

The Victorian Medical Women's Society

Founded 1896

Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 4b

February 2004

President's Report



**Dr Desiree Yap
President, VMWS 2004**

Herewith our first newsletter for 2004! I hope everyone has survived Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year.

Firstly, congratulations to Dr. Jan Coles for her great work as President. She has worked

very hard for VMWS and focused very successfully on student and early career members and been most concerned about the down-grading of many community supports for women and children's health. As she is staying on the committee as Secretary, these issues will continue to be pursued. Thanks also to the out-going committee members – Merrilyn Murnane, Nancy Nichols, Pat Scrivenor and Dwina Dobriansky for all their hard work.

We are hoping that this year will again be a busy year for VMWS. Last year we managed to get our web-site up – I hope lots of people have had a look and provided feedback. There was also the issue of National Registration that was summarized at the AGM by Dr. Deb Colville and that we all need to be keeping our eye on, due to its potential for differential impacts on female doctors compared to their male counterparts due to differences in work practices. We also had four successful meetings: Mothering and Medicine, Medical Indemnity, the traditional Lyceum mid-winter lunch and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

(Cont. pg 2)

The Victorian Medical Women's Society

warmly invites Victoria's medical women to a

Networking Cocktail Party

8-10 pm, March 18 2004

Australian Medical Association

293 Royal Pde, Parkville

Door prizes for current and new members

RSVP by 5pm Monday, 15 March 2004 to
vmws2002@yahoo.com.au or 9419 4644

VMWS Medical Student Essay Competition

'The Role Model and Mentor in Medicine'



An essay or research project focusing on this theme.

Prize: \$500

Further details in attached flyer.



A good turnout heralded the AGM last November, with many old members mingling with some new faces.

The evening had a formal aspect, with reports from our outgoing president, **Dr Jan Coles**. She highlighted some important developments (such as a strengthening mentor program, a stable membership, a summary of the activities for the year), and some new battles. Amongst these was the looming issue of National Registration – although it may seem logical, there are several aspects of the proposed structures that could affect female doctors to a much greater degree than men. Also, she drew attention to the losses occurring for women in our community, including a widening income gap, punitive developments with the Equal Opportunity Commission (a filing fee of \$1000 for sexual discrimination allegations!). She then welcomed our new president, **Dr Desiree Yap**.

Dr Yap briefly responded, thanking Jan for her work over the last years as president, and acknowledging her achievements on behalf of all present.

Dr Deb Colville provided information of the development of our website. It is now running well, but there are many areas where content need to be developed, and then placed on the site in a timely manner. All members are encouraged to register on the site, with many more resources becoming available to registrants. She has been involved with negotiations about National Registration, and enlarged upon current concerns held by the VMWS about this.

Dr Sue Piper (Treasurer) presented a healthy balance sheet for the year's activities, with all activities making a profit or covering costs. Of note, we now have the money to finance a medical student's prize and look at donating funds towards

the coming year.

Dr Deborah Amott, the new newsletter editor, gave a brief presentation on developments on that front. Of note, the newsletter will have several new columns, and we are looking at interdigitating with the website to provide more detail on issues in electronic form. She also announced the new recruitment drive scheduled for the coming year.

Acknowledgement of the generous gift by **Dr Merrilyn Murnane** to establish the Constance Stone award for the speaker at each AGM was made. We also acknowledged her contribution to the VMWS on her retirement from the committee.

(cont. p5)

(Cont from P1) President's Report

This year, our major goal is RECRUITMENT. Did you realize there are now nearly 4000 registered medical women in Victoria – and those who are VMWS members make up only a fraction? Increasing our membership keeps us representative as well as viable, and you as members can play a key role in highlighting this organization to your peers. Comments as to how we, the committee, can better serve your needs, would also be appreciated.

Meetings for this year include our "Networking Cocktail Party" in March where we hope members can get to know one another, exchange advice and mentor their younger colleagues. In June, we are excited to have Ms. Caroline Rickards, a "Space Physiologist" talk to us about human adaptation to space and flying. This will be a member's only function, and we hope to obtain sponsorship. In July will be the traditional Lyceum Lunch and in September, a Medical Update evening and in November, the AGM.

Lastly, we were sad to hear of the loss last year of Noreen Nicholson. She has done great work for the women of Victoria, and we extend our condolences to her family. We would be very grateful if you, our members could let us know of events in our colleagues' lives – both sad and those worth celebrating. Until the next newsletter then...enjoy!

Wonderful Medical Women



Dr Cherrell Hirst OA

Dr Cherrell Hirst began her career in Medicine but now contributes impressively to numerous organizations. She has MBBS and B.Ed. degrees (UQ) and a D.Univ.(Hon.) from the Southern Cross University. Dr Hirst directed the Wesley Hospital Breast Cancer Clinic between 1984 and 2001, becoming a leader in breast cancer screening. In 1995 she was awarded Queenslander of the Year for her services to breast cancer and education, and in 1998 was made an Officer of the General Division of the Order of Australia. Currently, she is Chancellor of the University of Technology, a Director of Suncorp Metway Bank, Opera Queensland and the Breast Cancer Network of Australia, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Brisbane Girls' Grammar School and Peplin Biotech Limited, and on advisory committees for the UMP and the Salvation Army.

Dr Hirst's generative roles stem from an "all-encompassing belief that making a contribution to any organization ... is achieved only through commitment and involvement ... not involvement by intervention, but rather an in-depth understanding of the people, the business, the wider context and the internal dynamics. I am a great believer in life-long learning and flexibility of skills and knowledge acquisition over time."

On the status of women, Dr Hirst comments, "...progress is being made by virtue of an enormous amount of concerted continuing effort across many thousands of different situations. We are creating ... a critical mass of successful women across many disciplines and that will make a vast difference. Women are being appreciated for the different values they bring and their different ways of doing, but it is critical that women perform extremely well in all situations. Confidence in women's ability will then increase and women will be chosen - even sought - more often."

Dr Lexia Bryant

Awarded the Vida Goldstein Award for Women in the Professions (2003)

www.wel.org.au/announce/viaward.htm#2003



Lexia Bryant is a medical educator and former rural general practitioner. She is a past President of Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACCRM) and a world expert on gender and curriculum. She is a senior lecturer in the Medical Faculty at Monash University and continued her dedication to the health of rural Australians by teaching medical students and young doctors to be safe and competent to work in rural and remote Australia.

And representing the VMWS internationally...



Dr Deborah Colville

In a recent article in BMJ Online

(bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/327/7418/s110), Deb outlined to the international medical community issues facing women in the surgical workforce, and more generally. Besides highlighting Deb's impressive past career in both clinical and representative roles, it was a chance for her to outline her philosophy on a future for Medicine where women are welcome and valued.

An accompanying letter co-signed by many leading women clinicians is also in this issue (bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/327/7418/s110/DC1)

"Medicine needs women—we must change the structure of a doctor's life course to include a woman's life course" (D. Colville)

Teaching a Gender Perspective in our Medical Curricula

Did you know that women are two-thirds of the population seen by medical professionals? Did you know that women and men respond to external stressors in different manners, leading to different health outcomes? Did you know that men and women present with different symptoms of ischaemic heart disease?



These are a few of the differences in the way that gender (a culturally generated stereotype of 'typical' male and female behaviors) interacts with our attitudes and health both as patients and doctors. Introducing recognition of this into medical curricula has been a long term goal of staff at the Monash Medical Faculty, spearheaded by Jo Wainer (Senior Lecturer) and Ann Marie Nobelius (Project Manager).

A two day seminar was held recently at Clayton, with medical educators and students from every medical school in Australia present. Many medical students from Perth, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne also presented their opinions.

Facilitated by Jo Wainer, the day's programs explored the approach that each school was taking to integrating a 'gender lens' to their core curriculum. Ann Marie explored the specific barriers that they had encountered at Monash, and successful strategies for overcoming these. Suggested tactics included: recognizing exactly what was going on, changing your language to that of your opponent, picking the right fight at the right time, and recruiting key people to advocate on your behalf.

We all had plenty of opportunities to put the theory espoused into practice. Many of the sessions were in small groups essentially directed by their members. The interactions of our 'patients' and their gender became increasingly apparent as the exercises evolved.

We were honoured to have Dr Sue Phillips, a recognized world expert in gender and curriculum from Canada attend the seminar. She presented her own findings from previous research, and provided an excellent sounding board for opinions expressed throughout the two days.

Thank you to Jo Wainer, Ann Marie Nobelius, Sue Phillips, and all attendees for the work they have done in bringing this vital area closer to the main stream of our profession. For further information: contact Jo at jo.wainer@med.monash.edu.au or phone (03) 9905 1327

Looking to
buy a New Car but don't have the time or the desire
to talk to car dealers?

Australasian Vehicle Buying Services Pty Ltd
can source your next car for you and save you time and money in the process.



Australasian Vehicle Buying Services 30 Well Street, Brighton, Vic 3186
Telephone: (03) 9592 4949
Facsimile: (03) 9592 4947

Australian Federation of Medical Women

www.afmw.org.au

The website is running well, with new content added frequently. The VMWS have several projects that we plan to launch via the web in the coming twelve months: help with content always welcome! Current campaigns include:

National Registration

Current moves to establish National Registration, linked to continuing professional development (CPD) requirements, are likely to **disproportionately disadvantage female doctors**. Our many concerns include: lack of evidence that many of the proposals contained would improve patient care; difference in gender roles affecting women's ability to meet requirements; potential difficulties for rural and remote practitioners; CPD outside traditional medical areas is not recognized; and that the model does not adequately address the potential for change and development within the medical profession.

Leadership For Medical

Women: a two day program run in 2003 and planned to be repeated in late 2004 providing resources for women wishing to take up positions of power within the profession.



Australian Medical Association's 2003 Women's Health Award:

At the annual conference of the Australian Federation of Medical Women, **Dr. Marilyn McMurchie** was honoured with the Australian Medical Association's 2003



Women's Health Award (see www.ama.com.au for details)

...(Cont from p2) AGM Reports

Dr Murnane has been made a life member in light of these.

The formalities over, we enjoyed the wonderful food prepared by University House, and then turned our attention to our guest speaker, Ms Susan Jennison.

Ms Jennison has just finished writing a book focusing on the life journey of four remarkable women, all from different cultural backgrounds and all of whom experienced some significant challenge to their expected societal roles. One of the women, an Indian raised to be a 'good wife', found herself transported to America and left to fulfill this role with no cooking skills, no understanding of English and no-one that she knew beside her husband. Another, again groomed to be a quiet, good girl, found herself caught up in World War One, playing an active role at the front and then rebelling against her former 'passive' role once returning home.

The common theme running through these women's stories was that they had all not been prepared for the life they eventually led, but that all had the internal resources to cope and cope well. None saw themselves as particularly special, but all had somehow challenged assumptions they had had about their place in the world.

For the part of the people at the AGM, we found their stories (and the story of the woman who had written about them) fascinating, and inspirational. The evening finished with elections of the office bearers for the coming year. These have been outlined on the last page of this newsletter. We welcome Dr Ranjani Ratnam in particular as a new member of the committee.

Thank you to Ms Jennison, the outgoing committee for their work throughout 2003, and good luck to the new team for 2004.

* * * * *

MWIA

www.mwia.org.au



The workshops for Gender Mainstreaming in Health continue (*see report above*).

The Training Manual "Gender Mainstreaming in Health" can be found on the MWIA website. One of the topics for the 2004 Commission on the Status of Women to be held in New York in March is the role of men and boys in gender equality.

The project for the Prevention of Maternal to Child Transmission in HIV/AIDS is continuing at different stages in African member countries, as well as in Georgia of the former USSR.



For the last year of the triennium, MWIA is going to produce a Training Manual to better prepare physicians to deal with matters of adolescent sexuality. We would be particularly interested in hearing myths about sexuality from each region, from which educational material could be developed.

The Triennial Congress of the MWIA: 'Medicine in a New Life Style - Education, Research and Practice' is now approaching rapidly. VMWS will be represented by several members, and we hope many more of our members will be joining us. Contact details to register for the congress are:

C/o: Atsuko Helsinki
Saitama Med. School, Dept. of Radiology
38 Morohongo, Moroyamacho
Irumagun, Saitama 350-0495
Tel. work: (81)- 492-761265
Fax work: (81)- 492-958003
E-mail: heshiki@saitama-med.ac.jp
Website: <http://www.ics-inc.co.jp/mwia2004/>

The last congress was held in Australia, with many doctors attending pointing to it as a life changing event. The program in Tokyo is shaping up as a wonderful combination of scientific rigour, political advocacy and networking opportunities for registrants.

26th International Congress of the Medical Women's International Association



Keio Plaza Hotel
Shinjuku Tokyo

28 July - 1 August, 2004

*Medicine in a New Life Style
- Education, Research and Practice -*

World Health Assembly Adopts Historic Tobacco Control Pact



**Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
now ready for signature**

The 192 members of the World Health Organization have unanimously adopted the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) aimed at curbing tobacco-related deaths and disease. This is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO).

(cont p.7)

... (cont from p.6) World Health...

The Convention requires countries to impose restrictions on tobacco advertising, sponsorship and promotion, establish new labeling and clean indoor air controls and strengthen legislation to clamp down on tobacco smuggling.

Tobacco now kills some five million people each year. While smoking rates are declining in some industrialized countries, they are increasing in many developing countries. These will account for over seventy percent of that projected death toll.

To bring the FCTC into force, forty countries are needed to ratify or otherwise accept it.

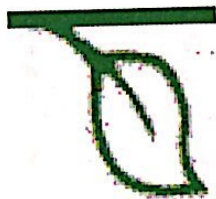
More News from the United Nations...



www.un.org/womenwatch

International Women's Day: 8th March

Why dedicate a day exclusively to the celebration of the world's women? In adopting its resolution on the observance of Women's Day, the United Nations' General Assembly cited two reasons: to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security. For the women of the world, the Day's symbolism has a wider meaning: It is an occasion to review how far they have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development. It is also an opportunity to unite, network and mobilize for meaningful change.



What are you planning?

Nobel Peace Prize winner

Honoured for her 'efforts for democracy and human rights', Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer and activist, is only the 11th woman to receive the award. One of the first female judges of her country, she was



forced to resign after the Iranian revolution, and has since taught at the University of Tehran and published extensively in the field of human rights. She has focused especially on the struggle for the rights of women and children, has advocated on behalf of refugees, and defended individuals and groups in Iranian courts. Recently, Shirin Ebadi was among the founders of the Center for the Defense of Human Rights, which provides legal aid to the families of imprisoned journalists and student activists.

Female genital mutilation

The International Parliamentary Union (IPU – Australia is a member), has established an international campaign against female genital mutilation. Initiated after a conference in Burkino Faso in 2001, there are many obstacles to overcome. Many women emigrating to Australia from Africa have undergone FGM themselves, and still face considerable pressure to have their daughters undergo the same to maintain social standing. Recent legislation has been presented to the Australian Federal Parliament to make transporting girls to another country to undergo the procedure (illegal in Australia) a crime.



Women and Intellectual Property

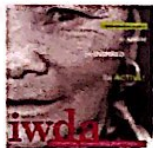
Women have long been known to have made important contributions in the visual and performing arts, in music and in literature, even if they may not have always received the recognition they deserved. It is frequently women who are entrusted with safeguarding and



transmitting traditional knowledge and folklore. It is important that these contributions be recognized and protected where appropriate.

Although women inventors overall still constitute a minority, this minority is slowly growing into a "critical" mass and expanding into all fields of science and technology. This is reflected not only in the growing number of women whose inventions are being patented but also in the scope of their scientific and technological activities. It is important that these contributions be acknowledged and that the prototype of an inventor as a "man" be discarded, so that girls and young women can look into the future with confidence that all fields of science and technology are open to them with equal opportunities. One of the major challenges of the 21st century is to ensure that women gain equal opportunities of access, advancement and recognition

International Women's Development Agency



www.iwda.org.au

Iraqi Women in Post-War Rebuilding

An active campaign to advocate for Iraqi women having a role in the rebuilding of their country is underway. Just as women have been given a seat at the table in the rebuilding of Afghanistan, so must Iraqi women be involved in establishing social order in post-Saddam Iraq. There is no formal structure for this to happen currently. Visit to IWDA website to get more information on the campaign and ways' to help.

Contact Us!

VMWS Secretariat
PO Box 202
East Melbourne 3002
Phone: 9419 4644
Web: www.afmw.org.au
Email: vmws2002@yahoo.com.au

COMMITTEE 2004

President:

Dr. Desiree Yap

E-mail: desireeyap@ozemail.com.au

Committee members:

Dr. Deb Colville (Vice President)

E-mail: colville@unimelb.edu.au

Dr Jan Coles (Secretary and Past President)

Email: jan.coles@med.monash.edu.au

Dr. Sue Piper (Treasurer)

E-mail: sue.piper@med.monash.edu.au

Dr Merrilyn Murnane (Past President)

Email: merrilynm@ozemail.com.au

Dr. Kate Duncan (AMA Representative)

E-mail: kateduncan@optushome.com.au

Dr Margaret Jenson (NCVW Delegate)

Email: vmws2002@yahoo.com.au

Dr Debbie Amott (Newsletter Editor/Trainee Rep)

E-mail: debbie@amott.com

Ms. Katie Mendra (Medical Student Representative)

E-mail: kmendra@hotmail.com

Dr Rajani Ratnam (General Member)

Email: rratnam@bigpond.com