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Grant Opportunity

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CONGRATULATIONS TO MICHAEL MATHAI ON HIS RECENT FINDINGS ON METABOLISM.

Dr Michael Mathai, from Victoria University is making waves with the discovery of how to aid weight loss and reduce the likelihood of developing diabetes by increasing the body’s metabolic rate and reducing the size of fat tissue.

Michael, a recipient of a Heart Foundation Grant-in-Aid, was featured in the Herald Sun as one of the study leaders of a project that has the ability to produce a powerful weapon in the fight to quell the rise of obesity and diabetes in Australia.

The results of the four-year study, which included researchers from Victoria University, La Trobe University, Deakin University and the Baker Heart Research Institute, were published in the prestigious Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA.

The project investigated the critical roles that the renin-angiotensin system plays in fat metabolism. Michael and his team used mice that lacked the angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) gene to investigate how blocking this system could cause weight loss and improve glucose clearance.

Congratulations to Michael and all those involved with this study on the wonderful results they discovered.

BYE-BYE CHARLIE TO BE LAUNCHED BY THE HON. JENNY MACKLIN MP AT MELBOURNE MUSEUM

The Hon. Jenny Macklin, Federal Minister for Families, Housing and Community Services, will launch oral historian Dr Corinne Manning’s Bye-Bye Charlie: Stories from the Vanishing World of Kew Cottages (UNSW Press, August 2008) at the Melbourne Museum in Carlton on 23 August. Corinne joined the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development’s School of Social Sciences as a Research Fellow in 2008. Her book is an emotional journey into an often secret world – Australia’s first specialised institution for people with intellectual disability, Kew Cottages. When it opened in 1887 with 57 residents, Kew was regarded as a world-leading facility, offering both residential care and educational opportunities. By 1968, Kew Cottages had grown to be Australia’s largest institution for people with intellectual disabilities. In May 2001, the Victorian government announced the controversial decision to close down Kew Cottages for redevelopment, sparking much community debate.

Corinne weaves a collection of oral testimony with documentary evidence to provide an emotional insight into the 121-year history of an Australian institution for people with intellectual disability. The voices of Kew residents are heard and celebrated, along with a rare mix of memories from family, staff, volunteers, social workers and many other people whose lives were intertwined with the story of Kew.
Cottages, where great kindness and compassion existed side-by-side with abuse and neglect.

Bye-Bye Charlie rescues what otherwise would have remained a hidden history, and sheds light on otherwise ‘forgotten lives’. The book includes a DVD which enables the story of Kew Cottages to be told through images and sounds.

Corinne will also appear as a panel member at the forthcoming Melbourne Writer’s Festival on Sunday, 31 August at 3:30 pm on a panel exploring the ethical and historical dilemmas of ‘Writing voices into Australian history’, chaired by Radio National’s Michelle Rayner and including co-panelists Mark Peel, Richard Trembath and Dorothy Wickham. Corinne’s previous publications include the co-authored book, A Man of All Tribes: The Life of Alick Jackomos, exploring issues of human rights, colonialism, identity and diversity in Australia.

THINKING ETHICS

CHANGES TO THE RESEARCH TEAM – KEY CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure that research projects comply with ethical standards, it is essential that Investigators notify the relevant ethics committee of changes to the research project’s personnel. Notifying the relevant ethics committee will ensure that details of your project are current and the relevant committee can ensure the project’s continuing ethical approval.

Changes and/or amendments to human research projects will require approval by the Chair of the approving committee while amendments to animal ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committee projects require approval from the relevant Committee. Researchers will need to submit a “Changes/Amendments to Research Project” letter to the relevant Committee. The letter must outline the reason for the change/amendment, quoting the project’s Number, Project Title, and progress to date.

Please refer to the Ethics and Biosafety website for more information on the process:

http://research.vu.edu.au/ethics0.php

Staff at the Ethics and Biosafety Administration Group are available to assist researchers with questions regarding amendments to ethics applications.

E-mail at researchethics@vu.edu.au

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND MARKETING

The School of Hospitality, Tourism and Marketing (HT&M) Lecturer Dr Pandora Kay (Marketing) and recent HT&M Graduate and sessional staff member, Dr Thuy-Huong Truong both received acclaim from the Faculty of Business and Law for Research and Research Training.

Dr Kay’s PhD thesis, “Determinants of Cultural Event Tourist Motivation” focuses on what motivates tourists to attend cultural experiences. The examiners marked the thesis with outstanding results and excellent comments in terms of thoroughness in the research methodology and the contribution to knowledge. In the words of one examiner, the thesis, “starts out with clear and excellent research aims that have both theoretical and practical significance … in addition to making a contribution to cultural tourism knowledge, the thesis also makes a contribution to cross-cultural studies, consumer behaviour, and tourism marketing”. Dr Kay developed a research model that conceptualised the tourist motivational process as having four interrelated elements: attitudes, motives, benefits sought and benefits gained. She tested the relationships for six major international tourist markets to Australia by undertaking primary data collection methods and new statistical analysis procedures of structural equation modelling linked to factor analytic methods that were acknowledged as breaking new ground. Market segmentation and marketing strategy implications as a result of her findings, were also presented in the thesis. Eleven publications relating to her thesis include national and international conference proceedings, a book chapter, and publication in highly ranked journals of international standing.

Dr Truong’s PhD thesis, “Holiday Satisfaction in Vietnam: Inter-Cultural Perspectives” explored the issues facing Vietnamese tourism professionals who will increasingly need to be capable of handling cross-cultural interactions, notably between tourists and service providers. This research is a unique contribution to the literature because of its in-depth comparison of Vietnamese service providers and the French, American and Chinese tourists. The thesis clearly demonstrates the importance of cultural factors and rules of behaviours in shaping visitor perceptions, experiences and overall satisfaction. Dr Truong’s dissertation was assessed as “Excellent” and her work has resulted in publications in various refereed journals, conference proceedings and book chapters both national and international. Thuy-Huong’s earlier achievements include receiving the Ocean Spirit Cruises Award 2006 as the most Outstanding PhD Student in the Faculty of Business and Law Awards, Victoria University and in March 2008, when she was awarded a Highly Commended SIR FRANK MOORE: Award for Excellence in PhD Research and Publications, Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC).
FEDERAL AGENCIES DRAW UPON CTSR’S EVENT EXPERTISE

The Centre for Tourism and Services Research was commissioned by the Federal Ministerial Working Group on the National Business Event Strategy to produce a report that provides a ‘state of play’ for Australia’s business event sector drawing together all of the research that has been conducted internationally in this sector over the last five years. This report will underpin the development of a National Business Events Strategy that is being prepared by industry with the support of the Federal Government as part of Minister Ferguson’s National Tourism Strategy. As the CTSR has led most of Australia’s national business event research projects over the last five years, it was not unexpected that the Centre would be asked to produce this review document.

The Federal and NSW governments invested substantial sums of tax payers funds in supporting the recent World Youth Day (WYD) in Sydney and there has been considerable controversy about whether this was a good investment and more generally, whether governments should be supporting religious events. As a consequence, the Federal Government has commissioned the CTSR to conduct the evaluation of the economic impact of WYD on both the Australian and NSW economies. Expenditure data for this study will be collected online from pilgrims once they have returned home and the most recent Tourism Satellite Accounts will be used to estimate the direct impacts of this event.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON PACIFIC ISLANDS COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF CARTERETS ISLANDS, BOUGAINVILLE

On 23rd June this year, the new Victoria University’s Pacific Research and Development Programme at the Institute for Community, Ethnicity & Policy Alternatives (ICEPA), together with the Australian Conservation Foundation’s (ACF) Asia-Pacific Programme, started a dialogue process with representative of Carterets islanders in Bougainville who are in process of being relocated due to rise in sea level. The half-day meeting is the beginning of a long-term process of engagement between the various parties in ascertaining best ways and means of supporting the relocation project.

About 600 families with an estimated total of 2,500 people are currently living on the six Carterets atolls. They are facing increasing hardships as their lands are encroached upon by the rising sea and the slowly sinking atolls. Carterets Islands have been identified as one of the earliest casualties of sea level rise from climate change. Dry land on the islands continues to diminish with no more sustainable plantations available to support the projected future population left alone the current population.

For more than two decades, the islanders have struggled to stay the tide of the waves and rise in sea level. They have build sea walls and tried to protect their coastlines by planting mangroves. The Papua New Guinean government authorised the evacuation of the islands on November 24, 2005, 10 families at a time, to Bougainville. This process of evacuation started in early 2007 and could continue up until 2020. At the current rate of land loss through rise in sea level, it is projected that the Carterets Islands could be largely uninhabitable by 2015.

The current topical global debate on climate change and the quest by individual countries to formulate its own strategy for effective domestic response and international global citizenry support is made more urgent when faced by community human stories like Carterets Islanders. Their story of survival provides Australians with the opportunity to re-look at their own lifestyle and response to climate change in relations to being a more responsible Pacific neighbour and global citizen for that matter.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

THE GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH FOUNDATION


The General Sir John Monash Awards are Australia’s prestigious scholarships supporting postgraduate study at the world’s best universities overseas. Award Winners are expected to become leaders of their fields and of the nation.

There is no restriction on field of study, overseas university or country or age of applicant.

The Awards are selected on a national basis from young Australians who have outstanding intellect, leadership skills and capability and who are engaged citizens demonstrated by their altruism and community consciousness.

Applications for the 2009 General Sir John Monash Awards close on 22 August 2008 with the Office for Research and on 31st August 2008 with the Foundation. For further details please visit:

http://www.monashawards.org

THANK YOU to all who contributed to the content of the Research Matters bulletin.