

# Clinical Connections

## Inside this issue:

Indigenous Pre Conference Workshop	2
Project Work	2
Four Funerals in One Day	3
The Regional Plan: Priority 5	4
Getting to know you ... Anne Oakley	4

## 9th National Palliative Care Conference

The North and West Metropolitan region was well represented at the recent National Conference, with many experts from our region presenting papers, workshops and posters. Kevin Larkins (CEO of Palliative Care Victoria) set a relaxed and friendly tone for the conference in his welcoming address which incorporated him singing a song "Welcome to our town" while playing the ukulele.

The conference was very well attended and it was wonderful to see delegates not only from interstate but from overseas. The program was both stimulating and innovative and included keynote addresses that explored psycho-social issues, spirituality and public health. Major presentations from overseas experts such as Prof Irvin Yalom, Dr. Robin Fainsinger MD, Prof. Afaf Girgis, Dr. Keri Thomas, Revd Dr Michael Wright and local identities such as Geraldine Doogue and Sr Veronica Brady, delegates were treated to a feast of wisdom.

The most impressive as-

pect of the conference was that it was not introspective in its approach, but looked at current research and developments in palliative care in addition to developments globally in other areas of health and public policy. Delegates were challenged to think beyond the boundaries of palliative care ... beyond where we feel safe ... and that's a good thing!

In addition to the formal program the conference provided a variety of opportunities for people to network and share ideas. The Poster presentation area and Exhibition Hall were constantly "buzzing" as delegates caught up with friends and colleagues from around the country. For the North and West contingent it was great to catch up with Mark Boughey among others. The social program was also well supported and varied with the "hosted dinners" giving delegates an opportunity



Michael Bramwell and Anne Oakley

to share an intimate meal at the conference dinner giving them an opportunity to "let their hair down" at the Crown Palladium, have a nice dinner, a few wines and dance the night away to the music of "Soul Sisters" who managed to get people on stage dancing and singing until the wee small hours! Sr Veronica Brady set the bench mark as she danced all evening, despite being in her 70's!



## Upcoming Events

Mercy Western and Mercy Hospice Open Day—Saturday October 6  
Pastoral Care Awareness Week—Thursday October 25

Full details provided on the website:  
[www.northwestpalliative.com.au](http://www.northwestpalliative.com.au)



# Clinical Connections cont . . . .

## Indigenous Pre Conference Workshop—Going Home to Country

The inaugural Indigenous Pre Conference Workshop saw wonderful presentations from all over the country. Joanne Harrison, Barb Dobson and Brad Brown gave a keynote address on the NWMRPCC Koorie and Torres Strait Islander Focus Group and the work being done by that group in building relationships and providing cultural education for palliative care providers. Kutcha Edwards and Adrian Ross performed the moving song “Going Home” which Kutcha wrote specifically for

the workshop, after interviewing elders at the Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES). Intimate stories were told by Kellie Loughran Hunter, Jo Harrison and others about their experiences supporting family members in “Going Home to Country”

Deborah Prior facilitated a planning session in the afternoon where delegates worked together to develop some strategies to move forward in engaging with the indigenous members of our communities. The day

was completed by the presentation of a Message Stick to the representatives from Western Australia who are hosting the next conference in 2009.

Congratulations to Jo and her team for organizing such a great event!



Brad Brown and Joanne Harrison

## Project Work to develop Decision Making Tool to enhance referral to Palliative Care

In February, 2005, Palliative Care Australia released *A Guide to Palliative Care Service Development: A population based approach*. This document highlights the importance of primary, and specialist health care providers working together to ensure that people with a life limiting illness have access to those services most appropriate to their needs. In focusing on the increasing and decreasing levels of intensity of needs of the palliative patient, service providers across all levels of care, and in all settings, are challenged to develop protocols and practices to ensure the more appropriate care is available to each palliative patient.

Palliative Care Victoria has received funding for three years from the Department of Health and Ageing within the Round three Local Palliative Care Grants to undertake work to develop a **decision making tool** for use by general practitioners in order to assist them to meet the change in need/s of palliative patients, and

assist with the appropriate and timely referral to a palliative care service.

A Project Officer has been appointed and currently undertaking work to address key tasks including: the development of a decision making tool for use by general practitioners together with an education strategy to assist with the use of the tool. Further to this, a user-friendly companion care guide for consumers and carers, will also be developed to provide information about when an appropriate referral may be made to palliative care. This work will be completed within the first year of the project.

During the second year, a trial phase involving the three project components will occur within one metropolitan and two rural regions.

In the third and final year, the decision making tool, education strategy and carer resource will be implemented across the State in consulta-

tion with respective Regional Palliative Care Consortium.

An Advisory Group has been formed to inform the work of the project, provide leadership and advice and to promote evidence based practice.

Membership of this group includes representation from key stakeholders including:

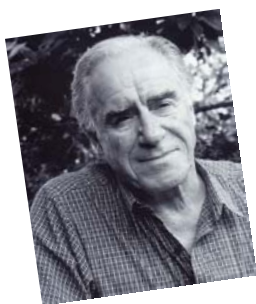
- Victorian Division of General Practice
- Carers Victoria
- Department of Human Services
- Representatives from the eight Palliative Care Consortium

The role of each Advisory Group member is to be a linchpin for the Project providing information and progress reports to their respective organizations and inform project processes with “field intelligence.”

# Clinical Connections cont . . . .

The underpinning principle of the Project is sustainability. Therefore the Project will consult widely to engage and facilitate “buy in” from key stakeholders.

The Project addresses a committed and collaborative approach to early identification and referral with strong leadership and family involvement and has the potential to significantly impact on patient care and support.



Alan Hopgood

## Four Funerals in One Day

The 9th National Palliative Care Conference conducted in Melbourne in the last week of

August was attended by many international, national and local members of palliative care services in addition to members from other health and academic specialties. Attendees were provided with a feast of contemporary information and research, but were also treated to the premiere of the play “Four Funerals in One Day”. Written by Alan Hopgood in collaboration with Molly Carlile, the play explores the role of story telling in palliative care.

“Karen is a community nurse caring for her first dying patient. Clarrie has had enough of being a burden on his family and wants to die *now*. Vi is tired and bad tempered and wondering why she stays working in palliative care, particularly as she has her own problems at home and Sue is walking the fine line of acting as a mentor for junior staff and supporting a colleague who isn’t coping. Four Funerals in One Day is a performance piece that explores the human reality for patients and professional

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## More photo's from the National Conference



careers living and dying in palliative care.”

In her introduction, Molly spoke about how Alan used his skills as a playwright to combine elements of her personal experiences as a clinician with fiction to create a performance piece that would get the audience thinking about the importance of their own stories and those of their patients. “Four Funerals in One Day does not aim to present a “best practice model” of palliative care”, she said, “but at it’s core is the need for us all to embrace the influence of other peoples stories on the development of our own personal and professional life story”.

The impact of the play was tangible as the audience laughed loudly when they recognized elements of themselves and their colleagues in the characters. Many admitted later that they cried at times as well! The professional actors Babs McMillan, Margot Knight, Michelle Hall and Alan Hopgood, played their roles

with empathy and humour and managed to hold the audience captive until the final curtain fell. Loud applause and long discussions followed over a glass of wine at the “Happy Hour” as peopled talked about their own experiences.

Developing and presenting Four Funerals in One Day as a keynote presentation at a National Conference was a gamble for the sponsors (North and West Metro Region Palliative Care Consortium, Southern Metro Region Palliative Care Consortium and PCV), for the authors, for the performers and for the Organising Committee, but it was a gamble that paid off. It proved that often the best way of imparting a message is by using the most ancient of techniques . . . . . Telling a story!

### Some quotes from the Evaluations of the play:

- “It was fantastic! I laughed and cried. Thanks”
- “Excellent. It was wonderful. Such a wonderful way to get a message across. Able to relate to it all.”
- “Overall, it was entertaining and a good way to finish a day for those of us whose brains are struggling to retain everything we have heard today. Well done! I look forward to similar productions at future conferences.”

## **SUBMIT YOUR NEWS!**

**Do you have a photo from an activity conducted in your organization? Do you want to promote an upcoming education session? Do you have a symptom management issue you want explored? Please send for inclusion in the next edition**

## **The Regional Plan**

### **Priority 5: Strengthening Relationships with Generalist Service Providers**

The North and West Palliative Care Consortium will continue to strengthen its relationships with generalist service providers in the region, including general practitioners, residential and community-based aged care facilities, and community health centres by providing information on palliative care services, involving service providers in care coordination meetings, participating in forums and workshops to discuss care of the terminally ill and issues of death and dying, providing education and training

**We're on the web!**

[www.northwestpalliative.com.au](http://www.northwestpalliative.com.au)



## **Getting to know you .... Anne Oakley**

Anne Oakley has an extensive background in health and

general management, drawing on both areas of expertise in her current role as Manager—Palliative Care with Melbourne Citymission.

Melbourne Citymission (MCM) was the first community based palliative care service, established in 1981. This MCM service has been a forerunner in developing best practice principles in palliative care and is recognized for its strong commitment to inter-disciplinary practice.

Anne's current role has full responsibility and accountability for all aspects of service delivery, this includes working with the team internally and working with key stakeholders externally. Anne is a member of the middle management team for MCM and contributes to the strategic and operational direction of the organization.

Anne is a registered nurse, having undertaken her training at Prince Henry's in Melbourne. She has more than twenty five years experience in community based nursing services. Prior to joining Melbourne Citymission in 1999, she spent 18 years with Royal District Nursing Ser-

vice (RDNS), working in many roles, including as a district nurse, clinical co-ordinator, Centre Management, Regional Manager and Director of Client Services.

Anne cared for RDNS' first HIV+ client and remembers the satisfaction and appreciation of the client and family of facilitating care to enable someone to remain at home as their chosen place of death.

Anne developed a strong passion for community care during those years, and has dedicated her working career to assisting people to stay in their own homes, working tirelessly not only for the recipients of care, but for the immensely important informal caring network, being family, friends, neighbours and community. Anne has been a director of the Carers Victoria Board for 11 years and was Chair for 6 of those years. Anne is currently the Vice President of this Board.