A Alternative to methadone to be trialled

Drug researchers at the University of Adelaide are seeking heroin users who want to ‘kick the habit’ to take part in a trial of a possible alternative to methadone.

Methadone is currently the only legal alternative to heroin in Australia. However, there are some drawbacks to methadone treatment. It is not suitable for all users, it can be an addictive drug, and there is still some risk of overdose and death.

The new alternative drug being studied by the University’s Department of Clinical & Experimental Pharmacology is buprenorphine, which until recent years has been used only as an analgesic for things such as post-operative pain relief.

Buprenorphine has a number of suspected benefits over methadone. It is believed to be less addictive and therefore easier for users to end their addiction, and it has a much lower risk of overdose. The drug is widely used in France as an alternative to methadone treatment.

The research into buprenorphine, being conducted jointly by the University of Adelaide and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre in Sydney, is the first of its kind in Australia.

“It’s estimated that there are at least 60,000 regular heroin users in Australia, and about 5000 in South Australia,” said Dr Jason White, who is heading the study in Adelaide.

“About 400 Australians die from heroin overdose each year, and the number is increasing. We also know that people who use heroin are often involved in a considerable amount of criminal activity, so heroin use is still a major problem in the community.

“Methadone has been shown to be the most effective treatment, but it’s not perfect. We’re trying to improve the treatment, and to make options available.

The University of Adelaide has become one of the first Australian universities to teach a subject over the internet.

“Radiation Biology, Protection & Epidemiology”, comprising 25 lectures spread over 16 weeks, is being offered over the internet as part of the Master of Science (Medical & Health Physics) degree.

The subject is aimed at giving medical and health professionals an understanding of radiation biology, and involves lecturers from the University of Adelaide’s departments of Physics, Chemistry and Public Health, as well as the Royal Adelaide Hospital’s Medical Physics department, Flinders University and the South Australian Health Commission.

Using a password, students access the subject’s internet web site and either download a copy of that week’s lecture, print it out, or read the whole lecture on-line. Interaction with the lecturers can be conducted via email. There are also face-to-face tutorials for local students, to provide a ‘human element’.

The medical physics subject was launched on the world wide web in March, in the same week as a subject in marketing by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Open Learning Australia.

Associate Professor in Physics John Patterson, who is one of the course coordinators, said the idea for the internet subject was inspired by Dr Dale Spender’s address last year to the University of Adelaide’s Senate.

Continued on page 6
Rocket Science

Among other things, my excellent undergraduate education seemed to involve solving problems concerning launching satellites and calculating trajectories and a range of other fascinating tasks based largely in applied maths. While this work taught me all about the science of launching it did not really prepare me very well for the sort of launching I do most at the moment. In the last few weeks I have launched a book, a new nucleic acid and protein facility and a totally unattainable atlas.

The book, Sexing the Subject of Law, was edited by Ngaire Naffine and Rosemary Owens of our Law School and brings together the work of researchers from our own University, from Flinders and from Universities around Australia and the rest of the world. A formidable group of scholars explore questions of human rights, the philosophy of law, criminal justice and medical law in the light of contemporary feminist thought, making a major contribution to both feminism and legal theory.

The nucleic acid and protein unit is a magnificent research infrastructure joint venture involving many contributors including both Adelaide and Flinders, the CSIRO, the South Australian Research and Development Institute, the Australian Wine Research Institute and Bressette Ltd. This new lab contains the State’s comprehensive range of instruments for biological research and is already attracting interest in the Pacific, Asia and the world, and is already attracting interest in new lab containing the various units and as Roderick West pontificates on the value of critical thought.

But very little thought, debate or discussion has centred around what is happening to higher education at the moment, as universities, on an ad hoc basis, make cuts to student services, slash and amalgamate depart- ments, and introduce up-front fees for 25% over-quota undergraduate students in 1998. The sector as a whole is undergoing a major period of transformation before our eyes, but in a reactive and panicked manner. From the eyes of a student, the tertiary sector appears very much redefined, with a sense of ethno undergoing changes, except for the alarming onslaught of neoliberal, economic rationalist terminology which seems to be overtaking campuses.

When did education become a commodity? When did the language of consumers and provision of higher education? When did higher education become a currency of exchange locally, nationally and international? The only consistent theme threading the Federal government’s slashing of Austudy, cuts to University operating grants, introduction of differential HECS and the allowance of undergraduate up-front fees for Australian students is the blatant attempt to privatisate higher education and decrease the level of access to education for the community as a whole.

And the Government itself is not the only party guilty of commodifying higher education. The ‘learning accounts’ or vouchers, recently suggested by Mark Latham, the Federal Shadow Minister for Higher Education, parallels universities to banks, where students as customers can withdraw educational credits to buy places at universities, TAFEs, and open learning systems.

Though the Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee has condemned Labor’s suggested voucher scheme, sadly enough universities themselves are becoming part of the process that has transformed higher education. From a public good for the community at large to a currency of exchange between students as individuals and tertiary institutions.

As both a student at the University of Adelaide, and as the President of the Students’ Association, I have been perplexed, outraged, and alarmed by the direction that the University of Adelaide seems to be heading in. The issue of quality student services, whether they be academic, or welfare oriented, is one that is central to a quality tertiary education, has been one that the Students’ Association has championed for a number of years, but without equal support from the University senior management. The cuts to the University’s operating grants imposed by the Federal government have made it quite convenient for the University to lay the blame on the Government’s indiscriminate cuts to student administration, and the 5% cuts to the library, for example. However, targeting these areas raises serious concerns about the University’s own priorities with regard to students.

The University senior management has been in a transitional stage since the beginning of the year: firstly with the Penington Review, and now with the restructuring of the Registrar’s position, the focus has been more on house-keeping and moving furniture within the Mitchell Building than on the lack of quality student services at this institution. And now, with the possible introduction of up-front fee-paying undergraduate students who will be competing with Commonwealth funded students for academic resources and student services, the Students’ Association can only represent the concerns it has been asking since the beginning of the year:

When is the University going to match the standards set by other universities within, and outside of this state, and finally implement the multi-purpose student identification cards that the SAUA has been trying to realise for the past three years?

When is this University going to address the ridiculous ban on bags within the Barr Smith library that has led to many students bags, with lecture notes, expensive textbooks and lab equipment, and personal belongings, being stolen and unrecovered?

When is this University going to acknowledge that its obligations to its students in this beyond the commemora tion ceremonies and reinstate individual careers counselling as a vital and necessary service to ensure that its students receive the best guidance with regards to their future careers?

When is this University going to prove its commitment to access and equity by appointing a convenor to the Non-Collegiate Housing Board, which has been languishing since the beginning of the year? It must disclose to students its intentions with regards to non-collegiate housing?

When is this University going to focus on its ‘clientele’ and instead of restructuring its senior management, undertake a dynamic, effective and comprehensive restructuring of the student services it offers?

I applaud the University’s initiatives such as the Pattanya Housing Complex for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students recently built in North Adelaide, which is the first of its kind; I applaud the University’s commitment to its Alumni, and to the quality of research produced by the students and academics of the University of Adelaide. I also sympathise with the University: the Federal Government’s regressive higher education budget has meant that changes, restructur ing and reform within the sector are inevitable, though unfortunately within the context of a ‘fiscal crisis’.

But if the University of Adelaide is truly to retain its rep utation as one of the ‘sandstone institutions’ and realise its ambitions to become one of the leading universities in the world, it is imperative that this is reflected not just in the Vice Chancellor’s public statements but also by the quality of education and student services received by its students. The onus is on the University to protect students from the brute of the budgetary hatchet, to uphold and ensure the quality of its degrees, and to engage students, as equals, within the dialogue and debate surrounding the changes to the higher education sector.

It is time that students demanded quality for money, and I use that language deliberately. It is time that students claimed quality, flexible education as their right, especially if they are paying for it. If students are being seen as mere consumers the University is reducing education being marketed as a product to be bought and sold, then we should act like customers, and the onus is upon universities, as the suppliers, and the shopfront, to provide a quality product. If you’re running a business, the customer is always right.
University and YAA to give new graduates the edge

The University of Adelaide’s Enterprise Education Group has joined forces with Young Achievement Australia to run a series of workshops, seminars and work experience programs for South Australian university students and graduates.

The programs are aimed at helping students and graduates from any year level and discipline develop a range of practical, business-related skills.

These include: business planning, negotiation, team work, initiative, self confidence, problem solving, financial management, project management, creative thinking, decision making, marketing, customer service, communication and networking.

“University graduates, irrespective of their chosen career, need these skills if they are to succeed in today’s work environment,” said Ms Joanne Pimlott, Coordinator of Enterprise Education at the University of Adelaide.

“Participants in our programs can give themselves ‘the edge’ when it comes to finding work. And we enable students to develop the confidence and ability to create work for themselves by establishing their own businesses.”

Ms Pimlott said the programs offered by the University’s Enterprise Education Group and Young Achievement Australia (YAA) would add value to graduates’ qualifications by providing them with practical knowledge of business management.

She said demand for the programs, which are supported by organisations such as Bank SA, the South Australian Centre for Manufacturing, Australia Post and Mutual Community, was expected to be high.

The YAA Business Skills Program starts Wednesday, 7 May. Places are still available — for more information phone (08) 8211 0548.

Small Business Management seminars and workshops will be held at the University of Adelaide’s Thebarton Campus in June and July — phone (08) 8303 3098 for details.

—David Ellis

Landscape students at work in Strathalbyn

A group of University of Adelaide landscape design students has been using the historic township of Strathalbyn as a laboratory for their landscape design ideas.

The students are reviewing the physical characteristics and ecological possibilities of the Strathalbyn town-ship towards the formulation of a draft Agenda 21 policy and potential landscape design ideas.

Hosted by the District Council of Strathalbyn, the students arrived to a well attended town meeting and a briefing by local councillors, environmental representatives, and the Town Planner, Gordon Statton.

As part of their Strathalbyn trip, the students visited prominent environmentalists Betty Westwood. Betty Westwood — a recipient of the Order of Australia and a Civic Trust Award for her promotion of environmental concerns – is recognised for challenging environmental conventions in the Strathalbyn region and advocating indigenous species, and habitat renovation well before the advent of land care and environmental concerns.

“She is adamant about her ideas and her practical applications of trees, shrubs and ground cover plant- ing,” said Dr David Jones, Senior Lecturer in Landscape Architecture.

“Plant indigenous species and regenerate our bushland and habitat areas,” was her plea to the students. Betty Westwood lives in her old sandstone town residence in a bushland environment that she has personally planted and nurtured.

“To one side of her residence is a raised nursery still carefully tended with seedlings she harvests from local grasses, shrubs, and remnant trees in the expectation that they will be planted around the Strathalbyn township,” Dr Jones said.

“The town was most impressed that the students actively practised sustainability by undertaking their site and mapping work on push bikes.

“I hope the students’ work acts as a catalyst for the council to create a community working party to properly develop an Agenda 21 policy and better lead the township into an ecologically responsible future.”

Students with landscape architecture teacher Ray Holliday (back right) and Betty Westwood (back, second from right).

First PhDs graduate in Women’s Studies

The first PhD graduates from the Department of Women’s Studies received their degrees during the Arts Commemoration Ceremony on Thursday 24 April.

They are Dr Jyannni Steffensen and Dr Barbara Pocock. Dr Steffensen’s PhD thesis was entitled “Queering Freud: Textual Re-configurations of Lesbian Desire and Sexuality”, while Dr Pocock, who is on the staff of the Centre for Labour Studies, wrote a thesis on “Challenging Male Advantage in Australian Unions”.

The Department also had 9 graduates in the MA (Women’s Studies) and 11 in the Graduate Diploma in Women’s Studies in the same ceremony.

Pictured L to R: Dr Jyannni Steffensen, Head of Women’s Studies Dr Margaret Allen, and Dr Barbara Pocock. Photo courtesy of Women’s Studies.
British Council EIA conference praised

A recent conference on environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the 21st century was a great success, according to three directors of EIA Centres in the United Kingdom.

Professors Rikki Thirivel and John Glasson from Oxford Brookes University, and Professor Chris Wood from Manchester University, were funded by the British Council to participate in the conference, convened by the Mawson Graduate Centre for Environmental Studies from 9-11 April. Key support was also provided by a Division of Humanities and Social Sciences Quality Conference Fund grant.

The Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, the Hon. David Wotton, opened the conference, commenting that he was the Minister for Environment and Planning when EIA was first introduced to South Australia in 1982. He noted that the subsequent separation of portfolios meant that the environment minister now no longer had responsibility for EIA.

EIA researchers from New Zealand, The Netherlands and Australia plus government EIA practitioners from most States attended, a mix which provided an excellent balance for the workshop discussions on theory and practice in EIA, according to the Director of the Mawson Graduate Centre, Associate Professor Nick Harvey.

“Although formal EIA started in the United States 27 years ago and has since spread around the globe, it was not introduced to the UK until 14 years after its introduction to Australia,” Dr Harvey said.

“However, the short time frame in the UK has been compensated by intense EIA research activity in that country and last month’s European Union directive on EIA is likely to trigger even more research.”

Professor Chris Wood suggested that given Australia’s greater experience with EIA, “the old world may learn from the new”.

Professor John Glasson commented that “Australia appears to be ahead of the UK in some aspects of EIA, such as public participation in EIA and a broader approach to strategic planning.”

The conference also heard from Associate Professor Tom Fookes (Auckland University) about the New Zealand Resource Management Act, which is more integrative and adopts environmental sustainability principles throughout.

In comparison, Australian EIA legislation has been through extensive review but the current federal government has been very slow in addressing EIA reform, according to Dr Harvey.

“Although we have a longer experience with EIA, perhaps it is time to learn from the UK research. We should certainly plan for adapting EIA in the 21st century, which is now less than 1000 days away,” he said.

Half-century gap between degrees no bar to new PhD

At age 85, Dr Ernest Easton may be one of the world’s oldest students to successfully undertake a PhD.

Dr Easton, whose last degree (a Master of Arts) was completed 50 years ago, received his doctorate in Economics at the University of Adelaide on Monday 28 April.

“I’ve always enjoyed a challenge, and this was a real challenge,” said Dr Easton. “When you meet that challenge and successfully accomplish what you have to do, it’s a wonderful feeling.”

It took more than four years of hard work to complete his 190-page PhD thesis, which deals with the impact of the cost of rail freight on Australia’s coal mining industry.

Dr Easton was no stranger to his chosen PhD topic. He has worked as a transport consultant to the mining industry since 1978, and specifically with the coal mining industry since 1984, with major companies such as BHP, CRA, Exxon, Mount Isa Mines, Shell, Western Mining Corporation and the New Zealand Coal Corporation.

Even at the age of 85 he still acts as a consultant, and he proposes to continue his work as long as his services are of value to his clients.

Because of his intimate knowledge in this field, Dr Easton’s wife, Elizabeth, suggested he consolidate that knowledge into a PhD.

“I first thought of doing my PhD back in 1956, but I was too busy working in the public service, so I deferred it. Then when I resigned from the public service to start consulting I thought of it again,” said Dr Easton.

“About five years ago my wife suggested it to me. She said, ‘You’ve got a lot of knowledge of a particular subject, why don’t you research it further and make the results available?’ So that’s what I’ve done.”

A central conclusion of Dr Easton’s thesis is that the coal mining industry is being charged too much for rail freight, and that these extra charges act as a tax on the industry, reducing its ability to compete on the export market. The thesis also proposes changes to the current pricing policies of rail companies. There is now strong demand for Dr Easton’s thesis from the industry.

Dr Easton acknowledged the help he received from the industry, the railways and government organisations, as well as the guidance from his supervisors – Professor Jonathan Pincus and Dr Brian Bentick from the University of Adelaide’s Department of Economics, and Dr John Freebairn from Monash University (now with the University of Melbourne).

“I couldn’t have done it without them,” he said, “or without the support of my wife.”

The doctorate is yet another milestone in Dr Easton’s long career, which has included being an assistant director-general of the former Post Master General (PMG) and deputy chairman of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission, at a time when satellites were emerging as a major means of communications. For his work in these areas he was awarded an Imperial Service Order. Dr Easton is also the author and co-author of two books.

The graduation ceremony on 28 April was attended by some of Dr Easton’s family members who flew to Adelaide from Melbourne and Perth to share this special time with him.

—David Ellis
Dr John Matthews isn’t the only member of his family graduating with the University of Adelaide this year. His son, Nick, has completed his Agricultural Science degree with Honours at the same time John has completed his PhD in Agricultural Science.

They conducted their study and research in the same department (Crop Protection) and shared the same supervisor (Dr Stephen Powles, Director of the Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems).

One of the few things they couldn’t share at the University was the same graduation ceremony. John Matthews received his doctorate on Thursday, 1 May, while Nick Matthews, who has been working in the area, will graduate in October. Nevertheless, the Matthews family has something to celebrate.

“It would have been good to graduate together,” said Dr Matthews. “But for me, finishing my PhD thesis and Nick finishing his Honours thesis is reward in itself. A lot of hard work has gone into that, and we’re happy to have finished it successfully.”

Dr Matthews, who is now a Research Fellow based at the Roseworthy Campus, was a farmer at Bordertown until the age of 39 when he decided to undertake the tertiary study he never had the chance to do.

Completing a science degree at Flinders University, he then went on to do Honours at the University of Adelaide’s Waite Campus, followed by his PhD.

As a weed ecologist, Dr Matthews is currently involved in research which looks at the influence of weeds on crop production and the environmental influences on weed competition. His PhD thesis dealt with the population genetics of herbicide resistant ryegrass, while Nick’s Honours thesis dealt with the mechanisms of herbicide resistance in barley grass.

Dr Matthews said he thoroughly enjoyed his time as a student with the Department of Crop Protection’s weeds research group.

“I’ve always found it a real delight to be at university, and I’ve appreciated the opportunities available to me,” he said.

“University is a great experience, and anyone who has an inkling to do it should. The learning, the interaction with people that are involved in research and teaching – it’s marvellous. And once you get out of the undergraduate program and undertake a higher degree it becomes a whole different challenge.”

Dr Matthews said he was glad his experience was shared by Nick, who was strongly involved with a number of university organisations, including the Students’ Association. There is also another unit student in the household — Dr Matthews’ daughter, Amelia, is studying journalism with the University of South Australia.

“Two university students is a bit of a worry. Three is even worse,” joked Dr Matthews.

“Actually, it’s pretty good. After tea everybody goes and switches on their computer and starts to work. It’s been a very interesting time for all of us, and we’ve all enjoyed the experience.”

—David Ellis

Dr John Matthews. [File photo, 1993. Photo by Andrew Dunbar]
Annemarie Hoffmann of the University of Stuttgart is somewhat smaller than Adelaide with more than 20,000 students, some of them part-time, who were enrolled.

"While I don’t believe universities are ‘behind the times’ with our teaching methods, Dr Spender’s provocative comments are a challenge. What we are attempting to do is make an innovative departure from the traditional lecture presentation, and at the same time maintain the quality of teaching," Dr Patterson said.

Another reason for offering the subject over the internet was that Associate Professor Alan Beddoe, who set up and conducted many of the lectures in this field, was no longer available to teach in Adelaide because he had moved to the UK.

Dr Patterson said the internet was ideal for teaching a masters level course, particularly when small numbers of students, some of them part-time, were enrolled.

Internet teaching in Medical Physics

"The aim is to make the subject available not only to local students but also to interstate and overseas students, who may wish to take it as part of another university course or a non-award course," Dr Patterson said.

“It’s going well so far, although it’s clear that the face-to-face context is vital in helping students to come to grips with the material. There’s no doubt that a good computer presentation can’t do it all, even though it is something which the computer presentation can’t do it. It does, however, have its own motivating effect, with some graphics involved. We hope to present other subjects in this way, including radiophysics,” he said.

A sample page from the web site can be found at <http://www.physics.adelaide.edu.au/medical/RBPE.html>.

—David Ellis
Adelaide's International Spirit

Dr Paul Chan, CEO of Sepang Institute of Technology (S·I·T), the University of Adelaide’s twinning partner in Malaysia, and his wife Ms Low Kam Yoke (President/CEO of the HELP Institute) were in Adelaide recently with other family members to watch their son Adam graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bonython Hall on Thursday 24 April. This year’s ceremonies saw the graduation of several students from the first group of S·I·T students to come to Adelaide to complete their degrees, 17 of whom will be attending the University’s fourth graduation celebration in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, 25 May. L to R: Juliet Chan, Mrs Chan, Adam Chan and Dr Paul Chan.

Yang-Fung Li and Corina Ngaire Jolliffe (Bachelor of Health Sciences)

L to R: Medical graduates Fabian Matthews, Chi Kang Gooi, Seong Lin Khaw, Juling Ang, Eng-Siew Koh and Sheryl Sim. Dr Gooi was President of the Overseas Students’ Association in 1995. Dr Matthews will be among the 73 Malaysian graduates of the University attending the graduation celebration in Kuala Lumpur on 25 May.

Archana Pradhan and Balaranijini Srilhara (Dentistry)

Mekondjo Kaapanda and Benjamin Stewart Jarvis (Bachelor of Arts). Mr Jarvis has been doing Arts/Law and is now completing his Law degree. Ms Kaapanda, an Honours candidate in the Politics Department, was presented with a John F Kennedy Memorial Scholarship at the Arts/Performing Arts prizegiving on 24 April. Her parents also graduated in Arts at Adelaide in the early 1990s; her father is now Namibia’s High Commissioner in New Delhi.

Centre: Paminder Kaur Khaira and family (Bachelor of Dental Surgery)

Photographs by David Ellis
The second Adelaidean Feedback Poll asked two questions:

**Should University of Adelaide staff be encouraged to spend study leave outside of Adelaide as part of a strategy to develop the international recognition of the University?**

There were nine responses (one tied increase on the six received for Poll One!). The general (but not unanimous) thrust of the answers was in favour of encouraging leave outside of Adelaide and against discouraging leave in Adelaide. Several of those in favour of encouraging outside study leave mentioned the necessity of providing adequate financial support to make it feasible. Two respondents voted “Yes” to both questions, and another “No” to both questions, and a fourth was opposed to study leave being generally available at all.

**COMMENTS INCLUDED:**
- Staff should not be discouraged from spending their study leave in Adelaide. Staff with families, in particular those with children at a sensitive stage in their schooling, or those with partners who are unable to take sufficient leave to accompany the staff member, may find it difficult to leave Adelaide for significant periods of time. Such staff would be disadvantaged should any disincentives be put in place. In addition, some staff may be unable to leave Adelaide on study leave for financial reasons. Any disincentives have the potential to affect female academics more than males, so this has the potential to become an equity issue.
- Staff should not be discouraged from staying in Adelaide. Such a policy would inhibit important activities like rewriting lectures, preparing audio-visual materials, writing books or articles, which are often more easily done at home. Why would anyone want to interfere with study leave in Adelaide anyway?
- In these days of high tech everything, there is almost no need for anyone to have to front up somewhere else to sit at the foot of the ‘master’ to gain wisdom — it can be achieved through the means of computer networks etc. If there really is a shortage of funds at the U of A, stop wasting ‘master’ money on such indulgences as Study Leave!
- Staff should be encouraged to spend study leave engaged in ‘scholarship (and) research...of international distinction’ [quote from University Mission statement]. Where they do it should be up to them. That’s how we get our international recognition. Everything else is bullshit.
- Of course the answer to both questions is YES! The fact that you would even ask the questions indicates a total lack of understanding of what being ‘international’ means to a university, especially a university in Australia.

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**SPEECHES ON WWW**

Those interested in reading the Occasional Addresses from the 1997 Commemoration Ceremonies will be able to access them on the WWW through the Public Relations & Commemoration Ceremonies link. The URL is http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ PR/com.html.

Dr Barbara Hardy AO presented Cassandra Brooke with the Environmental Studies Medal for best MA thesis on Thursday, 24 April. Ms Brooke, who flew to Adelaide from Denmark to attend her graduation ceremony with 54 other Environmental Studies postgraduates, wrote her thesis on marine pollution. She is the fourth student of the Mawson Educational Technology Unit who has won the medal. Cassandra Brooke has written a thesis on marine pollution. She was presented with the Environmental Studies Medal by Dr Barbara Hardy AO on Thursday, 24 April.

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