

**Four talented scientists inspire students into medical research
HORSHAM, ARARAT, BALLARAT - JUNE 17th AND 18th**

HIV in the brain: a different coat

HIV continues to be a significant health problem worldwide. Over 2 million people died from AIDS in 2007 and 5% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa are infected with the virus. Ms Lisa Chiavaroli is working toward understanding how HIV can cause damage to the brain. *"In 40% of HIV patients neurological symptoms develop where they can't feel their feet or have slow cognition. My research focuses on the coat proteins in HIV that allow it to infect brain cells and cause neurological damage."*

Chiavaroli grew up in Geelong and found a passion for medical research while still in high school. *"I was invited to do some work experience at the Burnet Institute during Year 12. I liked it so much that I applied for a BSc at Melbourne Uni".* She is now working as a research assistant at the Burnet Institute. *"I'm learning something new every day, I don't have to spend all day staring at the computer and labs are fun places to work. Just last week I was bush dancing at a conference in the Barossa Valley with one of Europe's leading HIV scientists."*

Reversing the "brain drain": Australian researcher returns to our shores

Australian researcher Dr Anthony Argentaro returns home to continue his research after five years at Oxford University in London. Argentaro is now working in the Human Molecular Genetics lab at Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research, investigating a gene involved in determining the sex of babies during early development. Argentaro has never doubted his scientific calling: *"During my honours year studying in the genetics department I found I was excited and passionate about research in general and in solving scientific problems."* Argentaro is *"excited by finding even the little answers"* and will continue his research into the mechanism of sex determination in the coming years.

Career moves of a Scientist: from sperm cells to smoking

Dr Saleela Ruwanpura has recently completed her PhD at Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research where she studied how hormones regulate sperm development in the testis. She hopes that this will lead to effective treatments for infertility in the future. Ruwanpura is now taken up a research fellow position at the Monash Institute of Medical Research where she studies a disease called emphysema, which is caused by smoking. Ruwanpura is looking forward to running her own laboratory in the future and hopes to find a commercial application for her research into emphysema.

Manpower needed in medical research

Did you know women outnumber men in medical research jobs? You only have to walk into a lab to see two or three gals for every bloke. Mr John-Luis Moretti from the Baker Heart Research Institute will point this out when speaking to high school students about pursuing a rewarding medical research career. *"A turning point for me was when my university lecturers would talk about the research they were doing - it was so new, even the textbooks hadn't caught up! It felt really exciting to be learning up to the point where the lecturers said... and we don't know why that happens but we are currently investigating A, B and C and that might come up with an answer."*

Moretti is investigating how the nervous system is involved in the development of high blood pressure - a condition suffered by one in three Australians. Moretti comments, *"Hypertension is a very exciting area of research and understanding its causes will most likely shake some of the traditional ideas on treating high blood pressure."*

For more information or to speak to the researchers, please contact Hilary Hoare (0401 240 772) or Shahan Campbell (0433 113 454). High resolution photographs are available upon request.