

# ACT and Region Medical Women's Society Newsletter

Newsletter Number 38

<http://afmw.org.au/act>

December 2009

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

**DR JULIE HEWITT**

### Message from the President



I would like to welcome all our members and students, especially new students, to the Medical Women's Society of the ACT and Region in 2010. We will again be starting the year with our cocktail party, on 24 February at Rod and Vida's, but after that we are making a few changes to our year's events, as outlined in the newsletter. This has come about for two reasons; both students and members seemed keen for us to be more involved in student support and we have also seen a downturn in numbers attending our evening events in recent years. I don't think the latter is due to lack of interest, as you **are** all members because you really **are** interested. I think everyone is finding life more and more demanding and so we have tried very hard to re-schedule events in such a way that as many members as possible might be able to attend.

Another change in recent times has been to the amount of financial support we can access and subsequently the

**ACT and Region Medical Women's Society  
PO Box 178, CAMPBELL 2612**

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## DIARY 2010

### The Cocktail Party

- 4th February

### The Juggle - TBA

### The Presentation Dinner

- 7th April

### The Law and Medicine Panel—TBA

### MWS/AFMW Ski Trip6

- 6-8th August

Candlelight Lodge  
Thredbo

### The AGM together with AFMW AGM

- Saturday 23rd October

### Fundraising Dinner

- September

amount of funds we have available for charity work. Our financial position is secure but we are no longer able to have drug company support, unless we are prepared to have our evenings dominated by a drug-related educational talk. This may occasionally be acceptable if the topic is of particular interest but we need to gauge how our members feel about this. We have still had wonderful support from several stalwarts – Rolfe Motors, Briquette Jewellers, Ondina and of course many of our members have quently the amount of funds we have available for charity work. Our financial position is secure but we are no longer able to have drug company support, unless we are prepared to have our evenings dominated by a drug-related educational talk. This may occasionally be acceptable if the topic is of particular interest but we need to gauge how our members feel about this. We have still had wonderful support from several stalwarts – Rolfe Motors, Briquette Jewellers, Ondina and of course many of our members have been particularly generous in making private donations towards our fund-raising or in sponsoring students to our dinners.

This year will see continued close association with our parent organisation, the AFMW, and several members may also be attending the Medical Women’s International Association Congress in Munster in July. Please don’t forget to check out the AFMW website regularly; our newsletter will also be published there in future.

Finally, if you ever do have any comments, criticisms or ideas please email or

Facebook us as we are here for our members and need to know what you want. Our Facebook site is “The Canberra Medical Women’s Society”. I now wish everyone a fulfilling and happy 2010 and hope to catch up with you at the cocktail party.

Warmest regards,  
Julie Hewitt.

## **Editor’s column**

Hello and welcome to the new-look 2010 Newsletter. As Julie has mentioned in the President’s address, we have a change in schedule this year. Some dates have been decided upon, namely the Cocktail Party on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, The Presentation Dinner on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> April and the AGM and Dinner on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October in conjunction with the AFMW AGM. The Ski trip will be on the weekend 6-8<sup>th</sup> August.

The other functions will be organized as the year progresses. Last year “The Juggle”, a night to introduce work-life balance to students was a success and we intend to repeat that again, in a modified format. In addition we are planning a Medicine and the Law Night, open to all members and students. More will be circulated on these two functions as the year progresses.

This Newsletter is your Newsletter. Please feel free to offer a contribution.

Jane Twin  
Secretary

## **SKI WEEKEND 6-8<sup>th</sup> AUGUST – URGENT RESPONSE REQUIRED**

This annual highly successful event will again be on this year, at Thredbo, staying at Candlelight lodge.



The cost of the Weekend, including two nights' accommodation, breakfast and one magnificent dinner is \$420.00 four share.

A quick response is necessary, as a definite "YES" is required in order to reserve the rooms.

Email: Jane Twin on the [twins@netspeed.com.au](mailto:twins@netspeed.com.au).

**MWS ACT and  
Region Committee  
2010**

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Aodhamair lenagh-  
maguire

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Moniza Kumar  
Anita Hutchison



Australian Federation  
of **Medical Women**  
the voice of Australian medical women

*The voice of medical women advocating for,  
and supporting, the health and welfare of our  
local, national and international communities.*

Did you know that when you join the ACT and Region Medical Women's Society you become a member of the Australian Federation of Medical Women?

**About AFMW**

The AFMW offers our members, colleagues and the community access to the collective knowledge and experiences of medical women. The AFMW seeks to ensure equity and equality for women doctors, so as to achieve their potential throughout all stages of their professional and personal lives. AFMW also seeks to improve the health of all Australians, especially women and children.

In 1896 Australia's first medical women's society was formed by an inspiring group of ten Victorian female doctors, including Constance Stone. The AFMW was formed in 1927 and is a not for profit, politically neutral, non sectarian, non government organisation.

Today the AFMW offers an important network for female doctors in all regions of Australia. AFMW membership is automatic for doctors who are members of their affiliated state medical women's society; medical women can join AFMW directly where they have no active local State Society. Full membership is open to registered female medical practitioners of Australia. Associate membership includes non-registered female medical practitioners and medical students.

**Membership Entitlements:**

- Leadership development, networking and mentoring opportunities
- The opportunity to become actively involved in key issues surrounding the health and wellbeing of women and children, in Australia and globally
- Automatic membership of the Medical Women's International Association, an organization with United Nations representation
- Attend educational and social events
- Join the AFMW leadership skills database
- Receive updates and e-newsletters from AFMW

To ensure you receive emails from AFMW please visit <http://afmw.org.au> and subscribe to the AFMW quarterly e-newsletter. While you are there, check out the new, improved AFMW website!

To find out more about Medical Women's International visit <http://mwia.net>.

# Medical Women's Society of the ACT and Region

*presents their*

# 2010

# COCKTAIL PARTY

*for female doctors and medical students*

The Medical Women's Society of the ACT is a great group of female doctors who indulge in education pursuits, supporting grass-roots charities whilst catching up with our students and colleagues. Our cocktail party provides an excellent opportunity for female doctors and students to meet and mingle over cocktails and scrumptious finger food. It's a unique chance to network and talk about your future in medicine, make new friends within the profession, or just catch up with your mates.

***MWS of ACT & Region once again welcomes you to this fine event.***

**When: Wednesday 24th February 2010**

**Time: 6.00pm till 8.00pm**

**Where: 80 Empire Circuit, Deakin ACT**

**Cost: \$10.00 paid at the venue (FREE for students)**

**RSVP: Dr Jane Twin by Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February for catering purposes**

Please respond preferably by email: [jane.twin@capitalpath.com.au](mailto:jane.twin@capitalpath.com.au)

Or SMS 0418 336 217

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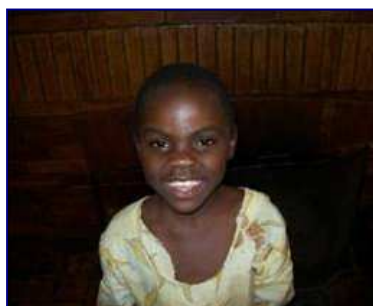
 zopom foundation	9 Roebuck Street Red Hill ACT 2605 Phone: +61 (0)2 6239 7578 Email: yvonne.wyer@zopom.org Web: zopom.org
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It has been a busy, rewarding year for the Zopom Foundation. Yvonne will have just returned from her second visit to the Orphanage so she will have an updated understanding of the current issues there. We are currently raising funds to buy them a new vehicle as the old one was written off by an unlicensed (and therefore uninsured) driver. We are hoping we can buy this vehicle by the end of this calendar year.



**About the Zopom Foundation:** Paula Leen, an amazing 74 year old US citizen has committed much of her life working with orphans. Paula had a dream of opening an orphanage in an area of desperate need, where 1 in 5 children are orphans and 100 babies become HIV positive every day. This dream became a reality in November 1996. Single handedly, Paula runs the Murwira Orphanage and her outreach program feeds the whole Marange destitute community.

Yvonne Wyer assisted Paula LEEN as a volunteer for five months at the Murwira Orphanage in 2006, and spent another 5 weeks there in 2009. The orphanage caters for children from a few months old to twelve years of age. Since her first visit to the orphanage, Yvonne has been committed to raising desperately needed funds for Paula. The Wyer's have established the ZOPOM Foundation which has charitable tax deduction status and 95% of all money raised goes directly to Paula's project.



**28th Medical Women's International  
Association World Congress**

Munster, Germany  
27 - 31 July 2010



<http://www.mwia2010.net/>

**Welcome** to the

**28th  
International Congress**

**of the Medical Women's  
International Association**



***"Globalisation in Medicine - Challenges and Opportunities"***

**July 27 - July 31, 2010 - Congress Venue: Fürstenberghaus, Münster (Germany)  
under the patronage of Ursula von der Leyen - German Federal Minister for Labour and Social Affairs**

## ***Presentation Dinner Report***

Dr Nuli Lemoh was one of the Speakers at the Presentation Dinner in October 2009. Dr Lemoh is a paediatrician who grew up in a poor rural village in Sierra Leone. With few resources, this remarkable man relied on scholarships and sheer determination to get to where he is today. He spoke to us of the project to give the city of Bo a hospital run by local doctors to diagnose and treat sick children.



## **Bo Children's Hospital, Sierra Leone**

### Harsh Realities for Children in Sierra Leone

1 in 6 infants dies at birth

165 per 1000 infants die (Australia, only 5)

Under 5 years mortality rate—282 per 1000 (Australia, only 6/1000)

### **Did You Know: Fast facts about Sierra Leone**

Sierra Leone has 5.5 million people

Under 15 year olds make up 45% of the population

Over 60% of people live in rural areas

Life expectancy is 34 years (Australia, 80 years)

1 in 6 women will die giving birth in their life time



## **Common Causes of Death—Mostly Preventable**

Under nutrition—25% of under 5s

Diarrhea—5% of under 5s die

Malaria—up to 63% of deaths

## **What About Health Delivery?**

93% of GNP goes to repayment of international debt

Gross National Income per capita was \$US150 in 2003

Annual health expenditure per capita is \$US34

1 surgeon for every 1 million people

1 midwife for every 26,000 people

Only 42% of births are attended by skilled personnel

The only children's hospital is located in Freetown, 150 miles west of Bo—  
at least a four hour journey on a bad road

## **Vision**

**To treat, teach, to train, to improve child survival and health**

## **Project Overview**

Bo is the largest rural city and is centrally located

3 acres are available—15 minutes drive to Bo town centre

Components; outpatients, hospital, health education and research unit, accommodation for administrator and visiting staff

Development by stages—initially outpatients

20 beds initially to be increased to 60

Diagnostic facilities (laboratory and imaging)

Operating theatre

Health education and research unit that aims to:

Educate children and parents on nutrition and prevention of disease

Train nurses and paramedics

Research into local health issues

### **For further information contact:**

Laurie Facer 2/29 Pomona St Pennant Hills 2120 (0419 633 115)

Nuli Lemoh 16 Johns Ave Normanhurst 2076 (0411 749658)

## ***The Story of Yajilarra***

*Film Review by Marjorie Cross*



The story of Yajilarra begins in 2007 when a group of Aboriginal women from the Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley decided enough was enough. Their community had experienced 13 suicides in 13 months. Reports of family violence and child abuse were commonplace and alcohol consumption was rising at an alarming rate. Acknowledging that something had to be done urgently, and that things had to change, a group of Aboriginal women from across the valley got together. With the support of the men, they stood up for changes and for a future for everyone in the community.

"Yajilarra" is the documentary produced by Melannie Hogan and financed, in part, by a "Sydney Family"

It was officially premiered at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York on 4th March 2009.. AND this was also the first time that Indigenous Women from Australia presented at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Elizabeth Broderick, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner was one of the team presenting it and said the film was a stirring illustration of the power of women's leadership in the face of community devastation. Personal communications to me, at the time, from people who saw this at the UN included, often, that this presentation had made them so proud to be an Australian that night in New York.

The presentation at Parliament House include two of the Aboriginal Community activists: June Oscar and Emily Carter from Fitzroy Crossing and their presentations invoked that same sense of pride. Clearly proud and happy to be there also were Ministers Jenny Macklin and Tanya

Plibersek, and Elizabeth Broderick. The audience that night in the theatre at Parliament House included many more Members and Senators.

To the film itself:

The cinematography was superb, given that the landscape is superb.

The story invokes the genesis of the women's plans and balanced reporting of both the support and opposition they received. Certainly not everyone agreed to limitations on the sale of full strength beer and curtailment of the availability of alcohol. It tells of a good doctor working in their community who supported them with community information on such issues as post traumatic stress disorder, and the foetal alcohol syndrome, and many other effects of alcohol use and abuse. The men and women themselves interpreted the facts and got the story out to everyone. Mostly it tells how a community took action to address the issues of alcohol use and abuse and the self harms associated with despair and losses. Remember this is all in WA and not the NT where similar things were imposed by the Intervention and without consultation. This community did it themselves, including lobbying the State Govt. so that alcohol bans were legally in place. This was a community taking action into its own hands.

Just two or three women first of all sat down in a creek bed and said we have got to make changes or all our young men will be dead and all our grandchildren will be born alcohol affected. With the involvement of the Elders and Traditional owners, it went from there eventually touching all who see the film or even read about it.

The "stars" of both the film and that night are the community activists: June Oscar and Emily Carter who saved their community, although it was clear, that the last thing these articulate, unassuming grandmothers would want is to be labelled as stars. At least till that date in 2009 there had been no further suicides at Fitzroy Crossing and the community instigated alcohol limits remained in place.

# Bridging Leadership Barriers Project

Jill Tomlinson, AFMW Project Manager

A 2008-09 project that engaged women from across Australia and allowed AFMW to establish a strong web presence.

## Project Initiatives

- \$15,000 in leadership scholarships to assist medical women to attend the Medical Women's International Association Western Pacific Regional Congress (MWIA WPRC)
- leadership and website skills training workshops at the MWIA WPRC
- redeveloping the Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) website, creating a more user-friendly, accessible website with up-to-date content, news and resources
- creating an online leadership portal, containing resources that enhance medical women's leadership skills
- developing a regular electronic AFMW newsletter, beginning January 2009
- creating a skills database of medical women who are willing to be consulted on issues of importance in their field(s) of interest

## Outcomes

The project met all objectives, including:

1. improved communication networks among Australian Federation of Medical Women and its members through effective use of internet technology
2. enhanced opportunities for women in remote areas to communicate with their peers and participate in internet-based training
3. enhanced access to medical expertise (via the leadership skills database) to assist AFMW to inform and drive health-policy development and service development

## Highlights

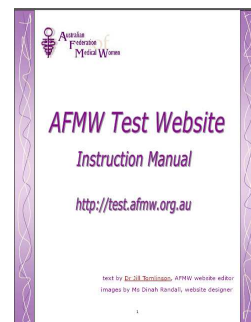
1. Effective Use of Internet Technology  
Highlights in the effective use of internet technology included redeveloping the AFMW



website (<http://afmw.org.au>) and using of Web 2.0 strategies to build online networking and communication. The AFMW website now has a high profile, and is currently the number two Google-ranked website for the term "medical women". It receives a high volume of website traffic through search engine referrals on terms, including "women's health policy" and "effective communication". The latest figures indicate an increase in website traffic of more than 275% from August 2008 to April 2009.

2. Accessible Internet-Based Training  
Highlights in accessible internet-based training included the development of a practice website (<http://test.afmw.org.au>), a training guide e-Book and delivery of website skills training in sessions specifically designed for medical women.

**Top right:** Website training at the MWIA WPRC. **Below left:** the AFMW website at <http://afmw.org.au>. **Right:** AFMW website training guide e-Book. **Below:** The AFMW Practice Website, at <http://test.afmw.org.au>





the voice of Australian medical women

## An invitation to provide your expertise to improve medicine and health in Australia

Do you want to improve medicine and health in Australia? The Australian Federation of Medical Women (AFMW) invites you to participate in an initiative that will enhance the opportunities for both individuals and AFMW to contribute to public health policy and service delivery.

Medical women have a wealth of expertise, experience and ideas on how to improve medicine in Australia. However, their voices often go unheard and they lack access to opportunities and forums that would allow them to foster change.

AFMW is often approached by government and non-government organisations to participate in debates and provide expert views on health and workforce issues. Often the time-frames are short, or the issue is an unexpected one. We currently have no systematic way of identifying medical women to consult with or to have attend meetings about these issues. Currently we are unable to access the vast wealth of expertise and experience that medical women possess.

To address these concerns AFMW is building a database of medical women who are willing to share their ideas in their areas of expertise, experience and interest. We will use the information obtained to offer interested doctors opportunities to provide their expertise and opinions to Health Policy Makers and other organisations that approach AFMW for advice. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss their ideas and consult on the formulation of consensus opinions both for AFMW and the Medical Women's International Association (MWIA), our international parent organisation that is actively involved with the United Nations as a Non Governmental Organisation and has official working relations with the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

We encourage all medical women to take part in this initiative - each medical woman has a wealth of expertise and experience to offer, and often from a different perspective. If you are interested in improving Australian medicine please register by completing the form overleaf and returning it to AFMW. AFMW will hold your details on file and will advise you when an issue of interest to you is raised, offering you the opportunity to participate in discussions. Your contact details will not be provided to a third party without your express consent. You can decline to participate or opt out at any time. You do not have to be a member of AFMW to join the database.

We hope to hear from you!

*The Australian Federation of Medical Women aims to further the professional development of medical women through education and research and to improve the health and welfare of all persons, especially Australian women and children. The AFMW acts for and represents medical women in all matters of mutual interest at national and international levels.*

The screenshot shows the HON website interface. At the top, it says "Health On the Net Foundation" and "Non Governmental Organization". Below that, it lists "Medical information you can trust!". There are navigation tabs for "PATIENT / INDIVIDUAL", "MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL", and "WEB PUBLISHER". The main content area shows a search bar and a list of "certified web sites" with a search box containing "afmw.org.au". Below the search results, it says "Results 1 - 8 for afmw.org.au. (2.80 seconds)". At the bottom, there is a "Google Custom Search" logo.

**Above:** AFMW website listing at the Health On the Net Foundation website

**Right:** The AFMW HON Code Badge

**Left:** The Leadership Skills Database Application form



### 3. Leadership Skills Database

The leadership skills database was launched online and at the Medical Women's International Association Western Pacific Regional Congress in October 2008. Medical women from across Australia have enlisted, providing AFMW with access to specialist medical expertise in a wide variety of areas from medical women with diverse backgrounds and practices. Application forms continue to be distributed and promoted across Australia, with continued growth projected for the database in future years.

### Milestones

All project milestones were completed on time. Milestones included:

- delivery of the leadership and website skills training
- launch of the redeveloped AFMW website
- launch of the Leadership Skills Database at the MWIA WPRC in October 2008
- inaugural AFMW e-newsletter in January 2009
- gaining Health On The Net (HON) Foundation accreditation for the AFMW website in March 2009

### Participant Satisfaction

Participants expressed high satisfaction levels in a web-based survey on the AFMW e-communication strategies, reflecting the interventions' appropriateness to the target group's needs. High satisfaction levels were also reported by project participants in the leadership skills training and website skills training, and recipients of the AFMW Leadership Scholarships.

### Future Directions

AFMW will sustain all of these strategies and outcomes beyond 2008-09. The redeveloped website is an integral component of AFMW's e-communication policy, which includes the quarterly AFMW e-newsletter developed as part of this project and available by free subscription to all medical women and stakeholders. Ongoing training will be available through the practice website and instructional e-Book that AFMW developed as part of the project.

Project outcomes will be promoted in a comprehensive report that will be launched online at the AFMW website on June 30, 2009, and disseminated to members and stakeholders via the July 2009 AFMW e-newsletter.

*The AFMW Bridging Leadership Barriers project was made possible by a \$89,000 grant from the Australian Government Office For Women's 2007-08 Leadership and Development Programme Grants. AFMW gratefully acknowledges this source of funding.*