On December 1 and 2, the Wesfarmers Centre will organise the first of the clinical training course ‘Hot Topics in Infection & Immunity in Children - The Perth Course’. IIC Perth is based on the concept of the successful ESPID-Oxford IIC course, and will be held biennially. The course will bring leading local, national and international experts to Perth to present and discuss the latest evidence on the prevention, diagnosis and management of childhood infectious diseases, with a focus on Australasia.

The confirmed 2016 Faculty include:

**International**
- Prof Zulfiqar Bhutta (Canada)
- Prof Benjamin Cowling (Hong Kong)
- Prof Kathryn Edwards (USA)
- Prof Adam Finn (UK)
- Prof Andrew Pollard (UK)

**National**
- Prof Nicholas Anstey (NT)
- A/Prof Julia Clark (Qld)
- Prof Bart Currie (NT)
- Prof Nigel Curtis (Vic)
- Dr Amanda Gwee (Vic)
- Prof Cheryl Jones (NSW)
- A/Prof Ben Marais (NSW)
- Prof Anton Peleg (Vic)

**Local**
- Prof Jonathan Carapetis
- A/Prof Peter Richmond
- Dr Tom Snelling
- Clin A/Prof Tobias Strunk

More information on registering for the course will be available on the IIC Perth website soon (iicperth.org.au). Trainees of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, as well as trainees from poor-resourced countries will be able to apply for travel scholarships.
Researchers from the Wesfarmers Centre and the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) have a long-standing research collaboration, particularly in the area of pneumonia and pneumococcal vaccine research. With sponsorship from the Wesfarmers Centre, Senior Research Fellow and Head of the Bacteriology Laboratory at the PNGIMR, Dr Rebecca Ford, spent 6 weeks in Perth to work in the laboratories of Associate Professor Peter Richmond.

The main purpose of Rebecca’s visit was to analyse saliva samples collected as part of the neonatal pneumococcal conjugate vaccination trial conducted in the Eastern Highlands of PNG between 2005 to 2009 for vaccine-induced mucosal antibody levels using a multiplex assay that is not available in PNG.

Back in PNG, Rebecca will continue to develop and train staff and students, help to expand the technological capacity of the PNGIMR, and further develop the Acute Respiratory Infection Program.

Other new and ongoing collaborative projects between the Centre and the PNGIMR include: a head-to-head immunisation trial with the 10- and 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (A/Prof Peter Richmond); an aetiology study of childhood pneumonia and meningitis hospitalisation (Dr Chris Blyth); and a multi-centre study called PneuCAPTIVE to establish the minimum level of pneumococcal vaccine uptake required in high-risk populations to achieve herd protection (Dr Chris Blyth).
On November 4-6 2015, Dr Anita van den Biggelaar and A/Prof Peter Richmond attended the 3rd International Neonatal & Maternal Immunization Symposium (INMIS 2015) in The Gambia. Neonatal and early infant morbidity and mortality remain high in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Novel preventative strategies are likely to have great potential to benefit pregnant women and their infants.

The previous two symposia stressed neonatal immunisation as a strategy to reduce neonatal and early-infant morbidity and mortality. This year’s meeting had shifted focus to maternal immunisation strategies, which is in line with an increasing global acceptance of this approach. Participants shared newly acquired knowledge on the use of licensed pertussis and influenza vaccines in pregnancy, and on new vaccines indicated for use in pregnant women such as a novel respiratory syncytial virus vaccine in development.

An additional highlight was a tour of the main operational base of The Gambia Unit of the Medical Research Council.

Vaccine epidemiology evaluation course in London

Parveen Fathima is a Research Assistant with the Centre’s Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Implementation Research team. Co-funded by a Wesfarmers Centre training scholarship, Parveen attended the short course “Epidemiological evaluation of vaccines: efficacy, safety and policy” conducted by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in the United Kingdom. This course provided an in-depth training on current epidemiological methods that are used in the evaluation of vaccine efficacy, safety and effectiveness pre- and post-licensure.

SEED FUNDING UPDATE: Dr Janessa Pickering

In Australia, middle ear infection (known as otitis media or OM) is the most common reason a child will receive antibiotics. It is the second most common reason a child will undergo surgery, and costs the healthcare system up to AU$400 million annually.

OM disproportionately affects Australian Indigenous children, experiencing greater severity and more severe long-term problems than non-Indigenous children. New strategies are needed to reduce this burden of disease. One strategy may be the development of probiotic therapies to prevent infections.

Researchers from the Telethon Kids Institute’s Wesfarmers Centre, the University of Western Australia, Princess Margaret Hospital, Starship Children’s Hospital, and University of Otago in New Zealand are working together to better understand the importance of bacterial colonisation in ear infections. Specifically, they are assessing whether the presence of “good” bacteria in children protects them from OM. They anticipate that the “good” bacteria can be developed into probiotic therapies.

Dr Janessa Pickering received a seed grant from the Wesfarmers Centre to trial a cutting edge technology called digital PCR. This technology has the potential to detect lower concentrations of bacteria than current technologies can and, hence, may provide new insight into the presence of different bacteria in the ear. Clinical samples from healthy and otitis-prone children from Western Australia and New Zealand are being measured and will provide useful evidence as to whether or not probiotic therapies have the potential to reduce middle infection in children.●

Digital PCR machine used to measure the concentration of bacteria from clinical samples.
CARLY FOULIS is a qualified Dietitian and Nutritionist. Having previously worked as a Clinical Trials Coordinator for the Women’s and Children’s Health Research Institute in Adelaide, Carly moved to Perth in December 2015, joining the Implementation Research team as a Research Officer. She will be working across a number of research projects including investigating oral Nitazoxanide as a treatment of acute gastroenteritis in Australian Indigenous children.

CHRISY EVEREST is the Administration Assistant with the Group A Streptococcal Diseases Research team. She has previously been involved in some exciting projects including: managing the office of a WA Charity fundraising for childhood cancer; the provision of high level security for the 1st democratic elections in Iraq post Saddam; and part of a team in creating and providing certified security training within the maritime industry post-September 11.

LORILI JACOBS joined as a Research Project Officer with the Group A Streptococcal Diseases Research team, where she is involved in setting up a project proposing to use ultrasound to detect rheumatic heart disease in high risk pregnant women during routine antenatal ultrasound appointments. Lorili briefly managed the King Edward Memorial Hospital Radiology Department before volunteering in India with a local NGO to produce a photo journal story of the life of daughters of sex trade mothers. On her return, she was involved in a number of projects with the UWA’s Centre for Genetic Epidemiology and Biostatistics, and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

DIANNE SIKA-PAOTONU is a Visiting Research Fellow joining the Group A Streptococcal Research team. She is working on the secondary prophylaxis penicillin pharmacokinetics project. She completed her PhD in Biomedical Science at the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research working on preclinical studies for cancer vaccines. She is currently on sabbatical from her role as an academic at Victoria University of Wellington, and will be in Perth until the end of June.

A WARM WELCOME TO THE WESFARMERS CENTRE OF VACCINE & INFECTIOUS DISEASES’ New Staff Members!

upcoming meetings & conferences

ACPID 2016
8th Asian Congress of Pediatric Infectious Diseases
7th - 10th November 2016
Queen Sirikit National Convention Center
Bangkok, THAILAND

“Working Together to Safeguard Children”

Organized by: Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of Thailand
in Collaboration with: Asian Society for Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Dr Hannah Moore at the Young Professionals Roundtable with the WA Premier

In early December 2015, Wesfarmers Centre researcher Dr Hannah Moore was invited to attend a Young Professionals Roundtable with the WA Premier, Hon Colin Barnett.

The diverse group of ten young professionals included many entrepreneurs, representatives from agriculture, tech start-up companies, a lawyer, consultants from the construction industry, and the digital world of social marketing. Hannah represented the health and science sector. The agenda and discussion of the roundtable centred on encouraging the natural diversification of the WA economy and fostering innovation.

Hannah highlighted the strength and history of data linkage for health and medical research in WA and need to increase efficiencies in this system in order to remain a world leader as was echoed in the science statement the Premier announced earlier in 2015.

The Office of the Premier, who was responsible for setting up this first time event, is keen to see these roundtable discussions with young professionals as an ongoing initiative.

There was an article on the roundtable discussion in *The West Australian* last December 9, 2015.

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