

# St Vincent's Voice

*The latest staff and  
community news from*  
**ST VINCENT'S HEALTH  
NETWORK SYDNEY**

APRIL 2016 — ISSUE 08

## **St Vincent's embarks upon groundbreaking chronic homelessness initiative**

Inside this edition:

Governor of NSW visits  
St Vincent's

Professor Gordian Fulde  
named Senior  
Australian of the Year

Medical Imaging  
Department's  
gift of a lifetime



## A message from Anthony Schembri



**CEO, ST VINCENT'S HEALTH NETWORK SYDNEY**

Reading through this, our first edition of St Vincent's Voice for 2016, it really drives home the point that we've hit the ground running this year.

Across all our departments and throughout our endeavours we have been responding to unprecedented demand for our services. And while this obviously places additional pressure on our staff and our resources, what I find particularly gratifying, is to see that we are adopting some really innovative models of care and novel approaches to dealing with some of our most intractable challenges.

Two important examples captured in this edition are the proposed Managed Alcohol Program that we're hoping to trial to help rough sleepers with heavy alcohol dependency and the St Vincent's Hospital Heart Health portal that is going to break down barriers for our cardiac patients – particularly those in the bush and in our Indigenous communities.

Two very different projects, two diverse clinical specialities, but both projects united in showcasing how effective we can be when we use our mission and values to serve something greater to respond to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

Enjoy,

## Short & Sharp

### Science Academy

Professor Steve Vucic, Co-Director of the Motor Neurone Disease Service at St Joseph's Hospital and Westmead, has been honoured by the Australian Academy of Science with the 2016 Gottschalk Medal for his pioneering research on the pathogenesis, diagnosis and treatment of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. Professor Vucic is one of 17 innovators and leading thinkers recognised in the 2016 Science Academy awards, and one of only four in the field of human health. **Congratulations Prof Vucic!**



### Improving Aboriginal Health

The Sydney Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Health Partnership is an alliance between St Vincent's, Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, Sydney Local Health District, Northern Sydney Local Health District and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, and The Sydney Children's Hospital.

Through collective expertise the group are committed to positively improving health outcomes for Aboriginal

people. Recently the group launched the Aboriginal Health Priorities Action Plan for 2015-2016 which identified six key priorities: the social determinates of health; chronic care; cancer; illicit drugs, alcohol, smoking and gambling; the Aboriginal workforce; and research. The plan details how we will work together to address these issues and ultimately improve Aboriginal health in our community.



### St Vincent's congratulates Prof Gordian Fulde – Senior Australian of the Year 2016

As Director of Emergency at St Vincent's Hospital for more than three decades, Gordian is the longest serving emergency department director in Australia. Throughout this time he has shown generosity and care to the patients he has treated, the students he has mentored and the colleagues he has supported. His passion for public health and safety has led him to become one of the country's leading spokespersons on alcohol and violence and in speaking out, he has become a nationally recognised advocate for the implementation of social harm minimisation strategies for our community. He's had a major impact on the St Vincent's Campus, and we're very proud to congratulate Gordian on this once-in-a-lifetime achievement.

### St Joseph's opens Molly's Place

Molly's Place, the new coffee shop at St Joseph's Hospital was officially opened on 8 February 2016 with a blessing by Reverend Ray Farrell, from the St John of God Parish in Auburn. The new shop, dedicated to longstanding president of the St Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary, Molly Carle, was opened by Ngaire Buchanan, COO, SVHNS and staff from St Vincent's and members of Molly's family.





## SEEING SOMETHING GREATER

# St Vincent's finding solutions for the chronically homeless

Most homeless programs across Australia require alcohol abstinence before long-term support and accommodation are provided. But A/Prof Nadine Ezard, Director of Alcohol and Drug Services and her colleagues here at St Vincent's, believes there is another way to help.



When it comes to solving homelessness, we know what works. More social and affordable housing; greater efforts to support young people and families; employment and training opportunities; and access to a range of services, from health to education, when and where it's needed.

But for a significant minority of homeless people – heavily alcohol-dependent rough sleepers, homeless agencies and health services struggle to offer a way out. Largely because most homeless programs in Sydney and across Australia require abstinence before long-term support and accommodation are provided.

For many severely alcohol-dependent rough sleepers, it's a condition they're not able to meet, and so they go without the help they need.

Overseas – particularly in Canada, the US, and the UK – there is a trend towards supporting this group in a novel

way, and it is proving successful. Known as 'managed alcohol programs', or MAPs, these initiatives provide accommodation without abstinence from alcohol. Rather, alcohol is provided to residents in standardised doses at set intervals – a process that is actively managed and subject to ongoing assessment.

The idea is that by providing a safe space and a controlled drinking environment, participants can more readily access shelter, food, hygiene facilities, health care and other vital supports.

Encouraged by results overseas, Nadine along with a range of partners conducted a feasibility study to consider whether a MAP might work on our shores.

It was found that MAP would deliver far better outcomes for this group of homeless people. What's more, it found that it could provide such outcomes at a fraction of the cost of the community's current and mostly unsuccessful response to this issue.

The study enlisted 51 severely alcohol-dependent, chronically homeless people, 15 of which had presented to St Vincent's Emergency, totalling \$1.3 million in care costs over one year.

It was estimated the reduction in cost to St Vincent's Hospital from supporting just these 15 patients via a MAP was \$718,000, while at the same time offering the chance of far better, consistent care and attention than they're currently able to access. The study made an overwhelming case for trialling a MAP in Sydney's inner city and potentially other parts of Australia.

For St Vincent's – led by the example of our founders, the Sisters of Charity who have always looked for new and different ways to help disadvantaged people – this is a tremendous opportunity. "Establishing a MAP could offer a rare glimpse of hope for some of our most vulnerable citizens", said St Vincent's CEO, A/Prof Anthony Schembri.



## STRIVING FOR SOMETHING GREATER

## Improving services for our diabetes inpatients



IMAGE: JANE LUDINGTON, PHARMACIST; JOANNE TAYLOR, CNC;  
AND A/PROF JERRY GREENFIELD.

**Diabetes is a chronic condition affecting approximately 1 million Australians. However, in hospitals nationally, the prevalence of patients with diabetes is much higher.**

Knowing that people with diabetes are more likely to be hospitalised than those without, the St Vincent's Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes sought to better understand the prevalence of the condition amongst inpatients, in order to tailor and deliver better services to them.

To achieve this, the team conducted a hospital-wide survey of every admitted patient in both St Vincent's Hospital and Sacred Heart, as well as non-admitted patients in the Emergency Department.

Results showed that one in five patients had diabetes, however, an even more startling finding was that the prevalence was much higher (one in three) amongst our cardiac, cardiothoracic and haematology / oncology patients. Armed with this information, the Department were able to provide more services to the specific wards where the rate of diabetes is much higher. It directed the Department to create a new registrar role in the Heart Lung Transplant Unit to specifically manage diabetes in patients before and after lung transplantation.

The survey also looked into diabetes management, mainly insulin use and administration practises within the Hospital, which has since shaped education and training, policy and procedure. Furthermore, the department is launching prescribing guidelines this month to assist doctors in the prescribing insulin to patients in hospital. The new guidelines will help safeguard patients from possible insulin dosage prescription errors throughout their hospital stay.

The survey will be conducted every two years and will continue to inform best practice diabetes support for our patients.

## SERVING FOR SOMETHING GREATER

## St Vincent's Hospital in the Home delivers

**The newly reinvigorated St Vincent's Hospital in the Home (HITH) program, which provides acute clinical care for patients in their own home, has seen rapid occupancy growth from 6% to over 100% over the last two years.**

The program provides acute services such as IV antibiotics, anticoagulation, diuretics and heart failure management as well as wound care for clinically stable patients in their own home. The program has helped prevent hospital acquired complications as well as reducing the need for days spent in hospital.

In a recent analysis of randomised controlled trials comparing HITH and in-hospital care throughout NSW, a report showed that HITH is safer and more efficient for these patients, specifically showing a 19% reduction in mortality; a 23% reduction in readmission to hospital; and high patient and carer satisfaction. While the program continues to grow, planning is under way to expand intake to include greater proportions of Indigenous and homeless patients.



DR NICK MILLS AND REGISTERED NURSE ANUPRIYA MEHTA.

# St Vincent's launches new Heart Health website



IMAGE: DR CAMERON HOLLOWAY AND TAMRA LANGLEY SPEARHEADED THE INITIATIVE.

Always at the forefront of cardiac knowledge and innovation, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney has launched a new website portal for patients, families and carers touched by the single biggest killer of Australian men and women – heart disease.

The new St Vincent's Heart Health website at <https://svhhearthealth.com.au> provides expert comprehensive advice and resources through all stages of heart disease from diagnosis through to treatment, recovery and beyond.

The brainchild of Associate Professor Cameron Holloway, the innovative project came about as a result of the large number of rural patients referred to St Vincent's Hospital Sydney who were unable to attend cardiac rehab after surgery, as well as those who returned to work soon after their treatment. A/Prof Holloway saw a gap between the care and attention patients were able to receive in hospital with a lack of resources and information once they returned to their homes at the beginning of their recovery period.

For those who had just been diagnosed, particularly in rural areas, he recognised that patients were sometimes uncertain and confused about what may lie ahead. In line with St Vincent's mission to help the poor and vulnerable, the website is designed to assist patients in areas where it can be difficult to access support, care and answers.

The portal was conceived as a way of bringing "health education into the modern world, via online education for everyone to access locally, regionally and nationally 24/7", said Cameron.

Patients can view easy-to-understand animated videos on tests, procedures and surgeries they may be scheduled for, as well as delve into written advice from St Vincent's specialists.

"We know from talking to hundreds of patients and their support networks that learning about heart disease as well as understanding the many tests, treatments and follow-up care options can be very confusing. You could be about to have your first MRI, be preparing for bypass surgery, or wanting to learn how to recover well from a pacemaker. Regardless of the stage, the St Vincent's Heart Health website enables the patient to create a journey that's specifically designed for them". Cameron said. The journey includes simple animations that demonstrate tests and procedures as well as video messages from St Vincent's cardiac specialists including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, dieticians, social workers, psychologists, pharmacists and more. A glossary of common cardiac-related words also helps patients who may find it difficult to understand medical terms. The science explained on each page and in each video was verified by an expert medical team, and will be updated as evidence evolves and new technology comes to light. Cameron explained, "We've found that the portal has empowered patients

through their cardiac journey before procedures, during their in-patient stay, and throughout the recovery period, as they've been able to take ownership of their condition from the point of diagnosis".

"The website has also been incredibly useful to our new graduates, medical teams and GPs in rural areas, as it helps update their knowledge on procedures and surgeries", he added. After receiving initial funding for scoping from the St Vincent's Clinic Foundation, A/Prof Cameron Holloway and Clinical Nurse Consultant Tamra Langley worked with fundraising group SIRENS who raised approximately \$1 million for a three year operational period.

"We're incredibly grateful to SIRENS and Sister Jacinta for their vision, and tireless fundraising efforts", said Cameron.

In the coming weeks, the Heart Health program will reach thousands of patients, as they explore the website portal in hospital before they're discharged. Approximately 100 iPads will be loaned to patients during their stay as part of their education program. "To reach this number of patients and start their cardiac rehabilitation education before they've left is incredible. The explanation of procedures would normally take hours face-to-face", said Cameron.

## STRIVING FOR SOMETHING GREATER

## Mental health innovation at St Vincent's

St Vincent's Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression (CRUfAD) has developed online courses to treat the most common causes of disability in Australia – anxiety and depression, unlike any other worldwide.

In an international first, the Unit has this month commenced the trial of a cancer specific mental health program. St Vincent's Psychiatric Registrar, Dr Michael Murphy and Clinical Psychologist, Dr Jill Newby, in collaboration with University of Sydney researchers and with funding from the NSW Cancer Institute, will study whether patients with early stage cancer and co-existing depression and anxiety can benefit from an internet delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy program.

It is expected that this will be an effective program that teaches patients skills to self-manage their anxiety and depression and how to incorporate these new skills in their daily life. Furthermore a new pain management program, called Reboot Online has also been developed in collaboration with



St Vincent's Pain Medicine team to provide sufferers of chronic pain a number of strategies to better 'self-manage' their condition using a variety of techniques. The comprehensive program consists of eight online lessons accessed over 16 weeks and incorporates a combination of psychological therapy with imperative physiotherapy. One of the leading investigators on this trial, researcher Jessica Smith says that the pilot trial preliminary results indicate that this program significantly reduced pain interference and severity for patients while increasing their confidence and ability to perform personal tasks.

IMAGE: COLLABORATORS ON THE CANCER SPECIFIC MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST, DR JILL NEWBY AND DR MICHAEL MURPHY, AND CO-INVESTIGATOR ON THE PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, RESEARCHER JESSICA SMITH.

## SERVING SOMETHING GREATER

## St Vincent's rolls out their **smarts** in pain management for older people



IMAGE: CNC JULIE GAWTHORNE, DR LIZ HARPER & DR JENNY STEVENS.

A St Vincent's pilot program to assess and manage pain in elderly patients has won two major awards and has been rolled out state-wide to other hospitals as a case of best-practice pain management.

Spearheaded by Dr Jenny Stevens, the program involved training Clinical Nurse Consultants in the Emergency Department to perform a regional anaesthetic bloc for elderly patients who presented with fractured neck of femur (NOF). In the wards, nurses were given training on assessing pain, particularly with non-verbal patients. Results from the program have seen reduced length of stays for elderly patients as well as reduction of delirium. The program has had great success and even helped change ambulance service protocols. Congratulations Dr Stevens and team.



SEEING SOMETHING GREATER

SERVING SOMETHING GREATER

## Medical Imaging Department's gift of a lifetime

Taking our commitment of caring for the marginalised to the next level, St Vincent's Medical Imaging Department have put their money where their mouth is.

The team have committed to sponsoring an Indigenous student from North Arnhem Land, through a scholarship for the duration of his secondary education at Scots College, here in Sydney. The scholarship covers tuition and boarding for his high school years 7 – 12.

The Scots College offers an education to Indigenous boys who demonstrate leadership and/or academic potential and are committed, with the support of their families, to achieving excellence in their lives. This scholarship will see this young student's opportunities expand to a future of his own design. With the support of the school, his family, a dedicated mentor family and the foresight and generosity of the Medical Imaging team, this young man's future is looking bright. Dr Lisa Tarlinton, is quick to point out that this scholarship is a very much a departmental initiative. "This sponsorship is a result of all our staff at every level in the department".

Service Manager, Diagnostics Pat Buick concurs, "What we do isn't just about revenue. Social responsibility is part of our operational plan, everyone is excited."

To eliminate obligatory pressure, the sponsors remain anonymous to the student, but the Medical Imaging team will receive ongoing updates on his progress throughout his high school years, which started in 2016.

The team may have just kicked off the future of the first Indigenous Prime Minister...

CEO A/PROF ANTHONY SCHEMBRI; DIRECTOR OF ABORIGINAL HEALTH PAULINE DEWEERD; GOVERNOR OF NSW, THE HONOURABLE DAVID HURLEY.



## Governor Hurley visits St Vincent's

St Vincent's was proud to host the Governor of NSW, The Honourable David Hurley and his wife, Mrs Hurley on a private tour to showcase our Aboriginal health initiatives.

Led by Pauline Deweerdt, Director of Aboriginal Health and A/Prof Anthony Schembri, CEO, the couple spoke with many of our Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff and met one of our young Aboriginal patients, who is currently recovering from a heart transplant.

The visit came at the request of the Governor and provided an important

opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to Closing the Gap in health care and employment, and share our ideas for continual improvement.

Following the tour, the Governor and Mrs Hurley joined St Vincent's staff, representatives from St Vincent's Health Australia as well as the St Vincent's Board members for an informal social event.



## FEATURE INTERVIEW

## KNOW YOUR PRODUCT

## Interview with Professor Jock Harkness



Jock is the Director of Microbiology & Infectious Diseases at St Vincent's, A/Prof of Medicine at University of NSW and Adjunct Professor at University of Notre Dame as well as University of Technology Sydney. Jock has made an outstanding contribution to St Vincent's, recently celebrating 40 years of service.



### *What major breakthroughs in your field do you hope we will see in the future?*

I expect there will be continuing development of molecular methods in microbiology capable of providing rapid and precise diagnoses. Whole genome sequencing will become a standard method for identification, antibiotic resistance detection and epidemiology of infectious diseases. We need new antibiotics and vaccines against common diseases such as HIV, malaria and dengue. I also expect laboratory microbiology to become much more automated.

### *What are the challenges you see now and in the coming years (in your area of expertise)?*

Practicing doctors need a better knowledge of all aspects of microbiology and infection

prevention. Rational use of antibiotics is of paramount importance to prevent further resistance developing in common pathogens. Untreatable infections are already occurring and without new antibiotics will become more frequent in the future.

### *What motivates you on a daily basis?*

Working and interacting with the St Vincent's Hospital staff – doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers. I have a very talented and enthusiastic team of scientists working in the Microbiology laboratory and I enjoy the team work. Working with the Sisters of Charity whose values and presence distinguish St Vincent's from all other hospitals is definitely a highlight.

### *What is your proudest moment, professionally speaking?*

Professionally speaking – seeing registrars who have trained in the Microbiology Department at St Vincent's Hospital advancing in their own careers and becoming leaders in our field of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases.

### *What do you love most about what you do?*

If treated early enough the majority of infectious diseases are curable which is always good news for the patient. I am fascinated by the constant evolution of medical practice – new diseases, new bugs, new diagnostic techniques and new ideas.

## Facts & Figures



5

continents  
Kings Cross ER  
is screened in



1M

Capital and regional  
Australia viewers of  
King Cross ER per episode



1

Logie Award won by  
Kings Cross ER



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