

# Professional development

Nick Duff and Graeme Cannell

The Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) is an initiative between the Department of Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and a consortium of universities, headed by the University of Queensland and including the University of Adelaide and Charles Darwin University. CMVH commenced operations at the Mayne Medical School within the University of Queensland early in 2004, to provide research, professional development, think tank, and e-health services for Defence and DVA personnel.

## Professional development

The first priority for CMVH in the field of professional development was the establishment of Graduate Certificate (GCPH), Graduate Diploma (GDipPH) and Masters (MPH) programs in Public Health (Defence) designed to specifically address the academic needs of Defence Health Service and DVA staff. The Public Health (Defence) program is open to all Australian Defence personnel, including Reservists, contractors and DVA staff. The degree may be taken part-time or full-time, by distance learning or attendance at the institution.

The core of the MPH program provides a platform of research, management and environmental and occupational health, with a broad selection of electives building to specific streams. The program is designed to provide development opportunities for a range of medical and allied health personnel, including medical professionals, scientific officers and laboratory assistants, environment health

## Abstract

- ◆ The Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) was established to provide research, professional development, think tank, and e-health services for Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs personnel.
- ◆ In the field of professional development, the CMVH has established a Graduate Certificate of Public Health (Defence), a Graduate Diploma of Public Health (Defence), and a Masters of Public Health (Defence).
- ◆ The courses began in 2004, and the first student graduated with a Masters of Public Health (Defence) in 2005.
- ◆ The CMVH is currently working to expand the available courses, and establish an exchange program with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, USA.

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officers, preventive medicine personnel, health administration officers, medical assistants, and other personnel with a public health interest.

## Programs

Currently all courses are worth 2 units, except for project and dissertation courses, which are worth either 4 or 8 units. The GCPH, GDipPH and MPH programs require a student to complete 8, 16 or 24 units, respectively. The GCPH is a set four-course program, whereas the GDipPH and MPH programs have four or five compulsory core courses, respectively, with the remaining courses chosen as electives. Students may include project and dissertation (research) courses in the MPH program.

Courses completed at other institutions may be considered as equivalent to these programs at the discretion of the university consortium, with a maximum of 60% of a program able to be credited in this way. Some Defence courses have been assessed for recognition of prior learning with a maximum of 4 or 10 units allowed for the GDipPH and MPH programs, respectively.

## Assessment

Most subjects are assessed by assignment only, with a small number of subjects assessed by examination, including online, open book examinations in specified subjects.



**Major Nick Duff** joined the Australian Regular Army in 1994 and was first posted to the former 1st Military Hospital. His previous appointments include Company Commander and Operations Officer at 2 HSB. He has seen operational service in Bougainville, East Timor and Indonesia. He is currently posted as the Professional Development Officer at CMVH.



**Lieutenant Colonel Graeme Cannell** joined the Army as a Direct Entry Scientific Officer Reservist in 1983, with postings in preventive medicine, training and administrative units. His current position is SO1 Research within the Defence Health Service. His civilian career has been in research, particularly in pharmacology, toxicology, organ perfusion and mathematical modelling. His current commitments are in drug bioequivalence, IT and aviation.

**Centre for Military and Veterans' Health, Brisbane, QLD.**

**Nick Duff**, Professional Development Officer.

**Defence Health Service.**

**Graeme Cannell**, Scientific Officer.

Correspondence: Major Nick Duff, Centre for Military and Veterans' Health, Brisbane, QLD. [nick.duff@uq.edu.au](mailto:nick.duff@uq.edu.au)

## Course and program information

### Master of Public Health (Defence)

[http://www.uq.edu.au/study/program.html?acad\\_prog=5224](http://www.uq.edu.au/study/program.html?acad_prog=5224)

### Graduate Diploma of Public Health (Defence)

[http://www.uq.edu.au/study/program.html?acad\\_prog=5131](http://www.uq.edu.au/study/program.html?acad_prog=5131)

### Graduate Certificate of Public Health (Defence)

[http://www.uq.edu.au/study/program.html?acad\\_prog=5181](http://www.uq.edu.au/study/program.html?acad_prog=5181)

### Professional Development Officer, CMVH

Major Nick Duff: Telephone 07 3346 4860

Email [nick.duff@uq.edu.au](mailto:nick.duff@uq.edu.au)

## Conditions

The university consortium recognises that the Defence service is unique and that service personnel may be required to mobilise at short notice. No Defence member will be disadvantaged as a consequence, and solutions for any members affected will be addressed in accord with the circumstances.

## Costs

Subject fees are linked to the first year in which a student enrolls and remain at that level for the duration of their study. Each unit (2006 price) is charged at \$750 and all Defence or DVA accredited students receive a 5% discount. If 10 or more students are enrolled in a course, a 10% discount is applied. The MPH is expected to attract Defence Assisted Study Scheme (DASS) support. Course details for the MPH, GDipPH and

GCPH programs are being evaluated by the Defence Assisted Support Study Committee and should be assessed for support at DASS Level 1. When approved, this will provide financial support to eligible applicants, currently set to an annual reimbursement cap of \$4000. This will ensure support may be provided for all enrollees if their application is successful. The university also offers a fee relief scheme, which students are encouraged to investigate as their circumstances may require.

There are no other compulsory fees for any of the programs. Students may need to purchase text and reference books; however, access is provided to university library resources. The University of Queensland is providing increasing resources online using an eLearning system known as Blackboard, which includes discussion groups and assignment management.

## Achievements

The programs commenced in second semester 2004, and Wing Commander Mike Seah was the first student to graduate, with an MPH awarded in 2005. Current 2006 enrolments are one for GCPH, two for GDipPH, and nine for the MPH program. The programs have been recommended as contributors to the competency level scheme related to remuneration in the Australian Defence Force.

DefenceHealth Ltd (Melbourne, VIC) has sponsored an award to be presented each semester to the student who is military dux of the online Environmental Health and Occupational Health course. For semester one, 2006, this \$500 award will be presented to Lieutenant Commander Bronwyn Ferrier at HMAS *Kuttabul*.

## Future direction

Future direction will include vying for further tertiary recognition for courses undertaken in Defence, expansion of current offerings, workforce innovations, and academic exchanges with international counterparts. Current interest is on developing a Physicians' Assistants course, providing diploma-level recognition for Environmental Health Technicians, developing a Masters in Nursing (Defence) and a Professional Certificate in Dermoscopy, adding further electives to the MPH (such as the Health Aspects of Disasters short course run over 6 days in November), and establishing an exchange program with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences located in Bethesda, USA.

## Information

The CMVH provides information sessions across Australia at major Defence health establishments each year. The Box provides details of where to obtain further information.

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Colonel John Turner and Major Nick Duff from CMVH visit RAAF Base Pearce.