

# An update on professional development at CMVH

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The Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) is an initiative between the Department of Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs. Harnessing the resources of the University of Queensland, the University of Adelaide and Charles Darwin University, CMVH is the pre-eminent centre for postgraduate and professional development qualifications for health practitioners working with former and serving personnel.

## Public Health (Defence) programs

Since it commenced operations in 2004, CMVH has offered a suite of professional development programs in the area of public health, ranging from a Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma through to a Masters in Public Health (MPH) (Defence). These programs were specifically designed to address the academic needs of Defence Health Services and Department of Veterans' Affairs staff, including all full-time and part-time Defence personnel, contractors, public servants and civilian personnel.

The programs are designed to provide professional development opportunities for a range of medical and allied health professionals, including medical professionals, scientific officers and laboratory assistants, environmental health officers, preventive medicine personnel, health administration officers, medical assistants, and other personnel with a public health interest.

The core of the MPH (Defence) program provides a platform of research, management and environmental and occupational health, with a broad selection of electives building to specific streams.

## Abstract

- ◆ The Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) Public Health (Defence) program is designed to provide professional development opportunities for a range of medical and allied health professionals, including medical professionals, scientific officers and laboratory assistants, environmental health officers, preventive medicine personnel, health administration officers, medical assistants, and other personnel with a public health interest.
- ◆ Recent developments include the introduction of a 16-unit Masters program for students who already hold a 4-year degree, development of a range of new elective subjects, and successful negotiation with the University of Queensland to allow recognition of prior learning for several Defence training courses.
- ◆ Several short courses are also available for students who do not wish to enrol in the full Public Health (Defence) program.
- ◆ CMVH is now working to develop a Masters in Applied Psychology (Defence) program, and is interested in developing a Physicians Assistants course.

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## Program structure

The MPH (Defence) program consists of 24 units (12 courses or subjects) delivered externally through distance education. It is structured in such a way as to allow for the progressive attainment of a Graduate Certificate (8 units), Graduate Diploma (16 units) and, finally, a Masters qualification (24 units). The entry level for applicants who do not have a degree is via the Graduate Certificate. For postgraduate applicants, the entry level is through the MPH (Defence).

For prospective students who already hold a 4-year degree in health, behavioural, social, agricultural or biological sciences, there is an option of completing a 16-unit Masters program. This option was introduced in 2007 and has proved popular for students wishing to obtain a Masters qualification by completing only eight courses or subjects.

All students are required to complete the four core subjects which make up the Graduate Certificate. Following that, students complete a range of four or eight electives to make up the Graduate Diploma or Masters program, respectively. In 2007, a range of new electives were added to the list for the MPH (Defence) programs. These include:

- Healthcare in Cyberspace
- Substance Use and Misuse in Special Populations
- Communicable Disease Control



**Captain Genevieve Liebich** joined the Australian Army in 2002 and was first posted to 2nd Health Support Battalion as a military physiotherapist. Her previous postings include 2HSB, Lavarack Barracks Medical Centre and CMVH. She has seen operational service in East Timor as the military physiotherapist in the Health Supplementation Team. She is currently posted as the Professional Development Officer at CMVH.

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## Recognition of prior learning

Courses completed at other institutions may be considered for recognition of prior learning at the discretion of the University of Queensland. Up to four units in the Graduate Diploma and 16-unit Masters and up to eight units in the 24-unit Masters program can be claimed and recognised through recognition of prior learning.

In 2007, CMVH successfully negotiated the recognition of prior learning for the following Defence courses:

- RAAF Aviation Medical Officer Course
- Army Logistic Officer Basic Course — Health Phase
- RAN Medical Officer Underwater Medicine Course.

The University of Queensland has granted two units of credit to any one of these courses as part of the Graduate Diploma and Master programs.

## Short course professional development opportunities

The availability of short intensive courses allows students not wanting to enrol in the full program the opportunity to access professional development activities. These short courses may be taken as a non-assessed participant or as an elective in the public health programs. They include:

- Occupational and Environmental Health (RAAF Edinburgh, 14–30 July 2008)
- Communicable Disease Control (Brisbane, 29 September – 3 October 2008)
- Health Aspects of Disaster (Brisbane, 17–21 November 2008)

## New initiatives

CMVH introduced a new elective to the public health programs in 2008. The course is titled Introduction to Military Medicine and is available online through distance education to medical officers, nursing officers and advanced medical assistants working in the Defence Health Service.

Students are introduced to the structure and function of defence (and veterans') health services before discussions of leadership, occupational and environmental health, and operational health support. Medical specialties practised in the military (aviation, underwater, tropical medicine, chemical, biological and radiation defence) are introduced to articulate with existing specific courses. Ethical issues of military medical practice are examined to stimulate an online (assessed) discussion to ensure students have considered these issues before being exposed to them on operations.

The course is not classified and is delivered online to accommodate all students, including international students and students on operational service. Experienced Australian

Defence Force civilian and military physicians have constructed a core online learning guide, or roadmap, to the practice of military medicine. Hyperlinks are embedded to existing learning materials of required, recommended and reference readings. Readings include definitive reviews, original papers, operational descriptions and personal experiences from international scientific, definitive texts, and ADF policy linked to modules within the course. Assessment is by participation in online discussions, and completion of mid-semester short and end-of-term long cases in military medicine.

Introduction to Military Medicine may be credited towards the CMVH MPH (Defence) program and supports the Australian general practice vocational training program.

## Achievements

In 2007, CMVH congratulated Group Captain Tracy Smart as the first student to graduate from the new 16-unit MPH (Defence) program. Over the past 12 months, student numbers have increased significantly from 22 students across the range of programs to 45 students, with four students due to graduate at the end of the semester in June 2008.

CMVH also welcomed its first international military student in 2007. Dr Hassan Al Qartoobi, a naval doctor from Oman, commenced full-time study in the MPH (Defence) program. Through the establishment of contacts at the Foreign Education and Training Cell in Canberra, there has been significant international interest in the intensive short course offerings, with students attending from Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam.

## Future direction

Future direction will include continuing development of a Masters in Applied Psychology (Defence), which is likely to commence in 2009. Current interest in developing a Physicians Assistants course and establishment of an exchange program with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, located in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, continues.

## Information

Further information on any professional development opportunities can be obtained from the CMVH Professional Development Officer, Captain Genevieve Liebich on [g.liebich@uq.edu.au](mailto:g.liebich@uq.edu.au) or 0412 158 515.

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