

Editorial The AHIP team has made great strides since the last newsletter. We held our successful retreat in Geelong last year with Professor Sally Macintyre from the Social & Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow and Dr Dorothy Broom from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health. We had two stimulating sessions on “Work and Health” and “Neighbourhoods and Health” which encouraged lively debate. One of the Chairs, Professor John Wiseman, commented after the presentations and ensuing discussions in the *Work and Health* session that we would remember this as “a watershed session in the work and health debate”. Networks between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners were expanded following the retreat. We now have a bunch of people who have attended the AHIP retreat twice, who see it as a critical event in their calendars and intend on joining us for all five.

This year’s retreat will be held at the end of October at the Weintal Resort in the Barossa Valley with public sessions at the Art Gallery of South Australia, North Terrace, in Adelaide. Confirmed invited speakers include Professor Ilona Kickbusch, the current Adelaide Thinker in Residence and an independent health consultant known for her contribution to innovation in public health, health promotion and global health, Associate Professor David Legge from the School of Public Health at La Trobe University in Melbourne and Professor Margaret Whitehead from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Policy Research on the Social Determinants of Health at the University of Liverpool.

We are delighted to report that we were awarded a prestigious NHMRC strategic award “*Changing patterns of work: impacts on physical and mental health and the mediating role of resiliency and social capital*”. Professor Sue Richardson, one of AHIP’s lead investigators will head this program of work. The grant involves six AHIP investigators and is indicative of our capacity to work across disciplines and institutional boundaries. This is a central vision of AHIP.

We held an extremely well-attended one-day conference on “Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Health Inequities Research” after the International Society for Equity in Health conference in Adelaide in September 2006. The audience included overseas and Australian researchers, policy-makers and service providers.

Other exciting achievements include being awarded the *Department of Human Services Victoria Public Health Research Innovation Award* for The Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Environment Study (VicLANES), led by me and involving Lyndal Thomas, an AHIP team investigator, among others. I have been appointed to the inaugural Department of Human Services Victoria Public Health Research Advisory Committee and hope to advocate for a central focus on health inequalities.

Professor Fran Baum co-edited a special issue on the Social Determinants of Health of the Health Promotion Journal of Australia (Dec 2006) with A/Professor Elizabeth Harris from the Centre for Health Equity Training Research & Evaluation, The University of New South Wales. This is a must read for all those interested in the Social Determinants of Health (see <http://www.healthpromotion.org.au/journal.php>) and includes contributions from AHIP investigators. A/Professor Anne Kavanagh and Rebecca Bentley will be editing a special issue of the Australian Journal of Social Issues on Gender Inequalities and Health based on the proceedings of the highly successful inaugural conference on Gender and Health Inequalities we organised last year. This will be published in early 2008.

We have had a busy six months. Keep an eye on our website for updates.....**Anne Kavanagh**

AHIP Events Summary

Anne Kavanagh, Lyndal Thomas and their colleagues were awarded the Victorian (Department of Human Services) Public Health Award for Research Innovation for the Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Environment Study in September 2006.

Proceedings from the First National Conference on Gender and Health Inequities that included papers by **Anne Kavanagh** and **Sue Richardson** from AHIP will be published in a special issue of The Australian Journal of Social Issues in March next year.

AHIP held the “*Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Health Inequities Research*” conference at the University of Adelaide, September 2006.

The AHIP Annual Retreat was held at the Waterfront Campus at Geelong in November 2006.

Three report launches:
“*People and Places: Urban Location, Social Capital and Health*” was launched by Ilona Kickbusch, Adelaide Thinker in Residence, on 15th March 2007.

A report order form is available from <http://som.flinders.edu.au/FUSA/PublicHealth/locationhealth.htm>



Pictured: Dr Adam Graycar, Professor Ilona Kickbusch, Dr Anna Ziersch, Professor Fran Baum, Professor Roy Goldie

“*Lifestyle, environment and disadvantage: a report of the Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Environment Study*” by A Kavanagh, L Thornton, A Tattam, L Thomas, D Jolley, G Turrell. This VicLANES summary report will be launched by Minister for Health Bronwyn Pike on 23rd May at the University of Melbourne. For details, please keep an eye on the VicLANE website: <http://www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/viclanes/index.html>.

The Mitsubishi Project: A report on the first stage findings of this study on retrenched workers from Mitsubishi in Adelaide is now available on the AHIP website (see Projects page).



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AHIP Retreat 2006

The annual AHIP retreat was held in early November 2006 at Deakin University in Geelong over four windy days. The purpose of this annual event is to reflect on the year's research and plan new collaborative activities with input from national and international researchers. The team of 15 from Flinders University and the University of Melbourne were joined by world-renowned expert on health inequities Professor Sally Macintyre, from the Social & Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow, and internationally acclaimed gender and health researcher Dr Dorothy Broom from the Australian National University's National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health.

Each year, public sessions are incorporated into the retreat that give an opportunity for researchers and policy folk to come together over important and current health inequities issues. Approximately 45 invited guests attended two seminars themed *Work & Health* and *Neighbourhoods & Health*. Presentations on *Work & Health* included Dr Dorothy Broom from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health on *The lesser evil: bad jobs or unemployment?* and Associate Professor Tony LaMontagne from the University of Melbourne on *A systems approach to workplace stress in Victoria*. AHIP was represented by Professor Sue Richardson who discussed the health consequences of how we are employed and Professor Andrew Beer's report on the health, housing and labour market impact of redundancy from a case study of closure of an automotive plant in Adelaide. Lively debate followed fuelled by discussants Tim Lee from Industrial Relations Victoria and Chrissie Pickin from the Department of Human Services.



Dr Dorothy Broom, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health



Associate Professor Anthony LaMontagne, School of Population Health, University of Melbourne



Dr Chrissie Pickin, Department of Human Services

The seminar on *Neighbourhoods & Health* took an international perspective with Professor Macintyre from Glasgow overviewing her team's recent work on neighbourhoods and health in urban settings in the UK. Professor Fran Baum from Flinders University and Associated Professor Anne Kavanagh from the University of Melbourne (lead investigators on AHIP) each presented on current place-based research being undertaken in Adelaide and Melbourne respectively. Enthusiastic discussion ensued after comments from Jane McInnis (Department of Victorian Communities), Mark Boyd (VicHealth) and Harald Klein (Department of Human Services) that highlighted the tensions and points of agreement between policy-makers and researchers.

Discussion and debate continued at the conference dinner where Mr Gavan O'Connor, Federal Member for Corio, and Associate Professor Kathy Alexander, former Executive Officer of Women's & Children's Health in Melbourne, reflected on their experiences working with, or in, the health sector.



Mr Gavan O'Connor, Federal Member for Corio

The next annual retreat will be held in Adelaide in late October 2007.

AHIP team and visitors to the 2006 Retreat in Geelong



From top left – Rebecca Bentley, Emma Baker, Anna Ziersch, Sue Richardson, Andrew Beer, Laurence Lester, Patricia Lamb, Helen Shearer, Lareen Newman, Guangyu Zhang. From bottom left – Fran Baum, Dorothy Broom, Sally Macintyre, Anne Kavanagh. Not pictured – Lyndal Thomas.

Multidisciplinary conference

AHIP held a one-day conference in Adelaide in September 2006 on "Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Health Inequities Research". It was attended by 170 Australian and overseas delegates. Key speakers included Professor Barbara Starfield, University Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University & Medical Institutions, USA, and Chair of the International Scientific Committee for the International Society for Equity in Health.

Professor Starfield explained that "equity in health is the absence of systematic and potentially remediable differences in one or more aspects of health across population groups defined geographically, demographically, or socially". She also pointed out the need to differentiate between social determinants (such as the level and distribution of wealth, occupational and environmental exposures) and societal determinants (including public expenditure on health and tax structures, the prevailing political ideology, globalization influences, and the nature of the health system).

Another international speaker was Professor Ron Labonte, former Director of the Saskatchewan Population Health & Evaluation Research Unit at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina in Canada. Ron talked about ways of establishing a successful multi-disciplinary team to conduct research on health inequities which would lead to action, respond to a political constituency, and proudly proclaim equity as its core. The work of the team is summarized in a recent article "Beyond the divides: towards critical public health research", *Critical Public Health*, 2005, 15(1):5-17.

AHIP presenters included Professor Fran Baum who talked about the importance of researching and publishing to enact change for people on the ground as well as for impact in the research community, and Associate Professor Anne Kavanagh who talked about methodological and epistemological challenges of multi-disciplinary teams. Associate Professor Elizabeth Harris (Director of CHETRE – the Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation - at the University of New South Wales Research Centre for Primary Health Care & Equity) made a presentation on "Getting Equity on the Policy Agenda". She reflected on how the NSW Department of Health's Health & Equity Statement had been implemented in practice (health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2004/pdf/faimessreport.pdf).

A/Professor Harris has recently completed a project on Australian governments and health inequities with Dr Lareen Newman and Professor Fran Baum of AHIP. The work is summarised in a new journal article on "State, Territory & Federal Government responses to health inequities and the social determinants of health in Australia", which is part of a bumper issue of the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* (Dec 2006) on the social determinants of health (www.healthpromotion.org.au). A full summary for each jurisdiction is available via http://som.flinders.edu.au/FUSA/PublicHealth/AHIP/projects_list.htm

VicLANES research prize

The Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Environment Study won the 2006 Victorian public health research award for innovation. The 10th public health awards were presented by Victorian Health Minister Bronwyn Pike on 5th September in Melbourne. The research category for innovation recognises original new research that has the potential to make a substantial contribution to public health practice or policy.

Announcing the award Health Minister Bronwyn Pike said VicLANES was inspired by the growing awareness of researchers that obesity was more than just bad food and lifestyle, but the environment was also a key component.

"This study takes a multi-level approach and draws upon a number of different disciplinary perspectives including epidemiology, urban design and planning, statistics, psychology and sociology. It takes the research just one step further and identifies the relationship between social economic positions, fast food outlets in the community, the range of the fresh fruit and vegetables available in the area and obesity rates."

Ms Pike said the results from VicLANES have been making an impact in the academic sector and in policy and practice.

"The researchers at VicLANES have been able to demonstrate that living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas is associated with lower levels of physical activity, high body mass index and less likely to purchase groceries that are consistent with dietary guidelines. I would like to congratulate VicLANES on an award winning study. Their work will help inform policy and practice initiatives in our fight to against obesity and improving the health of all Victorians."

Minister Pike said she was convinced that public health initiatives were "absolutely fundamental" to the provision of a responsive health care system, but others were not so easily convinced. "Your work demonstrates that an investment in prevention has huge payoffs, but some others are taking a bit longer to come to terms with this realisation."

Associate Professor Anne Kavanagh, the lead investigator on VicLANES, said the award was recognition of the unique methodology of the project and its capacity to generate results that will help to answer complex problems about health inequalities. "We hope that findings from VicLANES will inform a range of policies to reduce health inequalities, and improve our understanding of why physical activity rates and the quality of the built environment varies so much between different areas of Melbourne," she said.

For full details go to www.health.vic.gov.au/publichealthawards/phap06.htm
Information about VicLANES is at www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/viclanes



From left – VicLANES group Research Assistant and PhD student Lukar Thornton, Associate Professor Anne Kavanagh, Associate Professor Damien Jolley (Monash) Health Minister Bronwyn Pike, Research Fellow Lyndal Thomas and Community Liaison/ Research Translation Officer Amanda Tattam.

Introducing New Team Members

Laurence Lester is currently one of three full-time PhD students at NILS. He holds a prestigious APAI scholarship, funded by the ARC in partnership with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, to investigate the dynamics of labour market and settlement success of immigrants to Australia. Laurence will be joining AHIP, working on the *Changing Patterns of Work* project, in mid-2007 following completion of his PhD. Prior to commencing his PhD, his previous experience includes eight years as a Principal Economist/Manager with the SA Department of Treasury and Finance, and several years as lecturer in the School of Economics at Flinders University (and casual lecturing at UniSA and TAFE). Laurence holds a BEc(Hons) and MEc from Flinders University.



Laurence Lester – new team member

Capacity Building

Lyndal Thomas was awarded an *Australian Research Council Research Network on Spatially Integrated Social Science* Scholarship covering all costs to attend the two week workshop in GIS and Population Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara, USA, in July 2006. The workshop covered an introduction to GIS, spatial analysis, spatial statistics, mapping and visualisation.

Rebecca Bentley will be attending the annual conference of the *International Social Network Association* in Greece and visiting the Social & Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow in May 2007. Rebecca will be presenting on her AHIP work to date.

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Grants and recent publications

Successful grant applications

Richardson S, Baum F, Kavanagh A, LaMontagne A, Ziersch A, Lowry D, Lester L, Bentley R. *Changing patterns of work: impacts on physical and mental health and the mediating role of resiliency and social capital.* NHMRC Strategic Award Preventative Healthcare and Strengthening Australia's Social and Economic Fabric. 5 years. Total budget \$1,060,625.

This project will use a mixed methods approach (analysing existing cross-sectional and longitudinal data and undertaking quantitative interviews) to explore how changing modern patterns of employment and unemployment are affecting health. The project will be conducted over 5 years.

Recent publications

Baum F, MacDougall C, Smith D (2006) Glossary on Participatory Action Research. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 60: 854-857

Baum F, Jolley G, Hicks R, Saint K, Parker S (2006) What makes for sustainable Healthy Cities initiatives?- a review of the evidence from Noarlunga, Australia after 18 years. *Health Promotion International* 21(4): 259-265

Baum F, Ziersch A, Zhang G, Putland C, Palmer C, MacDougall C, O'Dwyer L, Coveney J. (2007) *People and Places: Urban Locational Disadvantage, Social Capital and Health.* Flinders University Press.

Baum F, Van Eyk H, Hurley C (2006) Re-orientation of Health Services towards Health Promotion: An Australian Case Study of Aborted Health Service Reform. *Australian Journal of Primary Health* 12(2): 24-33

Beer A, Baum F, Thomas H, Lowry D, Cutler C, Zhang G, Jolley G, Ziersch A, Verity F, Macdougall C, Newman L. (2006) An Evaluation of the Impact of Retrenchment at Mitsubishi, Focussing on Affected Workers, their Families and Communities: Implications for Human Services Policies and Practices: Report to SA Department of Health HSRIP. Flinders University, South Australia.

Bentley R and Kavanagh A (2007) Looking at contextual effects through Rose-coloured glasses: interpreting contextual effect in multilevel models. *Australasian Epidemiologist.* Special issue on Health and Place, April. (in press)

Chittleborough CR, **Baum FE, Taylor AW, Hiller JE** (2006) A life-course approach to measuring socioeconomic position in population health surveillance systems. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 60(11): 981-992

Newman L, Baum F, Harris E (2006) Federal, state and territory government responses to health inequities and the social determinants of health in Australia. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* 17(3): 217-225.

Newman L, Baum F, Harris E (2006) Australian Governments & Health Inequities Project

http://som.flinders.edu.au/FUSA/PublicHealth/AHIP/projects_list.htm

Newman L (2007) Research on health inequalities and social determinants of health. *SADI Statewide (newsletter of SA Divisions of General Practice)* 3(2):10-12

O'Dwyer L, **Baum F, Kavanagh AM, MacDougall C** (2007) Do area based interventions to reduce health inequalities work? A systematic review of the evidence. *Critical Public Health* (in press).

Turrell G, **Kavanagh AM, Draper G, Subramanian SV.** Do places affect the probability of death in Australia? A multilevel study of area-level disadvantage, individual-level socioeconomic position, and all-cause mortality, 1998-2000. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2007 61:13-19

Ziersch A, Baum F, Putland C, MacDougall C. 2007. Neighbourhood life, social capital and perceptions of safety in an Australian city. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* (in press)