ISSN 1447-4999

CONFERENCE REVIEW

Second Annual JEPHC Symposium

8th April 2010

The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Australia

Pauline Murcott, BAppSc (Human Movement), MBus (Event Management)

Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice,

Monash University, Melbourne

Over 140 delegates attended this year's 2nd Annual Journal of Emergency Primary Health Care (JEPHC) Symposium which was held at the Alfred Hospital's Monash Clinical School on 8th April 2010. The Symposium was once again co-hosted by JEPHC, Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice (DCEHPP), the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) and Ambulance Victoria (AV).

This year's innovative theme "Doing Things Differently" explored the implications of the three recent Australian national health services reports; international and national trends in community-based emergency health, and local initiatives in providing effective and efficient community-based emergency health and unscheduled care. Once again there was widespread interest in attending this year's Symposium, and from a Student Paramedic perspective it was a privilege to have the opportunity to mix with the wealth of industry experience and knowledge.

Professor Peter O'Meara of Charles Sturt University, NSW, delivered the David Shugg Keynote Lecture, exploring the theoretical foundations and practical applications of managing ambulance services as a complex adaptive system. He examined the co-evolution and incremental changes occurring in the prehospital sector by recognizing the challenges towards chasing "a moving target".

Peter Carver, Executive Director of the National Health Workforce Taskforce, presented on some of the Australian government initiatives on reforming the Australian workforce. Key themes during Peter's articulate presentation included a commitment to achieving self-sufficiency with innovation, reform, research, workforce planning, education and training. Professor Frank Archer, Head of Department at Monash University DCEHPP, and Editor in Chief of JEPHC, extended on the previous speakers' ideas by evaluating emerging models of doing things differently in community based emergency health by seeking national drivers, or looking for solutions.

Key themes from the conference explored the expanded scope of the "Paramedic" with a collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach to primary health care. Likewise, Professor Peter Brooks of the Australian Health Workforce Institute, identified the importance of inter-professional learning and the primary care challenges, and the concept of a physician assistant.

Other notable speakers included, Associate Professor Tony Walker (Council of Ambulance Authorities, and Ambulance Victoria); Professor Ron Stewart (Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada); Professor Matthew Cook (National Clinical Director for Urgent and Emergency Care, Dept of Health, London, and Director of Emergency Care and Systems Improvement Group, Warwick Medical School, UK); Dr Cindy Hein (South Australian Ambulance Service and, Flinders University); Dr Jason Bendall (Ambulance Research Institute, Ambulance Service NSW); Mr Andrew Wingrove (Convenor, International Roundtable on Community Paramedicine, USA) and Andy Long (Wellington Free Ambulance, NZ). All explored a diverse range of current issues and future challenges facing the prehospital sector from a national and international perspective.

A discussion panel provided the forum for interactive discussion and debate concerning the current and future capabilities of Extended-Care Paramedics (ECP), which was a unique opportunity for students, academics, paramedics and industry professionals to discuss current Paramedic Practice, revealed a diverse range of opinions, expertise and knowledge. The combined knowledge of all speakers provided the discerning audience with a consistent message, recognizing the importance of the extended-care paramedic, the current challenges and delineating future directions for the prehospital sector throughout Australia.

In summary, this year's Symposium was successful in providing a high calibre of speakers and interactive discussions regarding current and future challenges affecting the paramedic profession. Furthermore, the symposium concluded with optimistic visions towards the future and embraced the concept of "doing things differently". The festivities continued as delegates later gathered at the Melbourne Aquarium for a formal dinner to celebrate the 10 years anniversary of the Department of Community Emergency Health Paramedic Practice at Monash University.