

BULLETIN

Monthly News from JCSMHS

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



The new academic year has just started. The starting numbers for both medicine and psychology are well above target with a major increase in enrollment for medicine. We will be starting with 160 students enrolled in the first year. This is the highest we have ever enrolled. For psychology we are also about 10% above target in all but one of our programs. These are great achievements and it does give us some breathing space. I would like to thank all staff who have been involved in the recruitment process.

However this is also a time of significant challenge.

The major problem is the Covid-19 infections. While our public health system seems to have been coping in reducing the spread of the disease with the recent spike in infections, it has also placed a lot of strain on our healthcare system. Our medical students are placed in the Sultanah Aminah Hospital which is a major referral centre for the southern part of the peninsula and it is expected that suspected Covid-19 patients will be referred there. Our staff in CSJB are taking all precautions to ensure that the safety of our students take precedence over all else.

However, as the situation develops we need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to the situation. We will ensure the we follow all MOH and Monash advisories. While it may be too early for contingencies we may want to think about how we will cope in our respective areas should the situation deteriorate.

ACHIEVEMENTS & EVENTS

YOUNG SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Young Scholars Program (YSP) offers outstanding aspiring medical students on a short-term internship before they begin the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (Honours) course in March. The current batch of YSP scholars (2019/2020) were given the opportunity to be involved in various research projects with different backgrounds.

Some of which included a more lab based research intensive project which which involved bio- imaging, molecular biology and gene manipulation, clinical research intensive projects which trained the young scholars in basic medical examination procedures, diagnosis and literature reviews on patients with

diabetes, and also community based engagement that involved looking into barriers of breast cancer screening among rural women and prevalence and predictors of subjective memory complaints among older adults in rural Malaysia.



SHARING PROFESSOR DR MAUDE'S OSP EXPERIENCE

Professor Dr Maude Phipps recently undertook an Outside Study Program (OSP) for 6 months from August 2019 to Feb 2020. She was appointed Bye-Fellow of Darwin College, Cambridge for this period. Time spent away from her usual Semester 2 teaching routine duties at JCSMHS provided her with opportunities to immerse herself in focused research and education. She visited and worked in three different institutions in the UK and Germany. At the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus in Hinxton UK, She worked with Professor Chris Tyler-Smith and Dr Yali Xue researching unique population genetics of Orang Asli in comparisons with other global populations. She also collaborated with Dr Robert Finn at European Bioinformatics Institute in a pilot project to elucidate novel microbiomes of Negritos with the aim of providing 'proof of concept' and as a basis for submitting a joint research funding application to the Wellcome Trust.





At the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology (MPIEA) in Leipzig, Germany, Professor Phipps did joint research with Professor Dr Mark Stoneking and his group with special focus on ancient DNA remains in South East Asia looking at the special techniques they used to extract DNA and also compared ancient DNA and modern DNA sequences. Whilst there she engaged faculty members with keen interests in genomics and health of hunter-gatherer communities. She also delivered a prestigious institute seminar on her work entitled 'Engaging Indigenous Communities and Last Hunter-Gatherers of Malaysia: Genomics and Other Perspectives.'



Most of her time during the educational stint was spent auditing a postgraduate course on Genomic Medicine at the Institute of Continuing Education and Department of Medical Genetics, University of Cambridge. Professor Phipps was very engaged with the fellows and post-graduate students and a committed participant of the Darwin College science lunchtime lecture series during Michaelmas term in 2019. She returned to Malaysia and commenced fieldwork in Orang Seletar communities with an international team of researchers from CSJB, UC Berkeley and University of Copenhagen. Professor Phipps will utilise this OSP experience to enrich education and research programmes offered at JCSMHS and Monash University Malaysia.

DR KAREN'S OSP EXPERIENCE

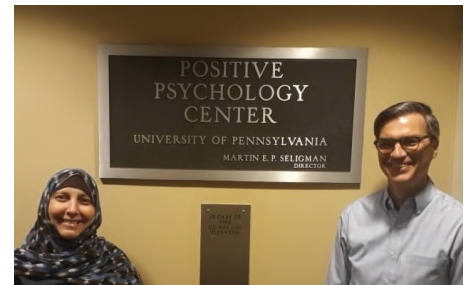
Dr Karen Golden's Outside Study Program (OSP) ran from July 2019 to January 2020. Her main focus is on autism and wellbeing (positive psychology). She assisted with research and program advising during her local OSP research attachment with GENIUS Kurnia, an early intervention centre for children with autism. Dr Karen was appointed to the Steering Committee for the National Autism Prevalence Study that's connected to GENIUS Kurnia. Another project linked to her OSP is the longitudinal Malaysia-Australia Autism Sleep Health Program in collaboration with the Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health, Monash University Australia.



In the US, Dr Karen visited five universities that have strong autism research programs as she's planning to establish an autism research centre in Malaysia. Her main focus was to strategize and explore how these institutions in collaboration with government agencies and industry offer autism services and conduct cutting-edge autism research. She visited the Weill-Cornell Center for Autism and the Developing Brain as well as the Yang Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University. The institute works to empower those with autism in higher education, employment and society.



Dr Karen also visited the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research and the Center for Population Health at Cornell, who are interested in connecting with SEACO. She also visited the Brain Institute at the University of Virginia to find out more about autism and epilepsy since she is collaborating with Dr Mohd Farooq. At the University of Pennsylvania, she visited the Positive Psychology Center since wellbeing is one of her main teaching and research areas and met with the centre's Director of Education, Professor James Pawelski. The main takeaway for Dr Karen was that she got to build collaborations and see different niches and facilities. To sum up in her words, it was breathtaking, motivating and inspiring. For the full coverage of Dr Karen's OSP experience, she'll be publishing a blog uploaded to Workplace in the near future.



UPCOMING EVENTS & NEWS

If you would like to share any news (past and/or upcoming events, achievement, student events, grants, etc.) with the School via newsletter, please email to gurmeet.kaur@monash.edu.