A weight management program is helping families battle the bulging waistlines of South Australia’s five to nine year old children.

The PEACH (Parenting, Eating and Activity for Child Health) program provides parents with the tools and support they need to create healthy diet and lifestyle changes. Group sessions with other parents are also offered as part of the program.

Four years ago, Claire Whitley was an overweight nine year old who lacked confidence, watched too much television and loved to eat snack foods.

But Claire wasn’t always responsible for her bad habits. Claire’s mother, Pat Armstrong, is the first to admit she could have been a better role model – and now she is.

Claire and Pat are graduates of the PEACH (Parenting, Eating and Activity for Child Health) program.

As a single parent Pat struggled to make time for food shopping and meal preparation. It was easy to let the kids watch television rather than making time for them to be active,’ she said.

‘Meals were not well planned because I was time-poor. The program has taught us to plan a weekly menu together as a family, and the kids are choosing the foods they want to eat based on new found knowledge of what is healthy.

‘You can’t force kids to eat, but you can make sure they are provided with the right foods. In the past if the kids didn’t eat their dinner I would make them something else they were satisfied with.’

Learning better parenting skills through the PEACH program has created more time for Pat to spend with her daughters.

We are spending more time together going for walks, riding bikes or going to the swimming pool, and these times have become special for all of us,’ Pat said.

We have also established family nights when the television is turned off and we talk about things that are important to us.

‘And instead of eating dinner while watching television, we now eat dinner together at the dining table.’

Claire’s self confidence has also increased since taking part in the PEACH program. She is now studying drama in the hope of becoming an actor.
Thousands plunge into hydro pool

A lecture theatre complex to seat more than 200 people, eight new tutorial rooms and an upgrade of existing teaching facilities at Flinders has been made possible by a $10 million Federal Government grant.

The new facilities are expected to be complete by the end of 2009.

The funding was announced at a visit to Flinders University School of Medicine by the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon.

The hydrotherapy pool is mainly used by patients referred from ward areas at FMC, and for group exercise programs designed by physiotherapy staff.

More than 8,000 people participate in self-help classes each year, which are available to people who have completed a course of physiotherapy treatment at FMC. The classes promote a healthy and active lifestyle for people with chronic conditions to help avoid re-admission to hospital.

Adam said the pool has many other benefits for the community.

“Mobility and rehabilitation sessions for elderly people, prenatal and postnatal classes, sessions for people with disabilities and swimming lessons for children with autism are also held by private providers in the pool,” he said.

$10 million boost for School of Medicine

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SOUTHERN ADELAIDE HEALTH SERVICE

The Southern Adelaide Health Service (Southern Health) was established in 2004 to bring together Flinders Medical Centre, Noarlunga Hospital and Alcohol and Drug Services South Australia. Repatriation General Hospital joined the region in July 2008.

Welcome to readers of Southern Health News – particularly to our colleagues and friends at Repatriation General Hospital.

Many of you would be aware that the Repatri Health Service, in particular, and the Southern Health Service, in general, have had a number of recent transformations.

As we say goodbye to winter and welcome in spring, we have encountered a shift in peak demand from the traditional winter to spring for Flinders Medical Centre, Noarlunga Hospital and the Repatriation General Hospital. Presentations to the Emergency Department have increased, but of those presenting the acuity is higher and, as a consequence our admission numbers have increased in all three hospitals.

Such surges in demand take a huge effort from staff and our health partners throughout the region, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their efforts and contributions. I would particularly like to acknowledge the region’s Emergency Department staff and Nursing Directors, who are going the extra mile to improve and manage patient flows during these surge periods.

Noarlunga Hospital, who provided significant increased assistance to the region in managing inter-regional diversion, and increased admissions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Sue O’Neill, A/Executive Director – Acute Services / General Manager, Flinders Medical Centre for her contribution and passion. Sue has also guided the body of work known as Nursing Works, which aims to make nursing work better for patients, nurses and other team members.

Underpinned by the Lean Thinking methodology, one of the key goals of Nursing Works is to increase the time nurses spend in direct patient care. This means more time by our nurses with the patients.

I think other key Southern Health staff who have been acting in Executive roles for more than a year, namely, Debbie Law, Claire Shuttleworth – A/Executive Director, Population and Primary Health Care and Don Hayward – A/Executive Director, Aboriginal Health.

Acknowledgements must also go to Robin Ford, Gary Verstegen and Geoff Tattersall and their Elective Surgery teams for their work on Southern Health’s Elective Surgery Strategy.

The hydrotherapy pool is celebrated during its 10 year anniversary this month after aiding the rehabilitation and recovery of more than 336,000 users.

Acting Director of Physiotherapy, Adam Govey said the pool has been particularly useful for conditions where land-based exercise is limited due to the pain associated with weight bearing.

People with a range of problems including arthritis, back pain and obesity have received aquatic physiotherapy in the pool,” he said.

It has also helped people recover from musculoskeletal problems such as ankle fractures and line replacements; and enabled people with conditions such as cerebral palsy and stroke to move more independently.

Several research projects have demonstrated the beneficial effects of aquatic exercise, including a weight loss study; a study to reduce back pain for pregnant women and the effects of hydrotherapy on the rehabilitation of shoulder surgery patients.

Physiotherapists have developed innovative ways to treat different patient groups in the pool. FMC is the first hospital in Australia to try hydrotherapy treatment for Guillain Barre patients who are often paralysed and may require ventilation circuits to be connected and monitored by a team of staff while the patient is in the water.

Other patients who have not traditionally been treated using aquatic physiotherapy are now regularly treated at Flinders, such as those with ICC (Infrapatellar Inserted Central Patella). This has enabled patients on long term intravenous antibiotics, TPN (total parental nutrition) feeds, and in-hospital dialysis for acute renal failure to access the pool.

FMC has a reputation as the leader in community-based and distributed medical education with our campuses extending from Darwin to Warrnambool in Victoria,” he said.

This new initiative will enable us to reflect the significant academic presence we already have at RGH, in terms of research and teaching, and to develop that presence at Noarlunga.

It also enables the high standard of anatomy and pathology teaching which Flinders is known for to be delivered to the large group of students at the Flinders Medical Centre campus.

SOUTHERN MENTAL HEALTH

Southern Mental Health provides a range of integrated services across community and hospital settings, targeted at all age groups. Services are provided in collaboration with non-Government organisations and the Southern Division of General Practice. Specialised statewide services include those for cognitive disability and autism.

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (DASSA) Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia addresses alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceutical and illicit drug issues across the state. DASSA provides a range of prevention, treatment, information, education and community based services that aim to prevent the use of illicit drugs, the misuse of licit drugs and other pathways out of harmful drug use. Services include drug and alcohol advice, and information services to promote the health and safety of South Australians.

Much has been achieved with recent statistics showing a 64 percent reduction in elective surgery patients who wait longer than their ‘category wait time’ at Repatriation General Hospital, and a 51 percent reduction at Flinders Medical Centre. In a major achievement, Noarlunga Hospital admitted between 97 and 100 percent of patients for surgery within their category wait time.

Southern Health’s new Executive Director, Acute Services, from Symonds joined us on September 22.

Tom hails from the United Kingdom, where he has worked as a senior manager for the National Health Service for more than 13 years.

Welcome also to Chris Seliboth, who joined the region as Executive Director, Population and Primary Health Care on 1 September and Shane Mocatta, who joined us as Aboriginal Health who commenced on September 22, 2008.

Now with Sue O’Neill accepting the regional role of Executive Director – Nursing and Midwifery the Executive team is complete.

Until next time, enjoy the spring sunshine!

Cathy Miller
Chief Executive Officer
Southern Adelaide Health Service

Link: Federal Minister for Health and Ageing Nicola Roxon visits the School of Medicine. Photo courtesy by Bryan Charlton.
A high-tech hexapod robot will be built at Repatriation General Hospital to support research into orthopaedic conditions.

The robot is the first of its type in Australia and is believed to be the most advanced of its type in the world. The robot will be used to study complex joint motions in three dimensions. It will simulate people walking, bending, twisting and lifting to help researchers design and manufacture improved joint replacements.

Biomechanical Engineer Dr John Costi will use the robot to continue his research into strains in vertebral discs that may be a cause of ‘slipped discs’ and lower back pain. Lower back pain affects approximately 70 percent of the adult population at some stage during their life.

The robot will measure the complex biomechanical properties of biological tissues, bones, artificial joints and other medical and surgical devices. Initially, the robot will test the impact of repetitive motion on the spine and vertebral discs, followed by research on hips, knees, shoulders and wrists.

John plans to test vertebral discs on thousands of stress cycles in different movement combinations. He will analyse the way in which they fail in the hope of providing improved manual handling guidelines in the workplace.

Dr Costi said that the robot will be able to test materials in a very advanced way, twisting, pulling and pushing with up to two tonnes of force, he said. ‘By simulating the motion of a joint we are able to understand how that joint might fail, and therefore provide information that will allow the design and manufacture of better joint replacements.’

Construction of the robot is underway and will be completed within the next 12 months with Richard Stanley from RGH Orthopaedics, in collaboration with Associate Professor Ben Cazzolato from the School of Mechanical Engineering, The University of Adelaide. The technology being used is similar to that used in three-dimensional virtual rides at theme parks and in flight simulators, although it is more advanced.

The $100,000 construction is being funded by a $30,000 grant from Foundation Daw Park, the State Government and orthopaedic research funds.

Learning what keeps the punters coming back

After 12 years of gambling, two marriages and thousands of wasted dollars, 37 year old Karen Hill now says she no longer has the urge to gamble.

The mother of two says the pokies were her ‘comfort zone’ when personal problems kept pulling her back to gaming rooms.

Five years ago Karen realised she had a gambling problem. She enrolled in counselling on two separate occasions, but never completed either course of therapy because her urge to gamble was too great. Instead she chose to revisit gambling rooms to ‘hide’ from her personal issues.

‘I lost the trust and respect of my husband, my family and my friends,’ she said. ‘At first playing the pokies was fun and enjoyable, but then I found myself gambling every day.’

What Karen experienced is known as relapse. Flinders University Research Officer Jane Oakes and David Williams are coordinating a study of up to 200 problem gamblers to investigate the predictors of relapse. The study is seeking people including those who are not currently receiving any treatment or counselling for their gambling problems. The study will help determine if the reasons why people take up gambling again can be consistently predicted and prevented.

Jane said possible causes for relapse include lack of social supports, relationship problems, accessibility to gambling venues, irrational thoughts about winning money and financial stress.

Participants will be followed up after one, three, six and 12 months through a questionnaire. No face to face contact is required.

The study is funded through Gambling Research Australia (GRA). Anyone interested in taking part in the study can contact (08) 8404 2610 or (08) 8404 4358.

Take notice of oesophageal cancer

Flinders researchers are spearheading a campaign for better outcomes for those with Barrett’s-derived oesophageal cancer.

Barrett’s oesophagus is a pre-cancerous condition affecting severe reflux sufferers in which normal cells lining the oesophagus are replaced with abnormal cells that, in some people, develop into a type of cancer of the oesophagus called adenocarcinoma.

Barrett’s oesophagus affects around 10 percent of severe reflux sufferers, with one to two in every hundred per year going on to develop Barrett’s-derived adenocarcinoma.

‘It’s one of those cancers that doesn’t get much recognition because it’s less common than bowel cancer, but the fact is that the mortality rate for adenocarcinoma is much higher,’ Professor David Watson, head of the Flinders University Department of Surgery, based at Flinders Medical Centre said.

He said that means that for every two deaths from colon cancer in Australia, there is one death from Barrett’s-derived adenocarcinoma. ‘Because there is such a high death rate associated with the cancer there’s not a strong lobby group to advocate for the disease and bring it to the public attention.’

David hopes that the research he is leading into improved outcomes for Barrett’s-derived cancer will change that.

‘Our research has two components,’ David explained. ‘The first is a laboratory focus, where we are trying to understand new markers of disease progression and changes in cell and gene function.

‘From that, we hope to develop a panel of bio-markers that will allow us to determine which patients with reflux are likely to go on to develop Barrett’s oesophagus and adenocarcinoma. David said this would allow medical staff to better target and treat patients in the future.

The second component of the research, being conducted in conjunction with researchers from the Repatriation General Hospital, aims to develop a cost-effective surveillance model for the disease.

As the moment surveillance has not been able to be cost effective in the Australian health care system. However, the work has not been done to look at this issue. We might be able to mount a better argument for surveillance, and possibly even screening, if we develop better markers of risk.’

David said the research was important because the incidence of Barrett’s derived oesophageal cancer was on the increase.

‘The condition mostly affects older men and it is associated with obesity – particularly abdominal obesity – so we’re seeing more and more of it.”

In fact, he said over the past three decades there had been a 600 percent increased prevalence of this cancer.

The research is being funded through a National Health and Medical Research Council research project grant.
Healthy bodies make healthy minds

An innovative program is helping people with a mental illness to keep healthy in mind and body in the southern region.

‘Thinking Fit’ is a program that introduces users of Southern Mental Health Services’ Morier Ward and Adelaide Clinic to gym-based activities. While many of us struggle to find the motivation to use the gym regularly, people on antipsychotic medication can also experience associated weight gain from their medication, says GP Plus Health Strategies Project Officer Gill Weston.

Introducing people to physical activity helps to increase the health-risk factors, anxiety and weight gain.

‘Many participants make great achievements in terms of fitness, which can lead to improved personal confidence and self-recovery from mental illness.’

The program provides one-on-one assessments by a physiotherapist, followed by highly supported individualised gym programs. Further assistance is provided to attend Noarlunga Leisure Centre at discounted rates.

The program is a partnership between Centacare, the Physiotherapy Department at Noarlunga Hospital and Noarlunga Leisure Centre.

Gill said the success of the Noarlunga based ‘Thinking Fit’ program could lead to the development of a regional service.

‘Alternatively, the physiotherapist will play a vital role in the Emergency Department and the inpatient team, which in turn will help patient flow.’

David said the physician assistants would work under the supervision of the paediatricians and would not be making crucial medical decisions.

‘That will remain the role of our paediatricians.’

He said the key role of the physician assistants was to act as a further ‘continuity lynch-pin’ between the Emergency Department and the Paediatric Department.

‘What physician assistants will allow us to do is provide our paediatric patients and their families with a better, quicker and safer service.’

David said if the trial proved successful, it could lead to a physician assistant training program being developed by the Department of Health in South Australia.

Improved cancer care for country patients

A project linking city and country cancer care providers has enabled more patients in the state’s south east to receive cancer care closer to home.

The Coordinating Cancer Services in the south east of South Australia project has been successful in improving the skills and knowledge of cancer care providers in towns including Mount Gambier, Millicent, Kingston, Naracoorte and Bordertown.

Six general practitioners, one hospital doctor and eight nurses from the south-east have spent time at Flinders Medical Centre (FMC) learning how to provide safe, quality cancer care.

Head of Medical Oncology at FMC Dr Bogda Koczwara said the project has also improved communication between oncologists at FMC and health care providers in the south east about cancer management strategies for patients.

‘In the past treatment plans for patients needing chemotherapy have not been coordinated closely and patients needed to come to Flinders for some treatments,’ she said.

‘Now health care providers are much more confident and willing to share information to better manage patients in the south east which is a great boost for patient care in the area.

The project has also improved access to specialist appointments for country patients.

Increasing numbers of patients have been seen by Dr Koczwara in her clinic at Mount Gambier Hospital.

The clinic was established as part of the project and originally held every three months. Funding from Mount Gambier Hospital has enabled the clinic to be held every six weeks.

Physician’s assistants – a common fixture throughout the United States health system - will be trialled in paediatric medicine at Flinders Medical Centre next year.

Two US-trained physician’s assistants will spend 12-months in the paediatric unit supporting the paediatric ambulatory clinic and the paediatric inpatient team.

Physician’s assistants are registered professionals licensed to practice medicine under specialist supervision. In the United States, they have proven to be an efficient and cost-effective means of delivering health care in the face of a growing global medical workforce shortage.

Australia is not immune to this workforce shortage. Despite the fact that the nation’s health workforce has been growing at nearly double the rate of the Australian population, shortages in a number of workforce areas have emerged – including paediatric medicine.

Globally, the World Health Organisation predicts that there will be a worldwide shortage of more than four million doctors, nurses, midwives and other health workers over the next decade.

Dr David Everett, a consultant paediatric at Flinders Medical Centre, said the physician’s assistants would provide a welcome helping hand.

‘The physician’s assistants will undertake a range of routine work that will free up our paediatricians to spend more time performing more complex work for young patients and their families,’ he said.

The physician assistants work might include the taking of patients’ medical histories before their consultations, undertaking basic medical procedures such as suturing, initiating tests and treatments, or following up on simple test results.

‘Importantly, the physician assistants will play a vital interface role between the Emergency Department and the inpatient team, which in turn will help patient flow.’

David said the physician assistants would work under the supervision of the paediatricians and would not be making crucial medical decisions.

‘That will remain the role of our paediatricians.’

He said the key role of the physician assistants was to act as a further ‘continuity lynch-pin’ between the Emergency Department and the Paediatric Department.

‘What physician assistants will allow us to do is provide our paediatric patients and their families with a better, quicker and safer service.’

David said if the trial proved successful, it could lead to a physician assistant training program being developed by the Department of Health in South Australia.

Psychology service for oncology

Another service has been established to improve the holistic approach to cancer care at Flinders Medical Centre.

Lisa Beatty has joined the Department of Medical Oncology as a Graduate Officer in Psychology.

The role involves offering individual and/or group counselling services to help patients and their families cope with problems such as depression, anxiety, anger or frustration, adjustment problems, relationship difficulties, sleep problems and pairs.

As part of the psycho-oncology service, Lisa provides a number of stress management strategies, such as relaxation and imagery exercises.

‘We also help patients and their families learn to identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts, and discuss how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are connected,’ she said.

Addressing psychosocial issues can lead to multiple benefits, including improved treatment adherence, improved physical health, decreased severity in treatment side effects and improved sleep.’

The service is available to any medical oncology patient with cancer and/or their family members. Patients being seen in the FMC breast unit or radiation oncology are also welcome to use the service.

Right: Lisa Beatty

www.southernhealth.sa.gov.au
Safer workplaces in the south

More than 350 businesses in the outer southern suburbs of Adelaide are taking part in a program to gain a better understanding about health and safety in the workplace.

The Safe and Healthy Workplaces in the South Program uses a range of strategies to introduce and maintain long term safe working practices. The strategies include on-site fire, chemical, manual handling and eye safety training, accredited first aid courses, education about first aid procedures and development of alcohol and drug policies.

Steve Parker, Director of Strategic Alliances, Motor Trade Association and Southern Primary Health – Noarlunga, said the program is helping to develop a safety culture in workplaces in the southern region.

“Businesses are accepting the need to set up safer systems of work and to develop more effective prevention and control of workplace injury,” he said.

The program is a partnership between local small business operators through the Lonsdale and Hackham Business Associations, the Motor Trade Association and Southern Primary Health – Noarlunga.

For more information about any programs, contact Steve on (08) 8384 9307.

School kids learn safety lessons

More than 8,000 students from 60 schools, including many in the southern region, are learning to eliminate needless injuries and prevent deaths when they enter the workplace.

A web-based program called ‘Passport to Safety’ is being used by schools to prepare young people for entering the workforce. The program asks students questions that challenge their understanding of safety and support their learning to be safer and healthier workers.

In Australia over the last 10 years, 580 workers aged between 15 and 24 years were killed and more than 310,000 young workers experienced a work-related injury or illness.

SafeWork SA Director of Strategic Alliances and Performance Kim Tolotta said data has shown that school age children are twice as likely to be injured in the workplace compared to other workers.

More than 70 percent of injuries to young or new workers happen in the first year of employment,’ she said.

“Young people are unlikely to question tasks that could be unsafe; they might not be informed about their rights; or they could be concerned about job security if they exercise their rights.”

Kim said high risk industries for young workers include food retail, construction, cafes, restaurants and agriculture.

“Passport to Safety provides a unique learning environment and successful participants are awarded with a certificate that can be attached to resumes to demonstrate awareness about workplace health and safety,’ she said.

For more information visit the website at www.passporttosafety.com.au

Business case to address depression

Semi-retired chemical business owner Tony Marissien knows first hand about the importance of supporting staff with depression.

Tony sought professional help and intervention to help some of his staff who had depression.

“I wanted to support my staff and show them that help is available and depression can be treated;” he said.

‘Employees who are supported through illness have more positive energy for their families and their community, and in turn their workplace.’

With one in five people experiencing depression, and four in five people being affected indirectly, it is almost unavoidable that depression will impact on businesses at some time.

From July 2007 to June 2008, approximately 760 people received counselling for depression from Southern Primary Health psychologists, social workers and primary health care nurses.

Small business owners in Hackham and Lonsdale are now learning about the impact of depression through a new initiative developed by Southern Primary Health – Noarlunga, as part of the Safe and Healthy Workplaces in the South program.

The ‘flow-on-effect’ for businesses who support their staff through the illness include quicker recovery time resulting in reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, and a more financially viable business.

Posters and a wall calendar highlighting the impact of depression in the community have been designed to raise awareness of depression and its effects on the workplace.

The resources highlight the warning signs of depression and provide telephone numbers for help and support. They were developed in partnership with the Hackham and Lonsdale Business Associations.

Vision for metal workers in Bangladesh

Metal workers in Bangladesh are seeing the benefits of Noarlunga’s involvement in the International Safe Communities Network.

Working with the Sherpur Safe Community in Bangladesh, Noarlunga is involved in the development of an innovative eye injury prevention program for small metal fabrication and welding shops.

Most of the work carried out by metal workers in Sherpur was done with no protective equipment.

The successful project included 38 safety workshops with more than 900 metal workers during five visits between 2002-2005. All workers were provided with safety glasses, welding goggles and training about how to keep their eyes safe. All equipment was donated by local small businesses located in the southern region of Adelaide.

The project demonstrates the important link between international safe communities networks and it provided an opportunity to learn and grow as members of the global community.

Southern Primary Health – Noarlunga Nursing Director Tess Byrnes said.

Kids learn about safe body art

An innovative program has helped more than 750 primary school students learn about the health risks associated with body piercing in 2008.

Southern Primary Health – Noarlunga, Community Safety Consultant Steve Parker said body art is the fastest growing form of body decoration.

A survey of Southern Division General Practitioners in Adelaide’s southern suburbs during 2006 showed that 96 percent treated people for infections or injuries following a body piercing during a 12 month period,’ he said.

More than 1,000 people were treated for body piercing infections or injuries during that time.

One of the major recommendations from the study was to trial and implement an educational program for Year 6/7 primary school students, to educate them about body piercing and the risks involved whilst also providing information about how to care for a new piercing to minimise infection.

The interactive program encourages young people to talk with their teachers and parents about the health issues involved with piercing. Students are given a mini-information booklet, which supports them in making safe, healthy choices.

The program is run in conjunction with Environmental Health Officers from the City of Onkaparinga. It will be offered to all primary schools within the council area during 2008 and will spread to all other council areas in South Australia.
Hay fever

Spring has sprung and for many people, that means a streaming nose, watery eyes and constant sneezing. Hay fever is the common name given to a condition called seasonal allergic rhinitis, which is most often caused by an abnormal sensitivity to airborne pollen.

Flinders Medical Centre’s ex Director of Allergy, and now Royal Adelaide Hospital Director of Allergy Services, Dr Robert Heddle, spoke to Health Talk about hay fever and its treatment.

Hay fever generally peaks during the spring months when airborne pollens are plentiful. However, some people experience sneezing, sniffles, blocked nose and itchy watery eyes all year round. This condition is called perennial or persistent allergic rhinitis, which is commonly triggered by household allergens including animal hair, fur, dust mites or mould.

**How common is hay fever?**

Very common! Up to an estimated 30 percent of the population suffer hay fever symptoms on an annual basis.

While many people think of hay fever as a nuisance rather than a medical condition, it can be debilitating. Left untreated, hay fever can have negative effects on mood, learning and work performance. In some cases, the symptoms of hay fever can be so severe that a person can’t sleep or concentrate, and may feel tired or unwell. There is also some evidence that poorly controlled hay fever predisposes to poorer control of asthma in people with the condition.

**What are the symptoms of hay fever?**

The symptoms of hay fever can vary from person to person. However, people may experience some – or all of the following:

- Sneezing
- A runny or stuffy nose
- Irritated or blocked nasal passages
- Itchy eyes, nose and throat
- Red, itchy or watery eyes
- Headaches

**Is there a cure for hay fever?**

No. There is no cure for hay fever. However, there are many effective treatments available to help control the symptoms of the condition.

**How does hay fever develop?**

Your nose acts as a filter. The tiny hairs and mucus that line the nasal passages trap dust, pollen and other microscopic particles. A person with hay fever is allergic to some of the particles that get trapped in the nose, such as pollen.

The immune system fails to discriminate between harmless foreign particles and potentially damaging microbes and responds by launching an ‘attack’ in an attempt to rid the nose of the particles. This attack inflames the nasal passages, causing excess mucus to be produced.

**Does diet have an influence on hay fever?**

In most people diet has only a minor influence on symptoms.

**Managing hay fever**

The first step to managing hay fever is to identify the cause of the problem – and then try to remove or avoid the trigger wherever possible.

Suggestions to prevent or limit symptoms of hay fever include:

- Check the pollen count forecast on television or in the newspaper. Try to stay indoors if the count is high, or if the day is particularly warm and windy or stormy
- Avoid exposure to grass cuttings and harvesting
- Regularly splash your eyes with cold water to flush out any pollen

**Medication**

There are a number of sprays and oral medications that may be useful in reducing the symptoms of hay fever:

- Corticosteroid nasal sprays. These sprays are slower to act, but used regularly, are effective in unblocking the nose and relieving sneezing, itchy nose and watery eyes
- Antihistamine nasal sprays and eye drops. These medications provide rapid relief from sneezing and itching symptoms. However, they are generally less effective at relieving nasal congestion. The older antihistamines have common side effects including tiredness and impaired skills
- Decongestant nasal sprays or drops. However, they should only be used for a few days. Decongestant tablets are also available but have many side effects and should be avoided by those with vascular, bladder or bowel problems

**Suggestions to prevent or limit symptoms of hay fever**

- Avoid exposure to grass cuttings and harvesting
- Avoid exposure to pollens and other microscopic particles
- Use aeroallergen masks or respirators for long-term outdoor activities
- Wash your hands before eating
- Keep your home clean
- Use a vacuum cleaner
- Don’t let your pets sleep in your bed
- Keep windows closed on a hot, dry day
- Use air conditioning to filter out pollen
- Wash your bedding weekly
- Wash your clothes indoors

**How does hay fever help control the symptoms of the condition?**

Women experiencing miscarriage are going through a traumatic experience, and it can be difficult for some women to retain information, or be in the right frame of mind to ask questions,’ she said.

‘Some women are so distraught it is hard for them to understand what is happening, or why it has happened, other women get home and realise they didn’t ask enough questions.’

Detailed patient information brochures have been developed for women which provide information about miscarriage, medical advice and contact details to support groups and other resources.

All women experiencing miscarriage are now referred to FMC-based social workers, who offer counselling services and make follow up calls with patients.

‘Threatened miscarriage or miscarriage is something we really care about as nurses, and we decided that we wanted to do something about it,’ Jacki said.

A national survey of 69 users of performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs) has led to the introduction of targeted prevention strategies.

The qualitative field study of Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs (PIEDs) was coordinated by Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (DASSA) and conducted with the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and Streetwise Communications. PIEDs are substances which can increase muscle mass and strength, as well as substances which increase muscle definition through fat burning. PIEDs can include steroids, Human Growth Hormone and Erythropoietin (EPO).

Users of PIEDs from three groups took part in the survey – adolescent males, members of the gay community and people working in the security industry. Another 24 people with a good knowledge of PIEDS users in each of the three groups were surveyed, including health workers, law enforcement and industry representatives.

DASSA Director, Clinical Services and Research, Professor Robert All said concern over the non-sporting use of PIEDs emerged in the early 1990s, however there is little evidence on which to base prevention and harm reduction messages and strategies.

‘The study enabled us to explore the motivations, behaviours, risks and physical and psychological harms associated with the use of PIEDs among the three target groups,’ he said.

We were able to learn about the reasons why people take PIEDs and make recommendations about appropriate harm reduction messages and intervention strategies for each target group.

**Conclusion**

The study was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.
Volunteers help researchers to shine

Two of Flinders’ brightest young minds have received a boost to continue their ground breaking research.

The FMC Foundation has awarded Volunteer Service scholarships to Flinders PhD students Lauren Thurgood and Vicki Edwards.

Lauren Thurgood was recently SA. Mark has experience in Emergency Management, and has been appointed to the role of Emergency Planning Coordinator for Flinders Medical Centre.

Dr Bob Heddie has taken up a position at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH)/SA Pathology – Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science (IMVS) as the Head of Clinical Immunology. Bob will be responsible for leading the RAH Clinical Immunology Service and the clinical diagnostic section of the Immunology lab at the IMVS.

Bob started at FMC in 1979 as a registrar, before becoming Director of Allergy at FMC in 2004. He gained Associate Professorship last year.

Mark Cannadine has joined Southern Health as the new Executive Director, Acute Services.

The Volunteer Service for FMC has been recognized for its significant contribution to the health system at the inaugural SA Allied Health, Scientific and Complementary Health Excellence Awards.

SA Department of Health Chief Executive Tony Sherbon said allied health, scientific and complementary health staff make an important contribution to South Australia’s health provision, and the quality of nominations demonstrated the high standards of practice occurring within our health care system.

The awards were presented in 11 categories. Southern Health award winners included:

Category: Most significant contribution to the SA Health Plan
Winner: Jo Nolan, Physiotherapist, Flinders Medical Centre
Jo has demonstrated the positive impact of a targeted exercise program in improving outcomes for elderly hospitalised patients.

Category: Specialist Area
Winner: John Stirling, Principal Medical Scientist, Anatomical Pathology, SA Pathology, Flinders Medical Centre
John’s expertise in diagnostic electron microscopy has earned him a national and international reputation as an expert and leader in his field.

Category: Leadership
Winner: Tony Hewitt, Director, Physiotherapy, Repatriation General Hospital
Tony’s leadership has had a positive impact on health care services, education and research.

Category: Most significant contribution to the SA Health Plan
Winner: Jo Nolan, Physiotherapist, Flinders Medical Centre
Jo has demonstrated the positive impact of a targeted exercise program in improving outcomes for elderly hospitalised patients.

Volunteer service continues to grow

More than 115,000 voluntary hours, 435,000 customers in retail areas and 97,800 escorted visitors throughout the hospital.

These are just some of the amazing achievements of the Volunteer Service for FMC in the last 12 months.

Add to this the magical $10 million which has been donated to the hospital for vital medical research, support services, equipment, community education and staff development since the Volunteer Service began in 1972, and you can begin to understand why the volunteers are so treasured at FMC.

In the last financial year alone, the service donated in excess of $550,000 to FMC services. This included chairs and toys in the Women’s Health Clinic, a foot scanner and machinery in the Podiatry Unit and a mobile ultrasound unit in Vascular Surgery.

Most of the hospitals 540 volunteers recently celebrated their achievements at their annual general meeting.

Director of the Volunteer Service Joe Capozza said the volunteers have been instrumental in creating a ‘can-do’ culture at FMC.

We are the envy of many hospital organisations around Australia and with the Redeesigning Care project that FMC has developed, the volunteer service has been established following a redesigning care initiative, with the end result being better service for patients in the Transit Lounge.

We can easily forget the environment we are in after coming here regularly, but everyone needs community interaction and we supply that each and every time we serve patients, visitors, staff and other volunteers.

‘Every volunteer has made a difference to someone’s life at FMC.

Award winners

Mark Cannadine

Mark Cannadine has been appointed to the role of Emergency Planning Coordinator for Flinders Medical Centre.

Mark’s background is in policing with almost twenty years experience in the UK and more recently SA. Mark has experience in Emergency Planning and Disaster response with the Police Service and will be responsible for coordinating the hospital’s Emergency Planning, Prevention, and Responses.

Tom Symonds

Tom Symonds has joined Southern Health as the new Executive Director, Acute Services. Tom hails from the United Kingdom, where he has worked as a senior manager for the National Health Service for more than 13 years. Tom was most recently Senior Operational Manager for all medical and surgical gastrointestinal services within a large teaching hospital network.

Chris Seiboth

Chris Seiboth has joined Southern Health after 15 months as CEO of General Practice SA. Prior to this, Chris spent seven years as General Manager of Adelaide Northern Division of General Practice where he was instrumental in them receiving national service excellence awards for innovation in primary mental health care.

Bob Heddie

Dr Bob Heddie has taken up a position at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH)/SA Pathology – Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science (IMVS) as Head of Clinical Immunology. Bob will be responsible for leading the RAH Clinical Immunology Service and the clinical diagnostic section of the Immunology lab at the IMVS.

Bob started at FMC in 1979 as a registrar, before becoming Director of Allergy at FMC in 2004. He gained Associate Professorship last year.

Chris Seiboth

Chris Seiboth has joined Southern Health as Executive Director, Population and Primary Health Care.

Chris joins Southern Health after 15 months as CEO of General Practice SA. Prior to this, Chris spent seven years as General Manager of Adelaide Northern Division of General Practice where he was instrumental in them receiving national service excellence awards for innovation in primary mental health care.

Vicki Edwards

Vicki Edwards is building on the research of Biological Scientists Dr Kirsten Benkendorff and Dr Catherine Abbott, who are investigating the anti-cancer properties of a local species of sea snail.

Under the supervision of Dr Fiona Young in Medical Biotechnology, Vicki is studying the effects of bioactive compounds in sea snails on reproductive cancers. Vicki is investigating whether the compounds can kill reproductive cancer cells, or whether they can have a curative effect on conditions associated with infertility.

Southern Health staff have been recognised for their significant contribution to the health system at the inaugural SA Allied Health, Scientific and Complementary Health Excellence Awards.

SA Department of Health Chief Executive Tony Sherbon said allied health, scientific and complementary health staff make an important contribution to South Australia’s health provision, and the quality of nominations demonstrated the high standards of practice occurring within our health care system.

The awards were presented in 11 categories. Southern Health award winners included:

Category: Most significant contribution to the SA Health Plan
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New clinic boosts care for kids

Kids in the southern suburbs with developmental delays, behaviour and learning difficulties, or other general health problems can now be seen more quickly and closer to home.

A new public clinic has been established at GP Plus Aldinga to improve access to specialist care.

The clinic is run by Community Paediatrician Dr Deepa Jeyaseelan each Tuesday. The clinical community paediatrician role is the first of its kind for South Australia.

Left: Community Paediatrician Deepa Jeyaseelan is improving access to specialist services for kids and families in the southern suburbs.

The clinic has the advantage of being more accessible for local families, reducing travel times and distances, and easing parking concerns,' Deepa said.

Having a clinic available locally means it may also be more disruptive for children attending school and less disruptive on family life.

Deepa said medical investigations can be done locally, and children will be referred to hospital if more complex care is required.

Children need a GP referral to the Flinders Medical Centre outpatient clinic to access the clinic at Aldinga. For more information call GP Plus Aldinga on (08) 8557 9500.

Youth group brightens future for refugees

A youth group is helping young African and Middle Eastern refugees bridge the culture and language gaps in South Australia.

Good health and a free education are two of the most important aspects of starting a new life in South Australia for 15 year old Mohsen and his brothers, who fled war torn Iraq two years ago.

Mohsen and his brothers attend the African and Middle Eastern Youth Group at Southern Primary Health – Marion Youth.

Peer Educator from Marion Youth Keyvan Abak was a refugee from the Middle East and knows first hand about the difficulties of adjusting to the Australian way of life.

'Coming to a new country can be a frightening experience, and it's important for young people beginning a new life in Australia to feel safe,' Keyvan said.

The group gives people aged between 12-25 years the opportunity to meet and support each other while learning about their health and health services they can access in the community.

Meetings are held fortnightly with a range of activities designed to introduce and integrate new refugees into Australian culture.

Keyvan said transferable skills with a physical activity focus can be invaluable in integrating young refugees into a new community.

As refugees, the brothers have adapted quickly to their new life, settling at Marion. Mohsen is studying at Hamilton Technical College.

Attending school was difficult in Iraq. Only the wealthiest families were able to fund their children's education.

'Maths is my favourite subject,' Mohsen said. 'It will help me become a fire fighter when I leave school.

And I like playing soccer. The world's a small place when you play soccer. You don't need to know the language - soccer lets me make lots of new friends in Australia.'

The centre is looking for an additional health worker to be involved in the program. For more information contact Keyvan or Julie Wright on (08) 8377 1055.

Twenty years of hospice care

When cure is no longer possible, comfort and relief from suffering can be the most important part of someone's life.

In the southern region, Daw House Hospice is renowned for providing valuable psychological, social, emotional and spiritual support for patients, families and friends.

Daw House Hospice celebrated 20 years of specialist care last month.

The 15 bed unit provides care for patients who need transition from home to hospital, or for patients who are in the terminal stage of illness.

Executive Officer of Daw House Hospice Foundation Anthea Rice said more than 6,500 families have used the facilities and been touched by the caring and committed staff and the environment at Daw House Hospice.

A celebration including invited guests from the original staff from the hospice was held at Repatriation General Hospital (RGH) to reflect on the valuable work that has been achieved, she said.

A newly created ‘Jelly Cottage’ has also been established at the hospital to improve bereavement counselling and art therapy. The cottage was named after ex patient Brigitte Nelson (nee Jelly).

A toast for bowel cancer research

As an umpire would say at the end of a day in the cricket field, ‘Gentlemen that’s Stumps’. In line with his passion for cricket, this is the name of the latest Wirra Wirra magnum created to honour the memory of local wine great Greg Trotter.

The wine will help raise funds for bowel cancer research at Flinders Medical Centre (FMC).

In March 2005, as the Wirra Wirra Angelus bell rang out 70 times to announce Greg’s passing, the name of the latest Wirra Wirra shiraz created that’s stumps.

The wine will help raise funds for bowel cancer research at Flinders Medical Centre (FMC).

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