



Update from the Network General Manager

Over the last month I have experienced the health system from a very different perspective as the daughter of my extremely ill father. It was an experience which provided me with insights into the needs of families of ill patients at an extremely stressful time.

A few weeks ago my father had a significant stroke and was rushed to an emergency department of a hospital that shall remain nameless (but not in NSW).

Sixteen hours after admission to the ED, I arrived at the hospital to find my dad somewhere in transit between the ED and the neurology ward.

The nursing staff who were caring for my father were, without exception, outstanding. Well trained neurology nurses, hard working and unfailingly helpful.

Equally, other staff including the doctors and physiotherapists were fascinating to watch at work and talk to. The neurology physiotherapy student supervisor terrified me almost as much as the students, and nearly as much as when I was a student on that same ward!

I learnt that the system of care is very much based on a team approach that requires very good communication between team members if it is to work well, and that despite the best of intentions, this does not always occur.

In addition, when you are a patient or a family member of a patient, you are vulnerable, and unless you are assertive and knowledgeable, it can be difficult to communicate effectively.

Discussions around management of my father with staff were complex and very sensitive, taking place in public areas, which was most disconcerting. In this case my mother as a layperson could not understand clinical and technical information, and without my presence would have struggled to comprehend quite simple messages.

Signs such as the following one next to my father's bed in the stroke unit are not particularly helpful:

"For confidentiality patient's family and visitors are not permitted to read medical and or nursing files".

How much nicer it would have been if there was an additional sentence that said:

"However, if you are the next of kin and are keen to know more, our staff would be happy to go through the records with you".

Strokes affect approximately 48,000 people every year in Australia. Fifty percent of these occur in people over 75 years, like my father. Stroke is now the second most common reason for death in Australia and a leading cause of long term disability among adults.

We admit around 1,000 patients each year into our hospitals with a stroke. Contemporary stroke management revolves around the stroke unit, of which we have two, and advances in drug management are allowing us to intervene earlier in some instances and produce better outcomes. I welcome the introduction of thrombolysis for stroke management into our network of services over the coming 12 months.

Once again I would appreciate your assistance to make copies of this newsletter available for distribution to staff within your ward/department who do not have access to e-mail.

SUE SHILBURY
General Manager
Central Hospitals Network

Spinal Research wins international acclaim

A St George Hospital research team headed by Dr Ashish Diwan of St George Hospital's Orthopaedic Research Institute has received international acclaim for their groundbreaking study into the healing of injured inter-vertebral discs. Dr Diwan believes he is now on the cusp of finding a new treatment for back pain, a condition that afflicts nine out of every ten people.



Dr Diwan's work saw him awarded best paper and poster presentation at the recent International Society for the Study of Lumbar Spine scientific meeting in Bergen, Norway.

The St George orthopaedic surgeon and his research team have discovered a way of reversing the degeneration and death of cells - a find they hope will ultimately lead to a way of regenerating inter-vertebral spinal discs.

Dr Diwan said they have been working with a molecule called Bone Morphogenic Protein-7 (BMP-7). He explained that instead of using the patient's own hip bone chips as a graft, BMP-7 can be used for spinal fusion.

This led the researchers to consider whether BMP-7 could help make a new disc, or heal an injured inter-vertebral disc.

The team used degenerated patient disc samples removed during total disc replacement operations and treated them in the laboratory with BMP-7.

Their research has shown that not only does BMP-7 reverse the process of degeneration and cell death, but also enhances production of a matrix that provides the cushioning effect of the discs. Dr Diwan said there was great excitement about the potential of BMP-7 regenerating the inter-vertebral disc.

Baby numbers swell at St George and Sutherland hospitals

Following recent reports that Australia's population would reach 21 million in late June, it is not surprising that St George and Sutherland hospitals' maternity wards have been kept busy of late. Figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics released last month show there were 265,900 babies born in Australia in 2006 – the highest number recorded in 35 years.

CHN figures show that in May this year, there were 221 babies born at St George compared to 200 in May 2005. There were 95 babies born at Sutherland compared to 83 in May 2005.



Sutherland Hospital moving towards centre of excellence in low risk maternity care

A re-design of maternity services across St George and Sutherland hospitals has seen Sutherland Hospital's Maternity Service undergo some major changes towards becoming a centre for excellence in low risk maternity care. Newly appointed full-time staff specialist at Sutherland Hospital Dr John Breen, who trained in Glasgow, Dublin and Oxford, shares the hospital's ambition.

Dr Breen says the networking of St George and Sutherland Hospitals maternity services is providing specialised care at both sites. With tertiary level care easier to access at St George for women with complicated pregnancies, Sutherland Hospital is establishing itself as the best option for women with low risk of complications.

In the past 12 months, the Sutherland Hospital service has moved to a Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) model, which allows women to see the same midwife at each clinic visit.

Vanessa Clements, Midwifery Unit Manager at Sutherland Hospital, said the model provides continuity of care, and is backed-up by research showing outcomes for both mother and baby are more positive when the relationship between pregnant women and midwives is established and maintained throughout pregnancy.

Sutherland Hospital is working towards a model that allows expectant mothers to see the same midwife for all their antenatal care. The same midwife will deliver their baby and stay with them for their postnatal care.

Sutherland Cannabis Clinic future assured

Sutherland Cannabis Clinic has gained important recognition with a State Government funding injection of \$1.1 million to ensure the clinic's future over the next four years. Operating as part of the Sutherland Hospital and Community Health Service, the Cannabis Clinic opened its doors last June, and currently provides counselling to more than 166 clients.

Clinic manager Therese Finch said the specialist service offers free and confidential counselling to cannabis users, medical support for cannabis withdrawal, a dual diagnosis group program, and support on cannabis issues to other specialist and welfare services.

A doctor attends the clinic once a week for clients requiring medical support for cannabis withdrawal and a 'Twice as Tough' group program is available for clients with co-existing cannabis problems and anxiety and/or depression issues. Ms Finch said dual issues can cause a merry-go-round effect if both are not managed at the same time.

She said cannabis use at work is an occupational health and safety issue for employers and a number of clients had contacted the clinic after being tested for cannabis use at work, or after their employers had become concerned about their welfare.

SGH Auxiliaries make annual donations



The Barton and Allawah Auxiliaries tirelessly raise money every year for St George Hospital. This year the Barton Auxiliary nominated to donate \$25,000 towards the purchase of a Video Assisted Bronchoscope for the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and \$2,000 to the William Tan Rehabilitation Appeal to upgrade the gymnasium/facility rooms in the 6 West Rehabilitation Ward.

The Allawah Auxiliary also elected to donate their money towards purchasing the Video Assisted Bronchoscope for the ICU.

Left: Dr Michael O'Leary, ICU Staff Specialist at St George Hospital, receives the donation from the Barton Auxiliary members.

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A cheque presentation was held at the hospital on Monday, 25 July where representatives from both the ICU and Rehabilitation Unit were present to receive the generous donations. Network General Manager Sue Shilbury expressed her sincere gratitude to both auxiliaries for their ongoing support in raising money for St George Hospital patients. **These donations have assisted the 2006 ICU Christmas Appeal to reach its goal of \$56,000 and the Bronchoscope can now be purchased.**

Bell Singers donate to Rehab

Since 1994, "The Bell Singers" community singing group have been raising funds for St George Hospital through their performances at retirement villages and nursing homes. The group does not charge any appearance fees, but the singers request a donation for their services which goes to St George Hospital to improve services and purchase medical equipment.

Recently, on the 28 June, the Bell Singers donated \$6,000 towards the William Tan Rehabilitation Appeal to upgrade the gymnasium/facility rooms in the 6 West Rehabilitation Ward. They were formally thanked by representatives from the hospital Executive and Rehabilitation units.

Leanne Mills, Director of Nursing & Midwifery Services at St George Hospital, attended on behalf of General Manager Sue Shilbury to express sincere gratitude to the Bell Singers for their ongoing support for the hospital.

Right: *Dr Scott Hannan, Staff Consultant St George Hospital Rehabilitation Unit, with Mrs Frances Long, Group Leader of the Bell Singers Group presenting \$6,000 donation towards the William Tan Rehabilitation Appeal.*



Fashion funds

The Lamrock Committee held a fashion parade as its first major fundraiser for St George Hospital for 2007. The event, held at Zippo's restaurant Blakehurst on 16 May, attracted more than 200 guests, and raised more than \$4,000 towards this year's fundraising commitments.

Charity Dinner for SGH Rehabilitation Unit

Thank you to all staff who attended the Lamrock Committee's Charity Dinner on Friday 22 June at the Australian Golf Club. Some 140 guests enjoyed two courses of fine food, participated in some spirited bidding for auction items, and were entertained by guest speaker Dr William Tan. Approximately \$13,000 was raised for the Rehabilitation Unit Appeal. Special thanks to the Lamrock Committee for their tireless work organising this fundraising event.

Stars, stripes and students

The Community Relations Department hosted two groups of American students in May as a fundraising activity. A total of 40 undergraduates interested in a career in medicine, nursing or allied health enjoyed afternoon tea and a general presentation on St George Hospital. This was followed by a tour of the Emergency Department, Cancer Care Centre and Children's Ward. Many thanks to all staff who contributed their time to make these tours a great success – the students gained a lot of useful knowledge and excellent feedback was received.

Oh man! A health information night for men

Men's Health Week was a good time to put Men's health issues under the spotlight. St George Hospital hosted a free community information evening at St George Leagues Club on 14 June, for men, their partners and families.

To assist men to better understand important health issues, the hospital's Men's Health Initiative and Prostate Cancer Institute have developed a partnership with the Black Dog Institute, Urology Sydney, the St George Division of GPs and the St George Leagues Club.

Marty Janssen, a senior social worker at St George Hospital, said the evening was held to provide information on a range of men's health issues including prostate cancer screening and treatment, urology health, mental health and general well-being.

The evening was hosted by St George rugby league legend and local identity Johnny Raper. Mr Raper said he didn't worry much about his health in his younger days. "It was just something that I didn't think about – but now that I am older, I realise that my health is very important to me," he said.

"I have had some health problems in later life, and I know that I need to do things differently, such as taking better care of myself and having regular health check-ups."

Sutherland Hospital primary school tours

If you have seen school children on tour around the hospital and wondered how this happens, you can thank the hard working teachers in the hospital's School Room. This program for primary school tours is so successful that the calendar is totally booked for the next 12 months.

Children visit the Children's Ward, Emergency and other relevant areas to give them an orientation to the hospital, and to lessen their anxiety about being in hospital. The program has been running for ten years and sees over children 1,200 children attending each year.

Sutherland Hospital volunteers and fundraising

There are many dedicated committees and volunteers supporting Sutherland Hospital.

Keep buying all those yoghurts, salads, fruit salads and juices – because thanks to the volunteers and their customers, **Let's Get Fresh** raised \$200,000 for a Sterad machine for the hospital's Operating Theatres and CSSD. This is an amazing achievement from a little, but busy outlet like Let's Get Fresh. Volunteers from this outlet have the attitude that they help by providing healthy food and fundraising for equipment, and the hospital provides them with an interest and a friendly working environment.

Volunteers from the **Book Nook** have donated money to purchase a special bed for the Perioperative Unit and two Vital Sign monitors for Barkala.

Sutherland Hospital's **Raffle Volunteers** have donated funds to the Paediatrics Physiotherapy area to purchase toys and therapy items to assist children's rehabilitation.

In addition, these volunteers purchased a video player for Killara patients and a CD player for Killara's Falls Prevention Room, and gave a further \$5,000 donation to provide televisions and phones in some wards.

Quilt making

Apart from all the money our wonderful volunteers have donated, many others help in their own way – Margaret Budge at the hospital's Information Desk, is a very skilled quilter and has been busy making quilts for the patient's beds. She has supplied about twelve quilts this year as well as decorative wall hangings for the Children's Ward, and carry bags for patients' walking frames.

Killara goes bingo

Killara Ward patients are enjoying the opportunity to play bingo thanks to Volunteers Kerry Nicholson and Linda Shaw who run a bingo session on Thursdays. Falls Prevention Volunteer Barbara Riches knits scarves and beanies as prizes for the bingo winners.

Vale Elaine McGuire - a life of devotion and service

She will be remembered by many as the Matron and Superintendent of Nursing at St George Hospital until her retirement in March 1974. Elaine McGuire commenced her general nursing training at St George Hospital in 1938, and then did her midwifery training. She was appointed to the hospital staff as a graduate nurse in 1943 and worked on the wards, in theatre and was in charge of the children's ward, and later held positions as Senior Sister Deputy Matron. She was appointed as Matron and Superintendent of Nursing in 1970.

Elaine sought to develop professionally and undertook Nursing and Administrative studies. She was appointed as Foundation Fellow of the College of Nursing, and was recognised as raising nursing

standards and levels of patient care, and for setting a wonderful example and a positive influence on several generations of St George nurses.

After her retirement Elaine continued her nursing work as a Volunteer Abroad in Papua New Guinea, followed by working as a nurse in a refugee camp in northern Thailand. On her return home, she gave voluntary respite care to parents of children with disabilities. In 2002 Elaine was awarded "The Citizen of the Year" by Rockdale City Council. Her face is immortalised in the figures and faces of "Australian Heroes" in the grounds of Parliament House.

Volunteers sought for research project

Fat tissue produces its own hormones but our researchers are unsure what controls the production!

Are you.....

- Aged between 18-45 years old
- Female
- Not on any regular medications
- Not pregnant
- Generally healthy

The University of New South Wales St George Clinical School is looking for healthy female volunteers to participate in research into hormones produced by fat tissue during the menstrual cycle. Participants will be reimbursed \$50 for their time and inconvenience.

If interested, please contact: Nicole Hall or Associate Professor Tony O'Sullivan (02) 9350 2019 or nicole_hall86@yahoo.com.au

Calling all bright buttons ...

It's on again ... the Lamrock Committee's annual trivia night to raise funds for St George Hospital. This is always a fun night and this year will be no exception. All masterminds are encouraged to attend. The trivia night will be at Georges River Sailing Club, Sanoni Avenue, Dolls Point on Friday 3 August. The cost is \$20 per person and nibbles are provided. If you would like to reserve a seat (tables of 10) please contact the Community Relations Department on 9350 2901.

Sutherland Hospital's Annual Fundraising Dinner Dance

This year's event will be held on Friday 3 August, at Doltone House, Sylvania. Tickets for the evening can be purchased from Community Relations at \$95 each or \$950 for a table of 10. Tickets include canapés, three course dinner, wine, beer and soft drinks. Money raised will go to the operating theatre for medical equipment. Don't miss this night of fine food, fun and good entertainment.

Other Coming Events

Kogarah Fair & Charity Bed Race, 10am – 3pm, Saturday 1 September.

St George Hospital Symposium 2007

Please put this date in your diaries. The Symposium will be on **Thursday 8 November** in the Auditorium, Research and Education Centre. The program is being finalised and staff are invited to provide suggestions for the sessions and workshops to Professor Beng Chong Beng.chong@unsw.edu.au or ph 9113 2010. The Symposium will be followed by the Annual Medical Staff Council Dinner and presentation of research awards.

Next edition of the newsletter

If you have news, events or information for the next edition, please contact Marilyn Johnson ph 4253 4869 or Louise Saville ph 95407730 in Area Corporate Communications, or email:

marilyn.johnson@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au

The deadline for the next edition is 20 July 2007.