

THE PULSE



PUBLIC HEALTH: COMMUNITIES, INITIATIVES & VOLUNTEERS



Deakin Medical
Students'
Association



Winter is here, as is another edition of Deakin medical students' favourite quarterly newsletter, *The Pulse*. This edition, 'Public Health: Communities, Initiatives & Volunteering', is full of wonderful pieces from students and staff about their experiences and impacts on their respective communities.

The edition begins with a fantastic article from 3rd year student Amy Reid discussing her time spent with a refugee family in Geelong, with a first hand account from Mu Thien Chri, a 22 year old woman who spent her childhood in a refugee camp. There are also

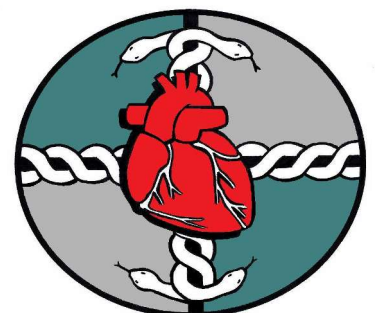
interesting pieces from Associate Professor Colin Bell on an initiative to reduce alcohol in sport, from Thomas Garry on the role of medical students in volunteering, and Lena Handrinos on her experiences in Vanuatu.

The issue finishes with some of UHAD's highlights and upcoming events.

Thanks also goes to Anisha Haseeb (3rd year) for designing the cover.

I wish everyone well in the second half of the year, and hope you enjoy this edition of *The Pulse*!

Benjamin Paul
Editor (3rd Year)



MeDUSA

Public Health and Volunteering:

My Experience

By Amy Reid (3rd Year)

I'd like to introduce you to a good friend of mine who I met last year, Mu Thein Chri, or 'Mu'. Mu is a 22 year old refugee from Burma, which is now called Myanmar after the civil war, and her family have been settled in Geelong now for five years.

"My name is Mu Thein Chri.

I was born in Karenni Refugee Camp 2 called Mea Su Rin and it is in Thailand.

Mea Su Rin is a very special place to me because I spent my whole childhood life there but it is such a pity that the place doesn't exist in a map because it is too tiny and it is located in a jungle.

Life in a Refugee Camp is like being a pet in the garden because you are surrounded and not allowed to go outside, plus you only get to eat when you are fed, so imagine even though you are terribly hungry you won't get to eat unless you are fed. The main food that we eat is white rice. We have rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner and there is no such thing as dessert or snacks. There is no electricity because just as I mentioned earlier, it is located in a jungle.

When I did my homework or study at night, I used a candle or a lamp.

We had to carry wood to make a fire for cooking. We also had to carry water and then we had to boil it before we drink. Our house was made out of bamboo and wood, and our roof was made out of thatch. It is not a concrete house that lasts forever so once a year we always had to rebuild it.

We waited for such a long time to come to Australia, we went to a lot of interviews and medical checks. We were extremely happy when we had the opportunity to come to Australia. Especially my mum, she was beyond happy because she knew that if she came to Australia, her four kids would get a better education, have enough food to eat and have a better life.

When I left Mea Su Rin, I was so happy but also a bit sad because I had to leave everything behind. I had to leave my childhood friends, my teacher but I just tried to stay strong

waiting for what would happen. I was so excited and also a bit scared to get on a plane because it was the first time that I had seen a real plane.

When we arrived in Australia, the environment was totally different, there were a lot of cars, tall buildings and birds. It was hard to settle in Australia with no



English at all but time has helped me to improve my English. I didn't know that I was a refugee when I was in the Refugee Camp because I thought that was how life is. I only realised I was a refugee when I came to live in Australia because I'm free to go to the place that I desire and plus there is a lots of opportunities.

Now I'm in Year 11 and I try to work hard at school so that one day I can fulfill my dream job, which is to become a doctor and work for the United Nations and help refugees."

"Life in a Refugee camp is like being a pet in the garden because you are surrounded and not allowed to go outside..."

My first evening of tutoring was one I will never forget. Mu, her three brothers and her mother greeted me outside their house in Corio, and showed me inside to a straw matt with a small table in the middle.

After a lot of chatting and getting to know one another, dinner was served which was quite a shock for me as I was not sure this was a part of my role. After a lovely, interesting meal of spiced dried fish, boiled greens resembling boc choi, and rice pockets wrapped in banana leaves (all eaten with hands, no knives and forks) I sat down and helped each of the children with their homework and any difficulties they were having at school. They were and still are so eager to learn, and incredibly appreciative of any help with homework that I could offer them.

This family has done an incredible job integrating into the Geelong community. The entire family are soccer fanatics, playing for Corio bay, and Mu's brother Kolo enjoys weekly art classes and has as of this year been accepted into 'The Gordon TAFE'

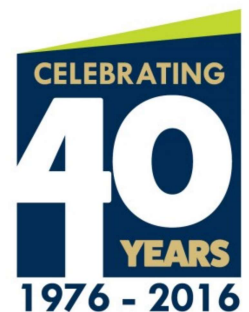
to complete a Building Design certificate. They have worked toward attaining their P-plates to get around, and also themselves volunteer at community hubs.

There are a lot of Karenni refugees settled in Geelong now. Often when I tutor, a young Karenni boy from down the road will open the door and come in and sit down, joining us on the straw mat. Or two Karenni elderly women will come around sharing some vegetables. I won't forget when a Karenni grandma-like character

opened the door and just came in to sit on the couch for a while to see what was going on. The Karenni community in Geelong is alive and vibrant, and had an incredible float display this year at PakoFesta.

Aside from tutoring, I have made a family of close friends in Geelong which is really comforting for me as I am new to Geelong myself; moving down for Medicine. It has undoubtedly been one of the best experiences of my life.

If anyone is interested in volunteering in any way, shape or form through Diversitat, please contact them through <http://www.diversitat.org.au/contact>



www.diversitat.org.au

Good Sports: A Community Initiative Good For More Than Just Sport

By Associate Professor Colin Bell

Chances are you have never heard of Good Sports. But if you are involved in sport there is a good chance you have benefited from it.

Excessive alcohol consumption is responsible for 6% of all deaths and 5% of the burden of disease globally. Australia has a culture of excessive drinking and you only need to see the label-forward pots of Carlton Draught dominating the screen on Channel 7's Friday Front Bar to know this culture is strongly associated with sports. In one Australian study, non-elite football players were reported to consume between 4 and 9 times the recommended level of alcohol.



Channel 7's Friday Front Bar

Good Sports is a three-step alcohol management program for sporting clubs, supported by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, that helps clubs put sports rather than booze in the spotlight. They want women and children to feel just as comfortable in the clubrooms as men.



Started in Victoria, Good Sports is now in over 5,000 clubs nationwide, across a number of codes, and it is kicking goals. Good Sports has been shown to reduce the likelihood of risky drinking by 37 per cent and reduces the risk of alcohol-related harm to club members by 42 per cent. Those are impressive figures and the program has expanded into junior clubs to help tackle other public health issues such as obesity, smoking and mental health.

Just as impressive is the boost Good Sports gives to club viability. Volunteers run most local sports clubs and many struggle to attract and retain members. When a club makes a commitment to serving alcohol responsibly however, parents are happier for their children to participate in the sport, families spend more time at the club and the pool of people willing and able to help grows.

While our elite athletes have their eyes on Olympic gold over the next few weeks, the good sport club down the road is also worthy of gold for helping the rest of us enjoy sport, build community and stay healthy.

Is your club a Good Sports club? For more information and to register see <http://goodsports.com.au>



Do Medical Students Have a Role in Volunteer Medical Work?

By Thomas Garry (3rd Year)

A 13-year-old boy shuffles into the cramped and stiflingly hot examination room in Dili. He reaches the bed, and needs help from his father to lift his cachectic body up. The echocardiogram confirms what was suspected on clinical examination: aortic and mitral valves destroyed by rheumatic heart disease. The damage to the valves was so extensive that any possible hope of surgical replacement or repair was out of the question, especially given how unwell the boy was. Sadly, this boy is not alone in East Timor. Rheumatic heart disease runs rampant. However, were it not for a small Australian charitable organisation, *East Timor Hearts Fund*, this sad case would not have even been known about.

East Timor Hearts Fund has been running for over a decade now. The organisation holds several clinics each year in East Timor, screening for Rheumatic Heart Diseases in patients referred by local clinicians. Dr Noel Bayley and other cardiologists from Australia perform a vast number of echos on patients. If a person is found to have surgically treatable valvular disease, the organisation funds a trip to Australia where the valve is replaced or repaired.

East Timor Hearts Fund is the gold-standard charity in my opinion. The reason for this is simple: they plan to make themselves

redundant. While the echo clinics continue to run smoothly, the charity has organised a massive prevalence study of Rheumatic Heart Disease in East Timor children and adolescents. If PHM has taught me anything, nothing can be achieved in public health without the presence of epidemiological data.

Dr Bayley has also arranged for Dili's first cardiologist trainee to receive extensive echocardiography training in Melbourne, thus providing scope for all echo clinics to be carried out one day in East Timor. Although it will take some time, there is even momentum to one day perform heart surgery in East Timor. Like a good TV show, *East Timor Hearts Fund* has an end-point. You might even say that it is the *Breaking Bad* of

charitable organisations.

East Timor Hearts Fund also offers a handful of lucky students that opportunity to join one of their many trips each year to Dili. In March this year, I was one of these fortunate students who made the

trip across the Timor Sea to Dili. This was my first trip in a "volunteering" capacity as a medical student. In an era where it seems that volunteer trips are becoming increasingly common, there appears to be a concerning trend of companies

"Ultimately, medical students should appreciate that they have potential to change the world for the better in their own unique way"

EAST TIMOR HEARTS FUND

Australians supporting a
healthy Timor-Leste

materialising to financially capitalise on the blissfully ignorant yet benevolent nature of young students. With this in mind, it was assuring to know that myself and my fellow medical student companion on the trip would not only be made useful by writing the important albeit tedious medical notes for each patient.

At the end of a particularly long and impossibly humid day in clinic, Dr Noel turned to me and my fellow medical student to reflect on the numerous cases seen throughout that afternoon. Before finishing, Dr Noel discussed his hope that by bringing medical students to Dili, he would inspire someone to continue the global

fight against health inequality in their own unique way. He didn't try to glorify his role in saving numerous lives, nor did he expect any recognition or gratitude. If *East Timor Hearts Fund* and Dr Noel don't set the standard for what medical student volunteer work should be, I don't know what could.

Ultimately, medical students should appreciate that they have potential to change the world for the better in their own unique way. The challenge is to accept that the best way to do so may not involve unsupervised overseas trips while we are still training. In the context of the enormity of global health issues, we should be effective altruists by rejecting the concept of voluntourism. With this in mind, we must keep alive the innate desire to change the lives of not only our fellow fortunate Australian's, but our global neighbours too.

It seems fitting to end with a pertinent quote from Abraham Lincoln: *"To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own."*

To learn more about the fantastic work done by the East Timor Hearts Fund, visit <http://www.easttimorheartsfund.org.au/>

Labour in Vanuatu

By Lena Handrinos (3rd Year)

It was my first morning in Lamap. I woke up tangled in my mosquito net, rolled out onto the refreshingly cool concrete floor, and made my way down to the beach for a morning wash.

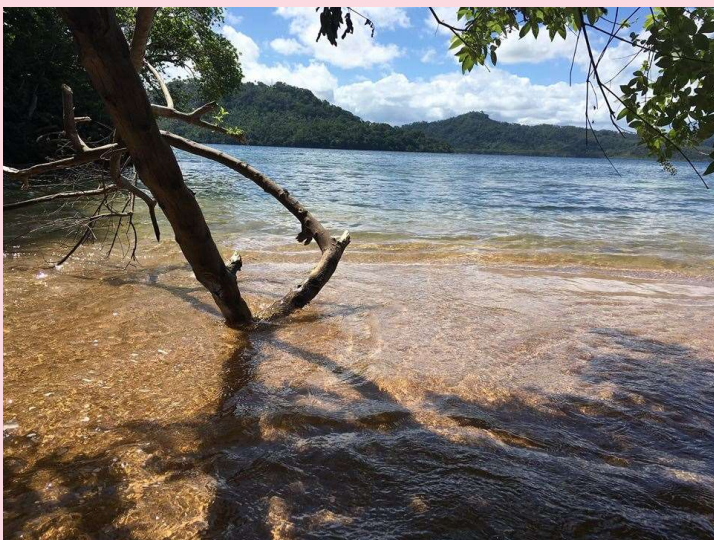
The sun was only just rising, it was high tide, and I could make out a dingy pulling in to shore. One woman stepped out into the knee-deep water, followed by a 4-year-old child, and then another woman. They hurriedly made their way up the hill towards town – market day, I thought.

By the time I made it back to the clinic, this 17-year-old second-time pregnant lady was labouring in the corridor of the abandoned hospital where we had set up clinic. Her friend was looking after her 4-year-old daughter.

They had been on that tin boat since 4:00am praying that baby would not arrive at sea. By 8:00pm that night, baby boy was born, and I had seen my first delivery.



Last month I was involved in the delivery of babies in rural Victoria, which now allows me to more profoundly reflect on the privilege of delivering babies in rural Vanuatu. There are some things you cannot learn from textbooks, that you cannot experience in a regular clinical placement;

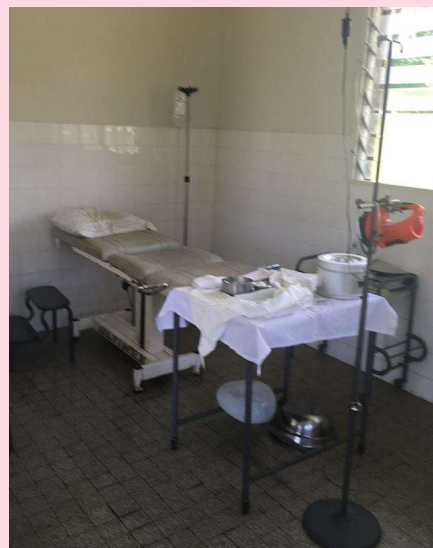


what it is like being barefoot in show but not flinching, what it is like with a lack of analgesia but cleansing calmness exuded by mother-to-be, and the absence of any urge to shy away to the corner to avoid being in the way.



I have a greater appreciation for the neonatal resuscitation cot, the skilled staff versed in managing post-partum haemorrhage and the theatre nearby for retrieving retained placentas. To

deliver a baby with the benefits of modern technologies is a privilege, but to deliver a baby in a make-shift birthing suite is a beautiful hands-on experience like no other. I went to Vanuatu as a Troppodoc volunteer, but I returned with a unique education that I encourage all medical students to seek.



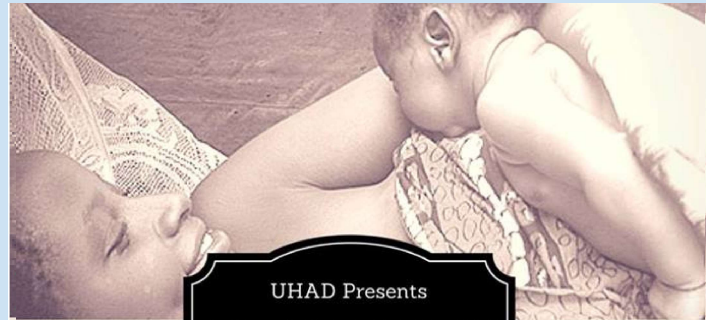
Lena's beautiful black and white photo above won 2nd prize in the UHAD Art and Photography Contest earlier this year.

UHAD

Universal Health At Deakin

UHAD hosted a **Maternal Health Evening** in February to raise awareness of the rudimentary conditions that millions of women around the world endure in childbirth. The night was a great success, with over 40 medical students gathering to hear from Joy Herman about Birthing Kits Foundation Australia and how we can help to improve access to safe conditions for all women during childbirth.

Our mission was to create 400 birthing kits to be sent to women living in developing countries. These birthing kits are simply made with a plastic sheet, soap, 2 gloves, sterile scalpel blade, 3 cords and 5 gauze squares. The impact of such simple measures has facilitated a 20-29% reduction in infection-related maternal deaths and is now a recommended method to assist clean deliveries in developing countries.



UHAD Presents MATERNAL HEALTH EVENING

We'll assemble 400 birthing kits of essential materials for safe and sanitary childbirth in developing countries, hear from a representative from Birthing Kits Foundation Australia, Joy Herman, and learn about childbirth in underresourced settings. Delicious pre-dinner snacks will be provided!

Monday 22nd February • 5-7pm •
Learning Centre SOM



design has a reinforced pit top with bamboo lining to prevent collapse and control pests during flooding. It is made from local, reusable materials. Each toilet costs \$40 and will help create a healthier environment for students in schools and health facilities in which the toilets will be constructed.

Vibrant guest speaker Gerard Finnigan, an epidemiologist and World Vision Health and Nutrition Advisor, shared his insights about the impact of climate change on developing countries. We had a Sunset Walk and Movie Night screening 'The 11th hour'. Our big finale event was an ABCG (ANYTHING BUT CLOTHES or GREEN!) party at a local bar in Geelong. Over the week UHAD rallied students, family and friends who generously donated more than \$600 for the Vanuatu latrine project!



CODE GREEN WEEK was to raise awareness of climate change and its impact on global health. UHAD held events throughout the week to engage fellow students and community members who are passionate about our environment.

During Code Green Week, we had a real, live, pooey (not really – we gave it a good clean) toilet in the med common room for students to “PLOP THEIR POO CHANGE” as a donation to a worthy cause - a project that builds flood-resistant toilets in Sanma province, Vanuatu. The islands of Vanuatu are particularly vulnerable to the effects of El Nino. The new toilet

An avenue for involvement in community, global health initiatives and volunteering



CHANGE & UNZIPPED

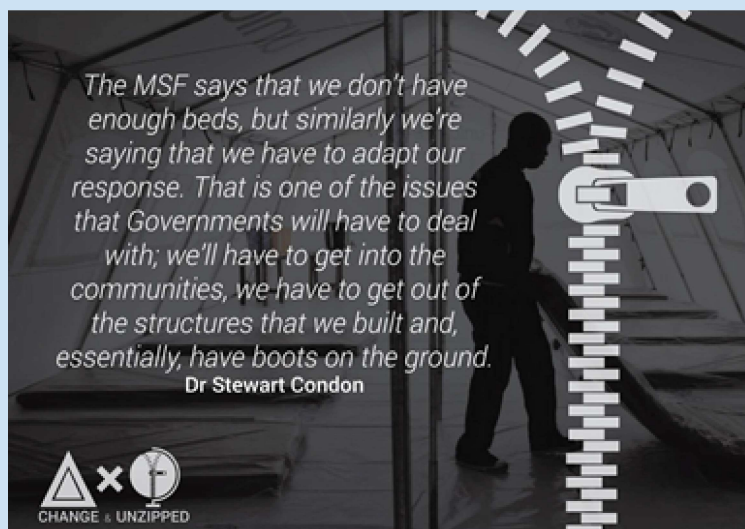
A VICTORIAN GLOBAL HEALTH COLLABORATION

Change x Unzipped is an exciting new collaboration, bringing together Victorian university students to engage in global health!

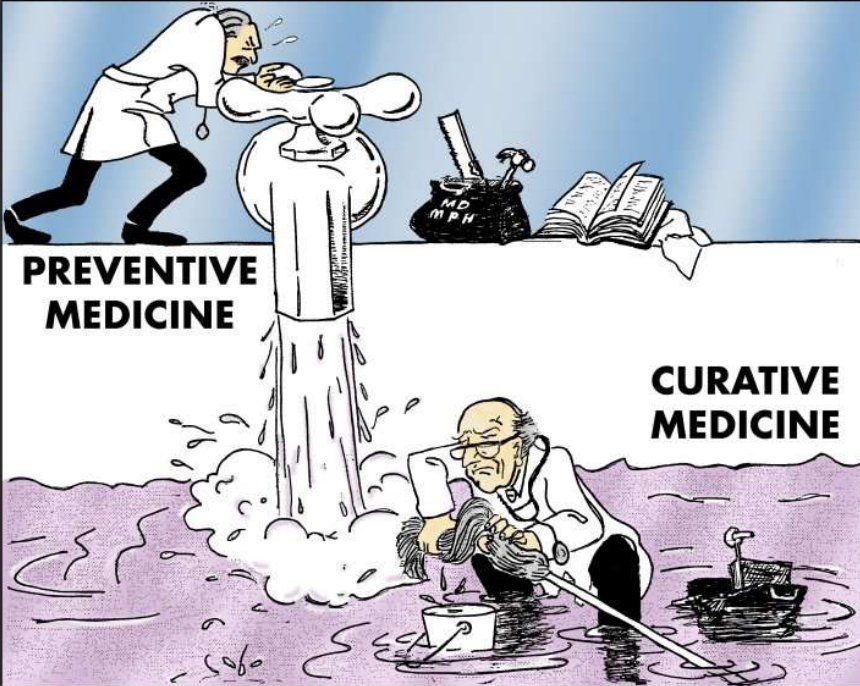
The second day of the Victorian collaborative global health conference, Global Health Unzipped, was held at Deakin Waurn Ponds on Sunday 7th August. Organised by medical students from Deakin University, Monash University, and the University of Melbourne, the conference aimed to engage and facilitate inter-university and multidisciplinary collaboration on the projects of tomorrow.

Global Health Unzipped seeks to empower individuals to take action in Global Health. Be inspired by Dr Stewart Condon, President of MSF Australia, Nova Peris, our first female indigenous parliamentarian and Dr Lloyd Nash, Co-founder and Chair of Global Ideas. Engage with world-class experts during a panel discussion focusing on the promises and pitfalls of volunteerism, the effect of war on health, and the rise of telemedicine.

'Feast On Diversity' will be a vibrant gathering at Deakin University Waurn Ponds, with speakers, music, dance, sport and food from all corners of the world. The celebration will have a particular focus on welcoming local refugees to the Geelong area. Feast On Diversity will be an empowering event which seeks to fuel relationships between future medical professionals, refugees and the culturally diverse community of Geelong. We invite you to 'Feast On Diversity' with us. If you would like to be involved in this celebration please contact us at uhad.deakin@gmail.com



"Australia is a proudly multicultural nation made stronger by the dedication and contribution of people who come here, whether as refugees or migrants." Malcolm Fraser



Oh the wonderful way you'll feel, you hear?
If you just go out and volunteer...
A bird... a worm... a guzzle-bivvit,
Could all use some help if you'll just give it;

You might say "No! Not!! No Way!"
"I've nothing to give - not today anyway!"

But you'll see if you look deep inside of you,
You've lots to give!
It's true! You do!



Watch this space for our 4th and final edition
of the year - "Medicine in the 21st Century:
Technology, Social Media & the Future"

Thanks for reading!

Make sure to follow MeDUSA for the latest updates

<http://www.medusa.org.au/>

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Page 5: <http://goodsports.com.au/>

Page 6-7: <http://www.easttimorheartsfund.org.au/>

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