

# Newsletter 2001

THE ST GEORGE GRADUATE NURSES ASSOCIATION

## President's Report

By *Janice Myatt (Bakker 1978)*

Dear Colleagues and Friends

This year it has taken me some time to put my thoughts into print and I feel some sadness as I write this, my last report. To all who attend this years reunion I welcome you and hope that you have an enjoyable afternoon catching up with each other and also with what is new at St George. This years reunion on the hospital site has given us all a good opportunity to see some of the changes. St George continues to hold it's good reputation and leads the way with innovation.

I send greetings to all those unable to attend and hope we meet at the next reunion.

I have had a commitment to the St George Graduate Nurses and the hospital will always be special, as like nearly all of you, it was the place where my nursing career began. I have been on the committee for a number of years and the President since 1995 and feel that it is now time to move on and take on new challenges. At this stage I will continue to be a committee member to assist the new executive become established in their roles.

I have enjoyed the time that I have been on the committee both as a committee member and as the President and am extremely grateful to all the committee and thank each member for their commitment and contribution. I have received a number of resignations this year including Judith Cornell the reunion secretary, and on your behalf thank her for all the hard work over the years, especially prior to the reunion when she graciously accepts your late phone calls and

letters that arrive after the RSVP date. Judith, you have shown commitment to the grads and the hospital On a more personal note I thank you for all the things you have taught me over the years, I will always respect and admire your achievements in nursing and appreciate the way you recognise the humble beginnings of your career. You are an inspiration and I hope that you continue to inspire nurses. Janice Robson has decided not to stand for an executive position and I thank her for being the secretary and also for her hospitality in hosting most of the meetings over the past few years.

Margaret Binder our faithful treasurer is also leaving us after many years of doing a magnificent job keeping our finances in order and organising the annual audit. You will be missed! The association has developed strong links with the St George Nursing Council and Yvonne Brugmans and Gai Pickering have both assisted in this process. I am sure that members who attended last years reunion would remember the stall and items for sale. I hope the Association can maintain these links in the future. Yvonne has also resigned from the committee and I thank her for her contribution.

Finally, I would really like to see the Association continue and hope that it grows with the commitment from some of the grads from my era and later. If you know some who are not members of the Association, please encourage them to join and come along to reunions. It is always great to catch up with old friends and find out what we are all doing. I want to encourage the new committee and look forward to assisting them in their new roles and hope to catch up with you at the next reunion.

## In this issue...

President's Report .....	1
Career Open Day .....	2
Reunion Report 2000 .....	2
Nursing in the Land of the Rising Sun .....	3
News & Greetings .....	4
Veterans and their Families Living with Heart failure .....	7
Nurse in Profile .....	7
Mail Returned .....	7
Digital Technology Gives Nurses a Powerful New Tool .....	8
Obituaries .....	8
Auditor's Report .....	10

## Committee Members

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Judith Cornell, Reunion Secretary (retiring from the committee November 2001)  
phone/fax: (02) 9587 2834  
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Committee members:

Rosemary Carmichael, Nicky Positti,  
Katherine Litchfield, Yvonne Brugmans  
(resigned from the committee July 2001)

## Committee Meetings

The first meeting of the new committee with the handover from the retiring members is scheduled for 26 November 2001 at the Rockdale Nursing Home, Banksia commencing 7.30pm. All 2002 meetings will be scheduled at the November meeting.

## Reunion 2002

Saturday 27 October 2001. Venue TBA.

# Career Open Day

*By Yvonne Brugmans, Chairperson,  
St George Nursing Council*

On 2 November 2000, St George Hospital and Community Health Nursing Council played host to over 150 Year, 9, 10, 11 and 12 students from secondary schools within South East. The program began with an encouraging and inspiring talk on Nursing as Career by Jenny Phillips, Assistant Executive Director and Gai Pickering, Nurse Educator. Much enthusiasm was demonstrated by the students through varied and interesting questions put forward.

The students were given information packages and divided into smaller groups and headed off to tour the hospital. Both Nurse Educators and clinical nurses came together to provide interesting scenarios and "hands on experience" for the students.

This was our opportunity to "strut our stuff" about Nursing in a realistic and positive way and "discover young talent". It's interesting to see students from varying backgrounds and cultures explore the possibility of nursing as an occupation, particularly when experiencing their first time exposure to the clinical environment. Career Open Days are ideal opportunities to



*Students successfully resuscitating a "traumatised manikin" in the Resuscitation Room in the Emergency Department*

promote Nursing Work Experience programs and for our St George Nursing Council Scholarships. It also further builds on our relationship with the community at large by participants gaining an understanding of the health care system even if nursing is not chosen as a career.

Feedback from students, parents and career advisers has indicated that the now traditional "Career Open Day" has become very popular for students contemplating a career in health.

Enthusiasm amongst the teachers and career advisers in attendance was also highlighted by their own personal interest in the hospital environment and active involvement on the day. Areas visited were Emergency Department, Operating Theatre, Intensive Care Unit, Mental Health Unit/Alcohol and Other Drugs, Medical, Surgical, Paediatrics and Maternity.

*Nursing Matters, Issue No 25, December 2000, reprinted with permission.*

## Reunion Report 2000

*By Judith Cornell (Roberts 1961)  
Reunion Secretary*

A total of 114 graduates were booked for the luncheon held at the St. George Motor Boat Club. There were a total of 85 apologies and special apologies were made by Helen Mills and Rosemary Snodgrass, Miss Mills was not well enough to attend and Rosemary was overseas. Their greetings were conveyed to all present. The lucky door prize winner was Jocelyn Harris (1957). A posy was presented to Miss McGuire.

During the AGM which was held preceding the meeting, the reunion

secretary outlined the difficulties associated with finding a venue suitable for smaller numbers and also the increased costs associated with both the hire of the room and the catering. It was resolved that the committee would attempt to find an alternative venue. The preference was to return to St George Hospital if at all possible, even though it was recognised that the hospital would not be able to cater for a luncheon. Those present agreed that the opportunity to get together was the most important issue.

I wish to convey my thanks to the all of the committee for their assistance

in the organisation and running of the day and in particular thank Yvonne Brugmans for her assistance with the newsletter production. The St George Nursing Council conducted a most successful trading table and all proceeds from the selling of goods was put with the profit from the sales of "The Belsen Story" toward nursing scholarships at St George.

Thank you to all who have put pen to paper and sent me material for the newsletter, I am grateful for the increasing volume of material which comes via the email as it saves much time for this 3 finger typist!!

# Nursing in the Land of the Rising Sun

By Yvonne Brugmans @ Gai Pickering, St George Hospital @ Community Health Service

The St George Hospital & Community Health Services has been hosting Japanese Nurses and other health professionals for study tours over the past five years, the majority of which come from the Kimura Foundation for Nursing Education. Feedback from the Kimura Foundation in Japan has indicated that the St George Hospital & CHS has gained a reputation for being innovative and visionary in their delivery of services.

Furthermore, it has been stated that the coordinators and staff of St George Hospital & CHS reflect a warm and hospitable approach to the Japanese delegates. Over the past five years a rapport has developed between Japan and Australia in relation to health care resulting in increasing numbers of Japanese visitors to St George Hospital & CHS.

Knowledge of the Japanese health care system is complex due to the cultural differences and language barrier which requires the full use of interpreter services when the Japanese visit our hospital. For this reason it can be difficult to communicate and in particular to have an understanding of their nursing and allied health protocols as well as other health care issues.

Therefore it is vital to the success of the current Japanese study tour to St George, that the coordinators have a better understanding in order to meet the objectives of the Japanese visitors.

The Kimura Foundation have on a number of occasions invited the coordinators from St George Hospital to participate in a reciprocal study program in Japan.

In May 2000 the coordinators of the program Nurse Educators, Yvonne Brugmans and Gai Pickering of Staff Education were granted permission to visit Japan with focus on nursing and



*Nursing in the Land of the Rising Sun. Japanese nurses in Tokyo with Yvonne Brugmans and Gai Pickering.*

allied health related issues highlighting hospitals in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto.

The benefits to the St George Hospital & CHS has been a continuation of the study tours by the Japanese visitors and continued goodwill between our two countries and the inevitable facilitation of cross cultural understanding of health issues to continue.

Whilst in Japan Gai and Yvonne were able to experience the way in which nursing is delivered in the hospital setting. With many hospitals in one suburb and beds averaging 1200, staffing at 1600, outpatient department seeing more than 4000 patients per day, it certainly proved that the Japanese are efficient in dealing with large numbers. Rate of occupancy of inpatients is 92% and average length of stay of 8 to 10 days.

There are many similarities between our two countries delivery of health care, with both providing a very high standard, even the food is delivered in the same manner.

Nursing in Japan however, is different to Australia due to the fact that their education is still conducted at hospital level. Nursing administrators indicated to us that it was time to move to university education. Interestingly

though, nursing is very popular in Japan and there are no shortages. However, it is in the administration of nursing that Japan is looking to Australia as a role model.

In our discussions with many nursing managers, interest was shown in our New Graduate Transition Program and Nursing Work Experience opportunities. As a consequence Gai was requested to write a paper on the New Graduate Transition Support Program at St George Hospital & CHS which will be published in Japan in the near future.

In our travels across Japan we were not daunted by the great number of people using public transport. To our amazement, we **were never lost** and found the people extremely helpful when we paused to look at our map. Japanese are definitely more efficient in moving people around by train transport which was extremely clean with no graffiti.

Overall our experience of the Japanese nursing culture has been very positive and we look forward to the continuation of goodwill visits to and from Japan.

*Nursing Matters, Issue No 26, March 2001, reprinted with permission.*

# News & Greetings

**Fay Loom** (Walker, 1964) sends greetings to all.

**Maisie Horswell** (Wyness, 1950) sends her apologies as she is away and sends greetings to all

**Joan Short** (McMahon, 1963) sends greetings from Kyrgystan

April 2001: I've been in Bishek 11 days today and have experienced some amazing times! Flights were great and everyone on team has been so helpful. It was fine weather when I arrived, then some days of snow (-2) and now it's fine again, though we still have coats on. It is warm and comfortable in my apartment. This morning I woke to the most beautiful sight. The clouds had gone and from my bedroom window were the snow covered mountains!

Hard to describe the beauty of such majestic snow covered mountains so close outside the city. Wow! what creation! From downstairs (3 flights) I could hardly see them because of the old buildings etc.

Bishkek is the biggest city, being the capital and like all cities there is movement of people and business as people go about their day. Many people sell their wares along the roadside then pack up at night and come back early morning. They may be selling home produce such as eggs and fruit or cigarettes or vodka. Most people walk or use public buses or small vans and the taxis are plentiful, old and mostly cheap (but you learn to check and pay before getting in) no seat belts and I haven't noticed the RTA. Guess it may be somewhere.

I have attended a conference at the Medical Academy, yet another huge building well past it's glory days, have met a lot of enthusiastic people and some of my prospective students, a combination of Russian and Kyrgy girls who are in Bishkek for 1 year. They are chosen for The Family Nurse Medicine Program from many, many applicants, to be teachers or nurses back in their own areas. A few still join the staff at Bishkek. One is already teaching and another in the clinic.

There is also a course run simultaneously, for retraining doctors in Family Medicine. For the next few months, it is proposed that I work on developing a Community Health Project as part of the nurse's course. There is so much to be done in so many fields of work, as the people's needs are many.

May 2001: The average person on the street has very little and many are obviously struggling with poverty. Teachers, doctors and nurses belong to this group. The infrastructure has collapsed and many families suffer. Street children and people rifling through garbage are common. Children knock on the door for food, they beg in the street. I know it is common throughout two-thirds of the world, but the reality of it is cruel and hard to live with. The guilt and shame of the western world with so much, (our money buys so much more), seeing the powerful tobacco companies everywhere, is distressing. Cigarettes are given out to young people free, and it is cheaper to buy vodka or cigarettes than most foods. Respiratory, heart and allied conditions along with alcoholism, depression and suicide are the highest killers especially among men. Many have given up.

In the Nursing school, it is busy. The students are chosen from nurses around the country and are retrained to be teachers of nurses. Some have graduated from the Medical Academy. Some return to teach in villages and few will come on staff. Eventually the teaching around the country will be in the hands of nationals. This work is in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and the restructuring of Health to practice holistic medicine, with the emphasis on treating and caring for the whole person with the nurses gaining a higher education. The hospitals are mainly throughout the city. They have few resources. The people bring their own bundle of medicine, syringes, sheets, etc. It is difficult to find bowls, hot water, soap and equipment is old or non-existent.

The practices are ancient, the people are told nothing. They are accepting and stoic. We need wisdom and understanding when taking students for so called clinical. Our interpreters and translators manage a very difficult job.

Sunday morning church, in Russian and it is great to hear some old favorites sung, including Graham Kendrick's songs – but hard to follow for beginners. (Average time to be fluent in Russian seems about 6 years to a lifetime) I have started Russian lessons with Nina a beautiful Russian teacher and mother of 5. Her husband is a doctor, but stays home to cook and feed the goats. She earns more than he would with her teaching a few expats and 3 days schooling for volunteers' children.

(Eds note, unfortunately some of Joan's letter has had to be culled because of space and a further letter dated September has not been printed for the same reason, however anybody who would like to read the full versions should contact Judith Cornell.)

**Lois Webb** (Assoc) writes of her experience as a volunteer. Lois recently had her 89th birthday and has just had her drivers licence renewed. She writes... After my husband died 2 years ago I was sad and depressed for some time as I had nursed him for several years and felt the loss deeply, especially having nothing to do. But, for over a year now I have been doing voluntary work and find it very rewarding. On Mondays I spend 4 hours working in Medical Records at St George Private Hospital and on Thursdays I do an afternoon shift on the information desk at Westfield Hurstville for the St George Community Services Inc.

Fridays are for shopping, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are for socialising, the odd meeting or appointment, thus keeping my week organised in much the same way as in E Ward in the 1960s. I wish all my colleagues a happy reunion and good health in the future. I would love to hear from anyone on 9547 2464 around 7pm any evening – it would make my day!!

# News & Greetings

**Jan Hodgson** (McDonald, 1962) writes... I'm enclosing my apology again this year, as my husband Jim and I leave for a cruise of the Greek Islands, Turkey and Egypt on the 23rd October 2001, and afterwards we will spend a week in Singapore visiting our daughter, son in law and new grandson, Samuel Charles and big brother Alex who is now 2 years old.

Jan also asks... if any of the 1962 graduates have any group photographs taken at the Graduation and the Graduation Ball? If so, could they please either loan them to her to have copies made or alternatively have the copies made and sent to her, she would be very happy to pay for them. Jan can be contacted on 02 4946 9555.

**Betty Pettit** (Miller, 1951) writes... The graduates of 1951 organised a luncheon prior to the Annual General Meeting to celebrate 50 years since graduation! We are hopeful of an enjoyable time of fun, celebration and reminiscence before joining with you all for afternoon tea.

**Maureen Bell** (1969) writes... I wish you all joy and happiness for the Reunion Day, sorry I cannot be with you but will be with you in spirit. My life on the farm continues to be one of peace and tranquillity caring for the flora and fauna. I have given many years caring for injured and orphaned wildlife and endeavour to release them back into the wild – my last two, Angela and JB, Eastern Grey Joeys are beginning to enjoy their natural habitat. I would love to hear from old friends especially graduates of October 1969.

**Marie Johnstone** (McIntyre, 1942) sends warmest regards especially to the 1942 graduates.

**Gloria Phillips** (James, 1957) sends her greetings and writes... love to be there but will be on holidays in Queensland.

**Cecily Dobson** (Heslewood, 1960) writes... Although unable to attend many of the reunions due to distance I do appreciate the efforts of the committee in maintaining the contacts.

I am still working running the Australian Paediatric Cancer Registry and hoping that cures can be found for the many devastating types of cancer that children suffer. I keep in contact with Betty Schofield (Blackford) and Jill Needham and recently (for those who started training in 1956) – June Menzies which was great. Best wishes for a great reunion and I am sorry to be missing the tour of St George.

**Cath Wolf** (Mathei, 1954) writes... In May this year I travelled with my husband to the Carnarvon National Park in Queensland where we stayed in the Oasis Lodge. The accommodation was in deluxe (timber & canvas) safari cabins set amongst macrozamia, palms and gums. We enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the park with its towering sandstone cliffs which surround the gorge. We walked approximately 6 Kms through the gorge, crossing the Carnarvon Creek about 10 times to reach the "art gallery" with its Aboriginal paintings on the sandstone cliff.

On our return we walked into 3 small gorges, Wards canyon with the rare king fern, the Moss garden and climbed a 10 M steel ladder to gain access to the "Ampitheatre." We covered about 15 Kms that day. The views from the Boolimba Bluff the next day were well worth the climb which the warning notice said "was only for the physically fit". The walk and the climb up to the lookout took about 1.5 hours. We were thankful that our hips and knees were still up to the task! There were shorter walks which included the "Rock Pools" where we looked for platypus but had to be content with the lovely reflections in the water in the afternoon. The park is recommended to all who enjoy walking.

Cath also says she received an email from Audrey Newman (Dash) who lives in Alberta, Canada. Audrey asked to be remembered to all who knew her. She has happy memories of our times together at St George.

**Anne Lightfoot** (Glover, 1965) writes... Dear fellow graduates, I wish each and every one a happy and successful day on this the 55th AGM and reunion. I am unable to be with you on this occasion because I shall be in Vanuatu for my nephew's wedding, and having a little R&R as well. Our family are all well, Daryl continues to work Monday & Tuesday as the Uniting Church Archivist in Sydney and often travels at weekends doing what he calls his "road shows".

The rest of the week he works as the senior social worker for International Social Services NSW, commuting daily by train from Lake Macquarie. Peter, our son has just been promoted as the mechanical engineer of a new mine in WA "West Angelus". Peter has spent the last 5 years working in Paraburdo or "Parabadice" as he often called it, working for Hammersly Iron. This is a big promotion for him, much closer to us time wise and he has bought a home in Mt Lawley, so I guess we will be off to see the wildflowers in WA next year.

While not working Peter pursues his love of surfing, sailing, triathlons, basketball as well as pursuing his ongoing Masters studies in Mechanical Engineering. He is still single but has a lovely girlfriend. After 7 years of happy employment in the Cardio Vascular Centre I took a big step and resigned, so I am semi retired from the profession. I continue to work casually at Toronto private hospital which is only 5 mins drive from home. I have the best of both worlds, I can say yes or no to work, and it is hands on nursing and very rewarding.

I continue to pursue my craft activities each Tuesday where a small group of ladies from our local church create hand knitted and crocheted items for sale. We recently donated \$1000 to the Rescue Helicopter appeal, Ronald McDonald House and other needy causes. Our daughter Jeanette and her husband Sean are finishing their respective post graduate degrees, Jeanette an MA and Sean a PhD both of them in clinical psychology.

# News & Greetings

Living one suburb away means we see them frequently and enjoy their garden produce which is a turn around for us as we have no garden produce which is quite sad for Daryl and his "green thumb". The Cornish Rex cat Ko-Ko rules the roost so to speak but this seems to be the norm until grand children come along. I wish you all God's blessings and an enjoyable day.

**Loretta Lancaster** (Craig, 1968) writes... I will be overseas in Fiji and not returning home until the 4th. Sorry to miss you all.

**Enid Whyte** (Cambage, 1950) writes... Sorry to miss the reunion again. Will make it "one day"!

**Alice Wong** (Ho, 1974) sends greetings via the email... Hi There! Greeting from Malaysia! Time really flies, again it is reunion gathering for all the graduate nurses. Love to join you all there but unfortunately I have not enough annual leave to travel. From 21/9/01 to 27/9/01 I will be attending the 5th World Congress in Perinatal Medicine in Barcelona. After the congress, I will be flying over to London to visit Alex, my son, who works for Accentures (formerly known as Anderson Consulting). Shu Shyan, my daughter is in 1st year medical school.

Next March 9-13, after attending the 12th Federation Asia Oceania Perinatal Societies Meeting in Christchurch, I plan to drop by to St George and love to meet up with all the PTS Jan 1974 colleagues especially those whom I have never met since 1974. Wish you all a joyful reunion tea!

With Best Regards  
email: [aliceho@dnateam.com](mailto:aliceho@dnateam.com) or  
[wwongs@pl.jaring.my](mailto:wwongs@pl.jaring.my)

**Joan Lindsell** (Dunstan, 1948) writes... We haven't had the best of years in 2001 but hope to be fighting fit in 2002 so, I must miss out on all the old friends and hope to see you next year. Have a Happy Reunion and Best Wishes to all.

**Narelle Standen** (Russell, 1963) sends her apologies and best wishes for the reunion and writes... I have had quite

a few visits to Sydney in the past 12 months, the first was for a month back in the Navy working as a reserve officer at the naval hospital, HMAS Penguin, at Balmoral. It was wonderful to be back in Sydney and at Penguin where I had served my longest posting during the time I was in the Navy. Many changes, for the better, had occurred but I was still able to tell the current staff where the wards and theatre was in "my day". Oh how I wish I was a few years younger as my reserve time is drawing to a close when I must retire aged 60 on 23/4/02. Like all hospitals, the Navy is short of Nursing Officers and they too use agency staff to cover the rosters.

I would recommend the Navy for anybody looking for a career change and there are opportunities for overseas service. The time in Sydney also gave me the opportunity to settle in my younger son, Anthony who is studying Interior Design for the next 2 years. My elder son, Colin, stopped off for a visit on his way to Melbourne where he is studying for a BA Hons. in Recorded Music which he is due to complete in 2002.

From May through September I had four trips to Sydney spending many days at St George within the various outpatient clinics and departments with my elderly Aunt & Uncle. As he deteriorated I spent time on both 6 North and the high dependency unit, sadly he died after a month in hospital. Unfortunately I never seemed to have time to visit the historical exhibition but I did notice several small displays around the hospital and I examined them with great interest. With the nurses home being used for various clinics, I was able to pick out where my old rooms used to be. No doubt in time these buildings will disappear into history!

Wishing you all a successful and enjoyable reunion.

**Sylvia Bennett** (Smith, 1971) writes... At the time of the reunion we will be on holidays on the Sunshine Coast. Earlier in the year I had a month in England with my Father, elderly relatives and friends.

Although not as a regular, I continue to get casual work in Early Childhood and mostly enjoy the presenting challenges. On 1½ days a week I'm a volunteer, as a reading tutor at our local school and as a shopper and home visitor with Neighbour Aid. Terry continues to be happy pottering at home and has almost completely repainted the house inside and out.

In 2002 we will be away for 6 months amongst our families where we have new young ones. Also we are planning a month touring on the continent in a hired motor home. Greetings and best wishes to friends and colleagues.

**Dianne Swan** (Tinsley, 1973) writes... Hello everyone, sorry I'm unable to attend this year, hopefully next year with a "new knee or 2!" it will be possible. I think the switch to afternoon tea and tour of the Hospital is a great idea. Hope it is a success for you all. Hi to all Jan 1970 PTS, would love to hear from you. Regards to all

**Valerie Hayes** (Green, 1964) writes... Many thanks to the committee for all their hard work over many years to help us all maintain contact with our nursing friends and the St George Hospital. I do hope the Graduate Nurses' Association is able to continue into the future.

Unfortunately I am again unable to travel from Melbourne for the reunion but shall be thinking of you all with great affection on the day itself. In these wonderful years of mid life I have taken a new path and ventured into the world of Writing and Public Speaking.

Those early nursing training days and my thirty year nursing career have given me many marvellous stories to share in my speeches and talks. Life is a great adventure with its many twists and turns to lead us ever onward to new and exciting challenges. Best wishes to everyone and may you have a wonderful day on November 3rd. Val's Website is [www.pngtours.com/val/](http://www.pngtours.com/val/) for those who wish to see it.

# Veterans and their Families Living with Heart Failure

## *A home based strategy to improve quality of life and decrease hospital admissions. St George Living with Heart Failure Program*

Congestive heart failure (CHF) is the only cardiovascular disease currently increasing in prevalence. It is one of the most common causes of hospitalisation in the elderly and of particular significance is the high rate of readmission to hospital.

The CHF population is becoming more heterogeneous, including increasing numbers of patients with preserved left ventricular function and aging of this patient group. Evidence suggests that a significant number of exacerbations of CHF and readmissions can be prevented by a coordinated management strategy.

Current health service data pertaining to readmissions of CHF reflects a failure of current management processes and a need for novel and innovative strategies to deal with the increasing burden of chronic disease.

The St George Hospital has implemented a multidisciplinary program

to create a link between hospital and community based services. This project has sought to implement a community-focussed model of self-care for patients with CHF, based upon available evidence and tailored to local needs, treatment and referral patterns.

This has been achieved by adopting a collaborative approach, supplemented by education, support and skill diversification. Funding for this service has been obtained from the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Department of Veterans Affairs and Roche Pharmaceuticals.

Specific Elements of St George Living with Heart Failure Program include:

- Inpatient heart failure education program
- Inpatient self-care program, including daily walks
- Institution of a policy for patients identified as being at high risk of readmission to hospital
- Heart Failure Specific Cardiac Rehabilitation Program
- Development of service links with

palliative care and multicultural services

- Home based heart failure service including medication titration
- Prospective data collection to identify trends and precipitants for admission
- Development of links with the St George Division of General Practice
- Increased communication with community based clinicians, in particular community nurses.

Patients in heart-failure specific programs undergo individualised needs assessment, and care plan development is structured around negotiated patient goals and strategies. This coordinated strategy has been evaluated favourably by patients and their families and demonstrated a decrease in hospital readmissions.

Fortunately, an injection of funds from the NSW Government Chronic and Complex Care Program has ensured the continuation of this service for the next three years. For further information contact Trish Davidson or Glenn Paull on (02) 9350 3171.

## Nurse in Profile

### Ruth Turton, CNC Lactation

#### *By Irene Broadbent*

FARE YE WELL! After 41 years of dedicated service to nursing – Ruth Jean Turton (né Richards) has decided to retire at the end of this year.

Ruth started her training at St George Hospital in October 1959 and later her midwifery training in 1964. Ruth remained within the midwifery department and was in charge of the baby nurseries for many years.

Later, she became a Clinical Nurse Consultant for "Lactation" and has contributed extensively to the care of mothers and babies with the art and skill of breastfeeding.

Ruth has been a member of the NSW Nurses' Association since 1959 and held the position of Secretary of the St George Branch for many years. She has always played an active role for the "Rights of Nurses" and all aspects of branch issues.

Ruth will leave Sydney to join her husband Jimmy at their property in Nimbin. Well done Ruth – the nursing profession has certainly benefited from your contribution. We wish you all the best and hope that you enjoy your retirement.

*Reprinted with permission, The Lamp Volume 57 no.10, November 2000, p.37.*

## Mail Returned

**Karen Patterson,**  
last known address Mudgee

**Belinda Lee,**  
last known address Coledale

**Nancy Russell,**  
last known address Caringbah

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*Newsletter 2001* was designed by John Thrift Publishing, phone (02) 9560 5076

# Digital Technology Gives Nurses a Powerful New Tool

*By Suzanne Mitten-Lewis, Research Officer, Acute Care Nursing research Unit, St George Hospital*

Julia Kittscha, Stomal Therapy & Wound Management CNC at St George Hospital, is at the forefront of an exciting breakthrough in wound care. She is using digital imaging technology as a powerful aid to wound management, to assess and track changes in wounds, communicate with clinicians and educate patients.

Julia photographs patients' wounds, for example acute surgical wounds or pressure ulcers, with a digital camera and stores the images on disk. The images are downloaded into a laptop computer using the Alfred/Medseed Wound Imaging System (AMWIS)<sup>1</sup>.

Developed by scientists at the Alfred Hospital, this program allows users to determine surface area and depth of the wound and calculate percentages of specified features such as slough, granulation tissue, necrosis, etc. Quantifying these features allows the nurse to make precise comparisons over time, and the AMWIS system is able to display serial images on a single screen, as well as display, print and store reports of numerical analyses.

One of the developers of AMWIS, Dr

Nick Santamaria, visited StGH on 15 January at the invitation of Professor Judith Donoghue of the UTS Faculty of Nursing Midwifery and Health, director of SEH Acute Care Nursing Research Unit.

A "real-life" demonstration of the system convinced Julia of its utility. A 57 year old woman who suffered post operative complications subsequently developed a stage three sacral ulcer which was treated using vacuum assisted closure. Julia obtained her consent to photograph the wound and Dr Santamaria digitised it into AMWIS. Julia photographed the same lesion 4 days later and the improvement was not only evident from the pictures but was also clear from a numerical comparison of wound surface area and sub-component regions.

This patient was subsequently transferred to another hospital and when Julia examined the wound again the ulcer appeared to have deteriorated. Again, Julia photographed and digitised the wound and quantified the features for comparison with the prior wound statistics. The evidence supported her clinical observation and she was able to share previous pictures of the wound with other members of the health care

team and collaboratively develop a clear management plan.

Julia has another, innovative application for this technology. She is now using the pictures to communicate with patients about the progress of their wound healing. This is especially helpful when the wounds are located out of the patient's sight.

She comments, "You might be surprised how many people want to see these pictures, even of their surgical wounds. They seem to experience some relief in being able to see the wound improving, to know what is happening to their bodies. As nurses we must involve the patient and their family in their care as much as possible; after all it is *their* wound".

Julia will also be collaborating with other CNCs at StGH and the next few months may show a number of inventive applications of the AMWIS system in many areas of patient care.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Santamaria N. & Clayton L. Cleaning up: the development of the Alfred/Medseed Wound Imaging System. *Collegian*, 2000; 7(4): 14-18.

*Nursing Matters, Issue No 26, March 2001, reprinted with permission.*



*Digital technology gives nurses a powerful new tool. Julia Kittscha (left) and Dr Nick Santamaria.*

## Obituaries

We extend our sympathy to all who have sustained losses throughout the year, the following list is those that were notified.

**Marjorie Pont** (Ainsworth, 1942)  
19 Jul 2001

**Helen Mills** (1944)  
12 May 2001

**Mrs Overall**, 6 Jan 2001, **Mr Overall**  
12 May 2001 and **David Robson**,  
parents and husband of Jan Robson  
(Overall, 1965)

**Val Browne** (Kirkpatrick, 1952)  
20 May 2001

**Margaret Stirton**  
19 Nov 2000

**Isabel Goodfellow** (1944)

**Mrs West**, mother of Helen Dawes  
(West, 1974)

**Alice White** (1944) 29 Sep 2001