



Meridian

Newsletter of the Australian Chinese Medical Association of Victoria
澳洲維省中華醫學會

15 August 2009, Volume 6 Number 3

Visiting Hanh

Freelance Reporter Blanche Wilkie recently travelled to Vietnam to report on Hong-Hanh Luong, who has been receiving assistance from the ACMAV.

In January 2009, Kim Vu (one of Hanh's best friends from Melbourne) and I met up in Saigon and then took a plane to Pleiku to visit Hanh.

I had been following Hanh's progress by keeping in contact with Dr Ian Holten since Hanh arrived in Australia in 2006 with her body fused together, the result of a traumatic burns incident.

Hanh, Kim and I first met at the St John of God Hospital in Geelong, Victoria, just before Hanh had the last of over 50 life saving operations with Dr Ian Holten and his team.

It's impossible to meet Hanh and not be inspired by her. She could have died so many times in her life, but has found the courage to live and the love of many new friends along the way.

We were so excited to see Hanh again once the plane landed at Pleiku airport.... lots of hugs and stories to catch up on.

Hanh, accompanied by her Dad and gorgeous son, Nhat, was wearing a hat with full face covering.

"I wear this so that people don't stare at me. Sometimes I go in shops and they refuse to serve me," said



Hahn rides her bike on a sunny day.

Hanh.

My heart sunk as another of the harsh realities of life back home was revealed.

Back in Saigon, Kim and I had visited the burns unit at the hospital where Hanh first went after the horrific incident—and where she was told she would die. The smell of burnt skin and blackened faces with raw bodies laid on beds side-by-side, cared for by relatives... we could see why Hanh

thought the nurses at the St John of God Hospital were like angels.

During our few days in Pleiku we were welcomed into Hanh's family home. This was a real highlight to be with them and learn more about Hanh's life.

We visited St Paul's convent where the nuns had cared for Hanh, and where the couple visiting from Adelaide (Nhuong and Hanh Tran) had first met Hanh and decided to help.

One of the nun's there offered me a nip of sherry... she must have noticed I was confronted by holding baby orphans and seeing the work of these amazing nuns caring for forty abandoned children.

After this – a miracle! I walked into the courtyard and Hanh was riding a bicycle. Seeing the photos of her from 2006 - with her legs and arms fused to her body and her chin melted into her chest, unable to close her eyes or open her mouth - who would have thought we'd see Hanh riding a bicycle on a sunny day?

Blanche Wilkie

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Top Marks!

ACMAV Member Michael Hong recently passed his SET written and clinical examinations with flying colours, gaining the highest marks in the June 2009 examinations in both components.



Dr Michael Hong

Michael has been awarded the Gordon Gordon-Taylor Medal for this achievement and is the first trainee to top the exam in both components at the same sitting.

Michael is currently a surgical trainee at Royal Melbourne Hospital and we look forward to his contributions in the future to the ACMAV and the wider medical community.



ACMAV Committee News

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President's Message

Although winter in Melbourne is not cold by the standards of many northern hemisphere cities, for those who like their sunshine this can be a dreary time of year, not to mention a season for illness. On reflection, it was probably appropriate for our most recent educational dinner seminar, on the topic of Vitamin D deficiency, to have been held close to the shortest day of the year - since it is almost certain that we and our Chinese patients are not getting enough sunlight to maintain our bone strength.

I was delighted to see a good turnout at this seminar, held on 24th June at the Crown Palace Restaurant in Vermont South (and sponsored by Melbourne Pathology). Not only was the topic of great relevance to us all, but it was particularly



Attendees at the ACMAV Harry Potter Movie Day. From Left, Back Row: Michael, Boon and Matthew Hong. Front Row: Adrian Mar, Debbie Chen, Jun Yang, Holly Zhang and son.



Members at the Vitamin D Talk at Crown Palace.

gratifying to have one of our own members, Dr Zhong Lu, as the expert speaker on this topic. Dr Lu is an outstanding example of the new breed of ACMAV doctor, having graduated in China before then pursuing post-graduate studies, including a PhD, in Melbourne. Her ongoing research into Vitamin D will continue to benefit our patients and the broader community.

This seminar also provided to members an introduction to a new project being supported by ACMAV – the Starfish Foster Home. Dr Siew Keng Chan was touched by the plight of “orphans,” abandoned by their parents because of congenital illnesses, who have made their way to the home of Ms Amanda de Lange in China’s old capi-

tal of Xian. Jun and I have also had the opportunity to visit the Starfish Foster Home and see first-hand the wonderful work of its founder and director. The ACMAV Committee has agreed to look further into how our association can assist Starfish, and Dr Chan has written an article for this edition of Meridian to provide members with further information.

Our next big event is the ACMAV Annual Conference, to be held at the Stamford Plaza Hotel on Sunday 30th August. This will provide yet another opportunity to showcase the talent, expertise and good works of our members and other colleagues. I am truly heartened by the contribution made by our members and the leadership and inspiration this provides. Enough for a warm winter glow!

Adrian Mar



Kenneth Chuah, Gilbert Chuah, and Helena Ng.

Lending a Helping Hand – The ACMAV Charitable Grants Program

The ACMAV Foundation was established to enable people disadvantaged for cultural or socioeconomic reasons a greater access to healthcare services through the implementation of educational and medical aid projects.

The vision was to offer assistance to those in the Australian and international community, while being attentive to the needs of the ethnic Chinese people in particular. One of the ways to realize this vision is for the ACMAV to promote the humanitarian efforts of its members and offer monetary assistance. All members who perform charitable work will be eligible to apply for such a grant.

Grants will be prioritised, in order of priority, if they are for projects, charita-

ble works or charitable events that:

1. Involve the Chinese community in the area of medicine and health;
2. Involve the Chinese community;
3. Involve other Asian communities in the area of medicine and health;
4. Involve other Asian communities; or
5. Involve other communities, as decided by the ACMAV Inc. Committee.

The amount made available for such funds will vary from year to year, and shall be determined by the Committee of the ACMAV. The total value of each grant



The new ACMAV Committee hard at work

will not exceed \$2000. The grants will be awarded based on review of the grant applications by the ACMAV Committee in March and September of each year. Grant application forms are now online at www.acmav.org.

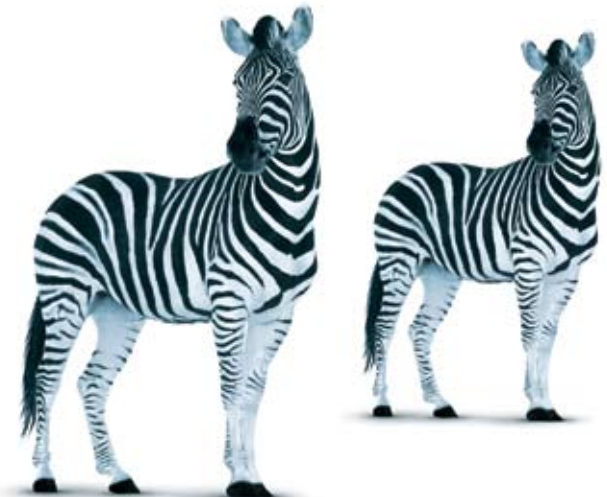
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ACMAV Special Article

Starfish Foster Home, Xian, China

*If your vision is for a year, plant wheat.
If your vision is for 10 years, plant trees.
If your vision is for a lifetime, plant people.*
– Chinese proverb

On a recent holiday in China, my family, friends and I had the privilege and opportunity to visit the Starfish Foster Home in Xian, to witness firsthand the inspirational work of

Amanda and her team of nannies and volunteers.

In September 2005, Amanda de Lange founded Starfish Children's Services to save the lives of Chinese orphans with special health needs. This resulted in the establishment of Starfish Foster Home to rescue children in need of medical care by working in collaboration with local orphanages. After nursing them back to health through solid nutrition and a loving environment, Starfish

Children's Services organises and pays for the child's surgery and post-operative care before arranging for the adoption of these children into stable, loving families.

Where do these orphans come from? In China, medical treatment and surgery is expensive. There is no Medicare system. In the rural areas, poverty is still rife. When a child is born with birth defects, the parents abandon the child somewhere. Babies have been abandoned in bus shelters, local parks, market places, cemeteries and at the orphanage's doorstep. The parents hope that the local authorities will find the child and look after them at the government-run orphanages. The local orphanage identifies any child requiring medical treatment and then contacts Amanda.

The children have a variety of medical problems. The most common problems are cleft lip/palate, congenital heart disease, spina bifida, hydrocephalus and cerebral palsy.



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Above: Baby Stella gained good weight after arrival, and proceeded to have her cleft lip repaired as part of Operation Smile (www.operationsmile.org) in Hang Zhou. Opposite Page: Eleven "Buddha Babies."

There are also cases of patent urachus and imperforate anus.

The Starfish Foster Home has taken care of 85 children to date, arranged surgery for 50 children and overseas adoption of over 20 children to America, Netherlands, Norway and Spain. Currently there are 46 babies under the age of 3 years in two foster homes in Xian.

Would you like to help? The Starfish Foster Home does not receive any financial support from the Chinese government. It relies on goodwill and donations from friends and supporters. There is always a need for monetary support, volunteers, medical practitioners and nurses. As with any household with a baby, everyday items – such as food, milk formula, clothing and nappies – take their financial toll.

Imagine having 46 babies in one house! Milk formula alone costs US\$3000 (not a misprint) per month. Volunteers are a huge help to the nannies, who often take care of several babies at the same time. Some volunteers choose to stay in the apartment next door, which can be rented for a low cost.

If you would like more information, about Starfish Foster Home then please visit these websites:

www.thestarfishfosterhome.org
chinesestarfish.blogspot.com
chinesestarfishcleft.blogspot.com

or contact Dr Siew Keng Chan
 on (03) 9398 5353.



Dr Siew Keng Chan speaks about her experience with Starfish at an ACMAV seminar in June.

Another way that we can help is by supplying medications. I was very surprised that some medications are not at all available in China. Simple over-the-counter items that we take for granted, such as Nilstat drops, hydrocortisone cream, miconazole cream, and common antibiotics such as Keflex were not available even in the major pharmacies in Beijing. I brought over some Panadol and Keflex for Amanda; she was most grateful.

By far the best way we can help is by offering our services as medical practitioners, nurses and volunteers. There is no medical help on site, Amanda has no medical training and the nannies do not have a nursing background. Whenever a child becomes unwell, it means a trip to the local doctor or to the hospital. While we were there, my father and I were asked to auscultate the chests of a few babies and to look at some toddlers with rashes.

We had planned a 1 hour visit; we ended staying over 2 hours. There was not a dry eye on the bus on the way back to the hotel.

I encourage all ACMAV members to be involved by giving some of their time and skills to such a worthy cause.

"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others" – Pericles

Siew Keng Chan

The Starfish Thrower

Once upon a time there was a man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach he saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself to think of someone who would dance to the day. So he began to walk faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he saw that it was an older man and the man wasn't dancing. Instead he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?"

The older man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

The man noticed there were hundreds of starfish all washed up on the beach from a storm the night before. He watched as the man carefully continued to pick up the starfish one by one.

"I guess I should have asked, 'Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?'"

"The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in they'll die."

"But don't you realise there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference!"

The older man listened politely. He bent down, picked up another starfish. He looked at the starfish as he prepared to throw it into the ocean, past the breaking waves and said – "I will make a difference to this one!"



ACMAV Seminar Program

Have you had enough sun this winter?

On the cold winter night of June 24th, we crowded around tables of lobster and duck at Crown Palace Restaurant in Vermont South, and savoured the warmth of the indoors. However, soon after Dr Zhong Lu presented her comprehensive talk on vitamin D, we realized that was the wrong thing to do.

To achieve a satisfactory vitamin D level (which in itself is difficult to define), we needed at least 30 – 40 minutes of sun exposure on a wintry day in Melbourne (somewhat less if one is sun-baking in Queensland). Dr Lu really hit home with the message that



Dr Zhong Lu from Melbourne Pathology gives her talk.

vitamin D is not just considered essential for healthy bone, but may also play a role in the prevention of cancer and autoimmune diseases like type 1 diabetes.

So, for the next healthy education seminar, we must organize an outdoor session where everybody can bare their skin for a precious dose of VD!

Dr Zhong Lu, Chemical Pathologist
Melbourne Pathology
Collingwood, VIC, 3066
T: 03 9287 7700

On the same night, Dr Siew Keng Chan shared her stories about Starfish Foster Home in Xi'An, China, where orphans with craniofacial deformities are rescued from the door of death and nursed back to health in preparation for life-changing surgery and possible adoption. This may be an opportunity for the ACMAV to make a difference in China. Please see the more detailed article written by Siew Keng in this issue of the Meridian.

Jun Yang



Nothing compares to fresh lobster!

ACMAV.ORG For all things ACMAV

Don't forget to check our website for up-to-date information about ACMAV events and activities, membership information, and past issues of ACMAV publications!



ACMAV Tennis Tournament

This year's ACMAV Tennis Tournament will be held on Sunday the 25th of October at Melbourne Park on Batman Avenue. This event generally proves to be fun day out for all with the challenge of knocking off last year's winners Douglas Gin and Trevor Lau-Gooey.

Competition starts at 1200 hours at Courts 6 and 7 under the

bubble indoors and public parking is available via Entrance D, Swan Street. A complimentary parking voucher will be available on the way in at the Pro Shop.

If you wish to take part in this year's competition, or know of a potential sponsor then please contact Douglas Gin on 0439 898 898 or email the ACMAV Office at office@acmav.org.



Australian Chinese Medical Association of Victoria

ACMAV ANNUAL MEETING 2009

"Think Global

Act Local"

Sunday 30 August 2009

Stamford Plaza Hotel

111 Little Collins St, Melbourne CBD



Feedback from last year's conference:

Awesome conference!
Excellent organisation
and venue – Melbourne
GP

The talks were excellent,
concise and clear, and
best of all, interesting! –
Physician, Melbourne



What's on the Program:

8.45 am Registration
9.15 am Introduction and Welcome

Session 1

9.30 am What On Earth Can One Doctor Do To Impact Global Health? – Dr Nathan Grills

10.00 am Update on HIV – Prof Jennifer Hoy

10.30 am Influenza – Assoc Prof Mary O'Reilly

11.00 am Morning Tea

Session 2

11.30 am Evolution or Revolution? The Changing Face of Vascular Surgery – Mr Jason Chuen

12.00 pm Advances in Diabetes Management – Dr Jennifer Wong

12.30 pm Obesity: Dealing with the Epidemic – Prof Joseph Proietto

1.00 pm Lunch

Session 3

2.00 pm Depression in a World of Globalization and the Newer Antidepressant Drugs – Prof Eng-Seong Tan

2.30 pm Saving Face with a Smile: Plastic Surgery in Developing Countries – Mr David Chong

3.00 pm Refugee Health – Dr Joanne Gardiner

Conference Dinner:

Quanjude Restaurant, 299 Queen Street, Melbourne
6.30 pm for 7.00 pm, Chinese banquet
Dinner dress theme: "A Touch of the Orient"

**Approved for 9 Category 2 points in the
RACGP QA & CPD 2008-2010 triennium**

**Places are still available at this year's Annual Conference.
Contact office@acmav.org for details or download a
registration form at www.acmav.org.**

The Back Page

NSW ACMA Japan Trip

Due to the success of last year's trip ACMA NSW is running another "Meet the Experts" meeting in Niseko, Japan between the 5th to the 12th of January 2010.

This will be preceded by a smaller satellite conference in Nozawa Onsen Ski Resort from Monday 28th December 2009 to Saturday 2nd January 2010 focusing on "People Skills".

For more information, please visit the ACMA NSW



website at www.acma.org.au or email the NSW office at office@acma.org.au.



ACMA NSW Members after a hard day of skiing and meeting experts.

Errata

The last printed edition of Meridian incorrectly listed **Dr Jason Oh** as ACMAV Secretary. **Dr Erwin Loh** was actually voted in to continue as Secretary while Dr Jason Oh will continue to serve on the ACMAV Committee.

Mr Alwin Tan, Urologist was also incorrectly named as Mr Alwin Taw in our report on his talk

about Erectile Dysfunction.

Meridian apologises for these errors and we have corrected them in the online editions available on the ACMAV website at www.acma.org.

Mr Alwin Tan
General & Laparoscopic Urologist
305 Main Street, Mornington VIC
T: 03 5973 6609

Birth Notices

Congratulations to Karen Lee and James Wong on the birth of their son Joshua Lee Wong on the 22nd July 2009.

Past-ACMAV President Frank Thien and his wife Tania also gave birth to another little girl. Jasmine Shu Yuan Thien was born 4th July 2009 to two



Frank and Tania Thien and Family happy and beaming parents.

Classifieds

Meridian offers free short classifieds to members. For non-members or larger advertisements please refer to our rates card available from the ACMAV Website or the ACMAV Office.

Rooms available for sessional use. Modern, 3-room consulting suite in specialist medical complex available close to Box Hill and Epworth Eastern Hospitals. Access to ultrasound machine and minor procedures room, paperless facilities. Ideal for surgeon or physician use. Please contact Alberta T: 8807 0388.

ACMAV Calendar

For more details or to RSVP, please check the ACMAV website or call the ACMAV Office. ACMAV is always on the lookout for sponsors or event ideas. If you have a suggestion, please let us know!

Date	Event	Location
30 August 2009	ACMAV Annual Conference	Stamford Plaza Hotel, Melbourne CBD
7 October 2009	Financial Management by HSBC	Tai Pan Restaurant, Doncaster
25 October 2009	ACMAV Tennis Tournament	Melbourne Park, South Melbourne
TBA	ACMAV Golf Day	To be arranged

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