



Newsletter

In this Issue...

Tristates Regional OT Group	2
OT Week events	2
Central & Northern Vic OT study day	3
Seating Interest Group	3
2008 Conference	3
New Allied Health Courses at LaTrobe	4
Consumer & Community Participation: Planning for the Future	4

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK FOCUS ON OT

This edition of the newsletter includes information on OT to coincide with OT Week (Oct 21-27). Future editions will focus on the other core disciplines of the allied health network, with December to focus on Physiotherapy.

Included in this newsletter is information about:

- the Tristates Regional OT group
- OT week events, and
- the Central and Northern Vic regional OT group study day

Others articles not specific to OT include information on the new Allied Health courses at La Trobe, a newly created seating interest group and "Consumer and Community Participation". We are also calling for volunteers to be involved in planning the 2008 Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network conference. Please contact me if you would like to be involved.

If you would like further information, to arrange a visit to your work place or to discuss any issues effecting allied health in the Loddon Mallee Region please contact me. Don't forget the December newsletter will focus on physio. Please contact me if you have some relevant physio news to include.

Sally Harris

Coordinator, Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network

sharris@bendigohealth.org.au

Phone: 03 5454 9058 (Mon & Wed)

Network Dates:

Reference group meeting
12/11/2007

Meeting with DHS
03/12/2007

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is for allied health professionals within the Loddon Mallee region to assist with communication. If you wish to contribute or have a suggestion of a topic you would like to see covered please contact me (details above).

LODDON MALLEE ALLIED HEALTH NETWORK DATABASE

If you know of an allied health professional who may like to receive information from the network please forward the network details to them. They can contact the coordinator and be added to the database to receive future information.

Don't forget to tell new staff about the network.

Newsletter submissions:

Submissions to be emailed to
sharris@bendigohealth.org.au

WEBSITE - www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au

The "WHAT'S ON" page of the website includes information on upcoming events. Items currently included are workshops on:

- Acquired Brain Injury
- Palliative care
- Tai Chi for Arthritis Leader training, and
- Free statewide allied health workforce education program presentations on a range of topics

If you are organising an event or hear of an event that may be of interest to other Loddon Mallee allied health professionals please follow the prompts on the website or contact Sally.

TRISTATES REGIONAL OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY GROUP

The "Tristates Regional Group" which comprised Mildura, Robinvale, Ouyen, Swan Hill, Broken Hill and Riverland Occupational Therapists unofficially folded in 2005/2006. There were a number of factors leading to the group folding which included:

- Swan Hill felt their professional development and support needs could be better met by the Adelaide regional group.
- Berri felt their professional development and support needs could be better met by the Bendigo regional group.
- Attendances to meetings were poor due to distances required to travel.

Therapists in the Mildura and District region, which comprises Mildura, Robinvale and Ouyen Occupational Therapists, have met adhoc over the past two years. Meetings have included OT week planning and celebrations as well as professional development opportunities such as a seating workshop and a hand therapy in service.

Occupational Therapists in the Mildura and District region met in October to determine the future of meetings, networking and local professional development. The meeting was well supported with a large percentage of local Occupational Therapists attending and keen to continue to attend regular meetings. A time table was developed with meetings scheduled in October 2007 for OT Week and in December 2007 for pressure care. 4 quarterly meetings will be conducted in 2008. As well as presentations on specific topics, meetings will also include case studies, lobbying for local professional development opportunities and promoting awareness of Occupational Therapy within the wider community.

Ongoing mentoring and supervision was encouraged during the meeting with senior therapists more than willing to mentor and provide advice to newly graduated Occupational Therapists. Group emails will be utilised to maximise communication between local therapists.

As yet, it is undecided whether or not the Mildura and District OTs will replace the defunct Tristates Regional Group or simply become an informal group meeting quarterly.

Belinda Dixon - Convenor

OT WEEK EVENTS

OT Week Private Practice Gathering

Monday 22/10/07 from 5pm
At Barzurk Restaurant Bar
66 Pall Mall, Bendigo

\$10 per person for finger food (drinks at own cost)

Private practice OTs and any other private practice allied health professionals and partners are welcome.

RSVP to Lynne Cooper 5442 4928

OT Week: National Book Launch and Seminar Enabling Occupation II

Thursday 25/10/07

At Albury/Wodonga Charles Sturt University

Book launch: 10.30 – 11.15 (no cost)

Seminar: 11.30-3.00 (\$150 – includes a copy of the book)

Further information available at

<http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au/viewEvent.asp?eventID=59>

OT AUSTRALIA- VICTORIA:-CENTRAL AND NORTHERN VICTORIA REGIONAL INTEREST GROUP

Each year the OT Australia Victoria Central and Northern Victoria regional interest group holds a study day. The study day this year, titled "Your One Stop Shop to Dementia Care" was held on September the 5th at LaTrobe University Bendigo Campus.

The day was attended by Occupational Therapists from across our region and beyond. We were fortunate to have a range of very professional presentations covering many aspects of Dementia care. The following is a brief summary of the presentations from the day:

- Kerry Whelan and Lynne Scott started the day with a presentation about the CDAMS service and what they offer as well as the importance of early diagnosis.
- Dr Bev Ferres, Geriatrician who spoke about 'competence' and by whom and how competence is determined. Bev spoke about the legal aspects of competence and the importance of dignity of risk.
- Following on from Bev's presentation Karen Creighton presented the Occupational Therapists role in assessing competence using the PRPP assessment as an example of an assessment tool.
- Joy Boyd, Psychiatric nurse presented on communication and dealing with difficult behaviours. Joy gave examples of how to cope and communicate in a variety of circumstances.
- Mandy Nicholes finished the day off by pulling all presentations together with a focus on where Occupational Therapy fits in across the Dementia continuum and raised the idea of advanced care planning.

Very positive feedback was received from the day with participants leaving with many resources and improved knowledge about Dementia care and OT's role within this increasing diagnostic group.

A survey will be distributed shortly to members of the group asking for ideas for next years study day topics and format. If anyone wishes to discuss any ideas they have please don't hesitate to contact me via email – nroberts@bendigohealth.org.au Nicole Roberts - Convenor

Seating Interest Group

This interest group has been developed for allied health professionals who are involved in prescribing seating equipment for their clients. The purpose of the group is to provide a forum where knowledge, skills and ideas can be exchanged. Topics for discussion will include assessment, posture, pressure care needs, and selection of equipment to meet the client's functional requirements.

The first meeting was held on the 14th August when twelve allied health workers from the Bendigo region attended. The focus was on how to conduct a comprehensive assessment prior to recommending or trialling equipment.

The next meeting will be **on Tues December 11 2007**, at John Liddell Rehabilitation Centre, Bendigo Health, Level 2 in the Multi – purpose room from 4.30 – 6.00pm.

"Cushion and Backrest – where do you start?" Discussion and trial of products.

All welcome.

Bring any equipment or information that you would like to share.

Light refreshments provided

RSVP to Marian de Koke by Dec 10th: 54547102/ mdekoke@bendigohealth.org.au

Marian DeKoke & Danielle Lindsay

2008 Conference Planning Committee

Volunteers are required to assist with planning the 2008 Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network conference. Time involved will be kept to a minimum and meetings can be teleconferenced. If you would like to help plan your conference please contact Sally Harris.

NEW ALLIED HEALTH COURSES AT LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

In 2009, La Trobe University is introducing new courses for allied health. Students will have the opportunity to obtain a double degree within four years, obtaining a bachelor/masters double degree. For example, occupational therapy graduates will obtain a masters of occupational therapy practice. For students wanting to exit after three years of study, they will be awarded a non accredited bachelor degree that does not enable them to practice as an occupational therapist. There is currently an international trend for entry level occupational therapists to have a masters as the entry point into professional practice and La Trobe University wants to ensure that their graduates have international recognition.

The course will also have a very different curriculum and teaching approach. To ensure graduates have sound concepts of team work and an understanding of other health professional's roles, there will be a common foundation first year. All first year students within the Faculty of Health Sciences, with the exception of dental and oral hygiene students, will undertake the same units within first year. This includes interprofessional practice, anatomy, physiology and psychology. This will also allow for more flexibility with later transfers between courses more efficient. There will be more flexibility in teaching with additional on-line support and a more enquiry based teaching approach that supports deeper learning.

There will continue to be two major pathways to becoming a occupational therapist. Students can enter via the VTAC system, straight from secondary school and also via graduate entry for those students already with a degree. Graduate entry students will enter at the beginning of third and all students will complete intensive third and fourth years, enabling them to obtain enough credit points for a masters. These graduates will still be seen as entry level graduates, which is the same as what occurs at present.

The university is also planning to have its first cohort of first year occupational therapy students at its Bendigo campus. It is anticipated that 20 students will enroll through the VTAC system and will be able to complete three of their four years at Bendigo. Unfortunately there is not the infrastructure to do specialist units such as anatomy at Bendigo.

For more information, go to www.latrobe.edu.au/health

Carol McKinstry, La Trobe University

CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE



In May this year, a workshop on consumer participation and chronic disease self-management was held at the Bendigo Community Health Centre. The workshop was facilitated by the Chronic Illness Alliance and Health Issues Centre, and was organised as part of the Chronic Illness Alliance's Chronic Disease Self-Management Special Interest Group. The workshop described the evidence on consumer involvement in chronic disease programs and outlined a range of strategies health professionals and health services can implement to enhance the involvement of consumers and community members.

In Victoria, there is a steady momentum towards consumer and community participation practice. To some extent this is being led by the Department of Human Services' consumer participation policy, *Doing it with us and not for us* (DHS, 2006). This policy outlines a range of strategic directions for health services and government departments to take to enhance consumer and community participation. The policy describes participation as the meaningful involvement of consumers, carers and community members in decision-making about health policy and planning, care and treatment and the wellbeing of themselves and their communities. It also indicates that consumer participation should happen at a number of levels of health care: individual; ward and program; health service organisational; and Department of Human Services.

At the July workshop, participants focused on developing strategies for enhancing consumer and community participation at the individual level, ward and program level, and, to some extent, at a health service organizational

(Cont. page 5)

Consumer and community participation: planning for the future (cont)

level. Strategies that were identified included surveying clients to seek their input on new diabetic management programs, involving community members in staff workshops and strategic planning processes, and systematically seeking the advice of community members regarding strategies to promote chronic disease self-management programs to the community.

There was general recognition of the need to plan appropriately and strategically for consumer and community participation. Strategies for a consumer and community participation plan were identified and included examining the evidence of effectiveness on consumer participation strategies, seeking CEO and executive level support for participation, allocating the role of consumer and community participation to a staff member, and establishing an internal working group to build internal capacity for consumer and community participation.

So that the work needed to establish good consumer and community participation approaches is minimised, a number of actions were recommended. These actions focused on developing initiatives that build upon the existing work of staff and current partnerships with consumers and community groups. Another example for enhancing consumer involvement identified at the workshop was to interview patients accessing the physiotherapy program to identify what improvements could be made to the program.

Throughout Victoria, a range of consumer and community participation initiatives are under way. Consumers and community members are involved in the development of Quality of Care Reports; Community Advisory Committees are contributing to strategic planning for health services; and consumers are taking part in cancer service improvement initiatives. At a Department of Human Services level, consumers are also being increasingly involved in service planning and policy development. Health Issues Centre runs a Consumer Nominee Program that nominates consumers for government and state-wide committees. Through this program consumers have been nominated for Department of Human Services' committees that are addressing service coordination, e-health, outpatients' reform and ambulatory care reforms.

Health Issues Centre's experience of supporting consumers and community members to participate—along with its research into the health care needs of consumers and community members—has demonstrated that consumers want to have a say in decisions about their care and treatment, are able to engage in issues that directly affect them and their families, and want a range of approaches for providing input and feedback to health services that do not involve consumer surveys or committee meetings.

Throughout the health sector, there is recognition that time, resources, leadership and skills are needed to meaningfully involve consumers in decision-making processes. Health professionals interested in enhancing their knowledge and skills in consumer and community participation should visit Health Issues Centre's two websites for evidence, resources, plans, guidelines and training opportunities www.healthissuescentre.org.au and www.participateinhealth.org.au

I hope to be able to visit the Loddon Mallee region in the New Year and to learn more about current practices of consumer and community involvement. Please feel free to contact me at Health Issues Centre on 03 9479 5827 or l.cordwell@healthissuescentre.org.au if you require further information on consumer and community participation in health.

Lauren Cordwell - Senior Project Officer, Health Issues Centre
l.cordwell@healthissuescentre.org.au / Tel: 03 9479 3218

Health Issues Centre is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that has been promoting consumer perspectives in the Australian health system for over 20 years. Its mission is to improve the health outcomes for Australians, especially those who are disadvantaged. It works with a wide range of consumers, health providers, researchers, governments and other health organisations to achieve this through: policy analysis and advocacy from consumer perspectives; consumer-focused research; supporting consumer participation; and providing information.

The Chronic Illness Alliance has 39 member organisations, both state and national. The aim of the Alliance is to build a better focus in health policy and health services for all people with chronic illnesses. It does this through education and research projects.