day in the small nation of Fiji, domestic violence leaves 43 women injured, one woman permanently disabled, and causes 71 women to lose consciousness. Only about 1 in 10 Fijian women seeking

medical attention for their injuries will report the true cause of their injury to a clinician.

As a medical student and a woman living less than 4000km from the students of UPSM, I am astounded by the challenges faced by my counterparts in Fiji. This is why I am a member of the Friends4Fiji Initiative, a grassroots partnership between Monash medical students and the students of the Umanad Prasad School of Medicine. Founded in 2009, we aim to enhance medical education and health outcomes in Fiji and Australia, by organising shared learning opportunities, and facilitating the donation of textbooks and basic medical equipment such as tourniquets and penlights.

Last year, we sponsored two students on a study tour to Monash University and Monash Medical Centre. One of the students, Sudisksha, attended the VMWS Lyceum Luncheon. Afterwards, I was struck by her serious tone when she remarked that the members of VMWS are so lucky to have an interest group that celebrates and supports women in medicine. She is right. For me, the experiences of my colleagues in Fiji have highlighted the importance of supporting our fellow female medical students and doctors.

Hayley Roberts - Monash University Student Representative



Field of Women 2014

Breast Cancer Network Australia



JOIN US!

Saturday 10 May 2014
MCG, Melbourne

Before the Melbourne vs Western Bulldogs evening game

Stand together with 15,000 people to represent the number of Australians who will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.

Everyone is welcome to participate – you don't have to have had breast cancer to take part.

It was the perfect celebration for me at the end of my cancer journey – it is a night I will always remember and treasure. - Isabelle, 2010 participant

Buy Tickets Now

Tickets: \$55/person

Major Event Sponsor



BCNA Partners



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Event Supporters



We would love to organise a group of VMWS members to participate and show our support. If you are interested in attending this event with other members, please contact Madga Simonis (magdalena.simonis@mac.com) for details. She will be attending as an “event champion” and would like to encourage as many members, partners and friends to participate. For \$55 you get a pink poncho, badge and entrance to the MCG for the football match.

Taking newsletter submissions now.....

VMWS is keen to promote opportunities for members to contribute within our community. Volunteering helps you engage with other members, share stories, discover mentors, create collaborations and develop friendships. Learn a new skill, share your skills with a colleague, or just enjoy the company of other medical women. We invite volunteers with an interest in any of the following to submit a short paragraph to vic@afmw.org.au outlining how you would like to contribute:

- Writing: submit a short story, essay, blog article
- Advertising: assist with marketing, design and implement a campaign through digital media
- Event management: entertainers, caterers, ushers, musicians
- Other: be creative!

The Victorian Medical Women's Society

Celebrating our history, advancing our future



Membership Invoice 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014

ABN 67 120 250 797

(MEMBERSHIP PERIOD IS FROM 1 JULY TO 30TH JUNE)

Membership Eligibility: Full membership is open to registered female medical practitioners (FMP); non-registered FMPs can join as an associate member, and Student membership is open to female medical students.

(NOTE: this invoice becomes a tax receipt upon payment, please retain the top section for your records)

Full Membership

1 year \$160

3 years \$432

5 years \$680

Rural Members (>100km from GPO)

1 year \$70

3 years \$189

5 years \$297.50

Life member

Senior Members (>65 years old)

1 year \$120

3 years \$324

5 years \$510

Student Members

1 year \$35 (* only receive electronic corresp)

Retired Members

1 year \$120

Donation

Please complete and send the bottom section of this form to the VMWS via email or mail so we can ensure your membership details and preferences are kept up to date

Payment Method:

CHQ/money order to Victorian Medical Women's Society. Post: VMWS Secretariat, PO Box 202, East Melb VIC 8002

Electronic Transfer to Victorian Medical Women's Society;

BSB: 033 089; Act No: 297664. Please **include your name** in the **transfer info** enter the transfer date here: _____

Membership Details:

Membership type:	Duration:	Amount: \$
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Personal Details:

First Name & Surname:	Date:
Date of Birth:	
Mailing Address:	
Phone:	Fax:
Email:	
Specialty/ Area of practice:	
Year of Graduation:	

- Tick here if you wish to continue receiving newsletters via mail
- Tick here if you do not wish to receive VMWS email correspondence
- Tick here if you do not wish other VMWS members to have access to your e-mail address
- Tick if you do not wish to receive email correspondence from the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW)
- Tick here if you do not wish other AFMW members to have access to your e-mail address

Car-pooling: Potential driver: Potential passenger:

Donations are gratefully received. Please advise if you wish for your donation to be used for a specific purpose.

<http://www.afmw.org.au/vic> PO Box 202, East Melbourne 8002 vic@afmw.org.au