

The Department of Patient and Family Services Social Work Service continued to develop academic links with the University of Melbourne and has completed a consultancy program during 2010 with Associate Professor Lou Harms, University of Melbourne.

## Trauma Team

The Trauma Team, in conjunction with Dr Lou Harms, completed the research project, 'Family adaptation following trauma: the impact of ICU hospital admissions', which explored family members' perceptions of psychosocial trauma and adaptation as a result of an ICU admission. Findings indicated a high level of trauma symptoms relative to the mean scores in other studies of trauma. Similarly, the use of the PTGI showed that participants were also reporting some positive changes, occurring mostly in relation to personal resources.

## Chronic Illness Team

Sue De Bono, Senior Social Worker, Bone Marrow Transplantation, in collaboration with Lynda Katona (Psychology) and Stuart Lee (Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre), published a study on routine screening for psychological distress on an Australian inpatient haematology and oncology ward and the impact on use of psychosocial services in the *Medical Journal of Australia*. Up to 60% of cancer patients experience long-term distress, with 20-35% experiencing anxiety or depression. Many distressed inpatients are not identified or referred for psychosocial support until in crisis. The aim of this project was to trial a new system of screening inpatients to better identify distressed patients, to examine the causes of their distress, and to improve psychosocial referral. The research found that there is a high prevalence of unidentified distress in patients on the oncology ward, who would not normally be referred for psychosocial support.

A collaborative study was conducted on the psychological impact of haematopoietic stem cell transplantation on relative donors. For this research, we interviewed 19 sibling donors of recipients who underwent peripheral blood stem cell or bone marrow transplants from 2007 onwards. The findings revealed that there was a positive impact on the relationship between the donor and their sibling. However, donors experience a high level of distress associated with the success of the donation, which is linked with the length of the recovery for the recipient and whether the recipient survived the transplant.

Maureen McInerney, Senior Social Worker, Malignant Haematology and Medical Oncology, conducted a research project entitled 'Telling children about their parent's cancer: improving family focused practice in oncology and haematology in an acute adult hospital'. This project used current literature to assess whether it would help inform social work practice with children when a parent has been diagnosed with cancer. The communication style that a family adopts influences how they wish information is to be given to their children, and this needs to be taken into account when working with families.

## Infectious Diseases Team

The Infectious diseases Social Work Team, in collaboration with the HIV Mental Health Service, developed and commenced running a

six week support group program for young people aged between 18 and 25 who are living with HIV. The group was set up to provide these young people with a safe and confidential space where they could discuss and share their experiences of living with HIV, working towards a goal of improving participants' sense of social connection with other young people living with HIV.

Evaluation of the program will include consumer feedback and satisfaction outcomes, a presentation of critical reflections by the group facilitators and an assessment as to whether participants felt that had achieved an improved sense of social connection with other young people living with HIV.

## General Medicine Team

The General Medicine team, in conjunction with Dr Lou Harms, investigates admissions to the General Medical Unit following a suicide attempt. This research will look at ways in which we can improve psychosocial support during a hospital admission.

## Pastoral Care

Reverend Marilyn Hope continued with the project 'The spiritual dimension of the experience of illness', performing interviews of patients and a few staff members from pastoral care.

## Staff Achievements

Bridget Wall, John Ashfield, Maureen McInerney, Lou Kerven and Leah du Plooy presented papers at the 6th International Social Work in Health and Mental Health Conference, Dublin, in July 2010.

*From left: Stephanie Inglis, Associate Professor Lou Harms and Kellie Muir discuss research within the Social Work Trauma Team.*



## Publications

1 Journal Article