

# HOC MAI NEWS

Volume I, Issue I

December 2002

## Inside this

- ◆ *Medical Exchange Program* 2
- ◆ *The Student Perspective*

## What we did in 2002

- ◆ *Sydney Harbour Regatta* 3
- ◆ *Glittering Gala Banquet*
- ◆ *Hanoi Centenary* 4
- ◆ *Ethics Program*
- ◆ *In Brief*

## 2002: A Year of Achievement

It has been a hectic but successful year for the Hoc Mai Foundation. We have forged new links with Atlantic Philanthropies, one of the world's largest philanthropic organisations as well as the World Bank, the Global Foundation and other medical institutions with an interest in Vietnam. These relationships have proven valuable in enhancing our links and ability to contribute in Vietnam.

Our newest initiative has been with the Virtual Colombo Plan. We are implementing a pilot telemedicine program which will be launched in February with the help of the World Bank and which is funded by a grant from Sydney University. In addition, one of our medical students, Dov Hersh has done a remarkable job instigating an E-health link, which will enable doctors in Vietnam to consult with specialists at RNSH.

The mainstay of our activities continues to be medical educational exchange. This year we sponsored four Vietnamese doctors and a pharmacist to RNS for a three-month term. We were also able to provide scholarships for 10 of 12 medical students from the Northern Clinical School to travel to Vietnam for their elective terms.

Next year we are planning to bring six specialists from Vietnam and I will + interviewing candidates with Professor Michael Field, Associate Dean, in Vietnam in January. In addition, the Hanoi Medical University has asked us to host a fellow in biomedical engineering and an orthopaedic surgeon for a year. The College of Surgeons has funded two surgeons to come here for cardiovascular training and the North Shore Heart Research Foundation is also sponsoring a surgeon for training. We are also hosting the visit of Prof Nghi, Head of the Institute for Psychiatric Medicine in Hanoi for an exploratory

visit in February and are hoping that Dr Dang Van Duong will accompany him to explore additional ways of expanding our program. We are keen to identify individuals and teams here who would like to visit Vietnam.

In addition to the travel scholarships, we are sending a trauma/orthopaedic team to Hanoi in April. This team will be lead by Professor David Sonnabend who will travel with a fellow orthopaedic surgeon and a physiotherapist. Professor Michael Morgan, one of Australia's leading neurosurgeons, who is based at RNS, is also taking a team to Hanoi next year.

The Fundraising team has been very active organising the MCA dinner at which our Patron, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, was present, along with the Vietnamese Ambassador Vu Chi Cong and the Consul General Tho. I would like to express my thanks to the committee who helped make this event such a success and to the sponsors, including artist Angus Nivison, the Moulty Advertising Agency and Paspaley Pearls.

Additional fundraisers included the spectacular inaugural Hoc Mai Regatta on Sydney Harbour and the Hoc Mai Handicap at Rosehill Races on 30 November.

**Bruce Robinson – Chairman**



## A Day at the Races

The Foundation was the beneficiary of a charity day at Rosehill Races on November 30. Chairman Bruce Robinson and Maggie Drummond were on hand to sash the winner (Onyx) of the Hoc Mai Handicap, the last race on the card. The event was organised by racing enthusiast Bill Grace who sponsored the day and gave the proceeds to three charities, including Hoc Mai, which received \$2,000.

# Medical Exchange Program

Four doctors visited RNSH during 2002 as part of our Hoc Mai program. They included:

- ◆ Dr Nguyen Thi Dieu Thuy, a paediatrician who came for 13 weeks and has applied to return to do a PhD.
- ◆ Dr Gia Khai Pham, an orthopaedic and traumatic surgeon who did an Arthroscopy course at the Clinical Skills Centre and became proficient in joint replacements working alongside the Hospital's orthopaedic surgeons. He was able to go back to Viet Duc Hospital in Hanoi and show his colleagues what he learned.
- ◆ Dr Ngoc Anh Tran, who worked in the Gastroenterol-

ogy Department and learnt how to insert a peg tube and do an ERCP.

- ◆ Mr Trung Nghia Nguyen, who worked in the Pharmacy Department and was also hosted by the Department of Pharmacy at the University of Sydney and St Vincent's Hospital.

In addition, 10 of our medical students travelled to Vietnam for their elective term.

## The Student Perspective

### Hanoi Higs – by Lucy Goold



Student, Michelle Breglec riding to work Hanoi-style.

The Hoc Mai visit to Vietnam of 2001 – 2002 was a great experience. As well as learning about health in Vietnam, we were also able to see aspects of developing world health in general, and discover what daily life is like for many people in Asia.

There were many eye-opening experiences to be had outside the hospital walls too. The first of these was the life-threatening experience of crossing the road. Finding breakfast and dinner was a daily adventure, and the success of these sorties varied widely.

Negotiations on the price paid for bananas and bread be-

came a fiercely competitive event between a number of our party who were keen not to be outdone in bargaining prowess.

Along the way we were helped with language, practicalities and the search for adventures by most people we met in Vietnam.

Outside Hanoi there were lots of places of great beauty and a much quieter lifestyle. Many of us took weekend trips to Ha-long Bay and Sapa, some to farms out of Hanoi. A few risked their lives on the motorcycle-infested roads to ride to the Perfume Pagoda, either braving the roads under our own control, or entrusting our lives to 16-year-old boys to take us there as a pillion passenger.

The experiences each of us had in Vietnam over Christmas and the New Year were ones that I hope others will have the chance to be part of, and that I may be able to be part of again. I believe an equally important part of Hoc Mai, is that many of the doctors from the hospitals of Hanoi are able to come to Australia to have their own adventures and make some good friends here as we were able to in Vietnam.

### Life at Viet Duc – by Simon Quilty

Last year I went to Vietnam to study clinical medicine for four weeks with nine other medical students from the Northern Clinical School. It was part of the Hoc Mai Program between the University of Sydney and Hanoi Medical University.

Transferred from the ordered and organised streets of Sydney to the chaotic horn-tooting streets of Hanoi is quite an experience to say the least! The nine of us were spread amongst 4 large teaching hospitals in Hanoi – the Cancer hospital, Viet Duc Surgical Hospital, Bach Mai Internal Medicine Hospital and the Paediatrics Institute. I spent four weeks at Viet Duc learning the basics by observing the surgical teamwork, and assisting under supervision of an English-speaking surgeon.

The wards are a stark contrast to what is taken for granted in Australia. The care of the patients is left primarily to the relatives who cook and feed, clean and nurture. The very busy nursing staff are concerned mainly with giving medications

and monitoring the patients. In the wards of Viet Duc hospital, the poverty of Vietnam is more apparent.

A few of the RNSH med students, including myself, spent some time in the Emergency Department with the resident doctors. These poorly paid doctors work long hours in difficult conditions, dealing predominantly with people injured in traffic accidents. On average, there were about 200 people presenting to Viet Duc hospital every day, and more than half of these were due to traffic accidents.

It was a very confronting experience, watching as patients who were considered to be dying of their injuries were turned away, and their families given the task of taking them home to die. Resources are very limited in Vietnam.

## How we raised money in 2002

### ***Sydney Harbour Regatta***

The inaugural Hoc Mai Sailing Regatta was held on September 27 to raise money for the Trust. Supportive corporate teams ditched their suits and switched off their laptops for the day to sail Sydney Harbour. Funds raised from the event will be used to establish an internet-based "E-Health" link that will allow medical students from both countries to engage in electronic consultations about neurosurgery, pathology and cancer medicine and surgery.



*Infinity II on Sydney Harbour in the inaugural regatta.*

### ***Glittering Gala Banquet raises \$50,000***

About 250 guests attended the inaugural Hoc Mai Gala Banquet at the Museum of Contemporary Art on October 17, which raised \$50,000 for the Trust.

Our Patron, Her Excellency Governor Marie Bashir, spoke passionately about her experiences working as a psychiatrist in Vietnam.

The event featured an unusual auction of beach bags decorated by leading designers and retailers. A bag signed by Akira Isogawa fetched \$500. Another one, by Mambo's Bruce Gould, fetched over \$100. Other retailers who supported the work of Hoc Mai, included Tea Rose, Hermes, Cambodia House, Bec, and Zimmerman.

Chairman, Professor Bruce Robinson said he was overwhelmed with the support of businesses such as Paspaley Pearls, artist Angus Nivison who won this year's Wynne prize and donated a major work, and fellow Board member, ad-man Tom Moulton, who provided the theming.

One of the highlights was jazz musician Don Burrows who gave his time to play along with Lucinda Peters and Kevin Hunt.



*Ambassador Yu Chi Cong (left), Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir and Consul General Nguyen Van Tho.*

The \$50,000 raised will support the medical exchange program between Royal North Shore Hospital and Vietnam.



*Professor Michael Field enjoying the evening at the Museum of Contemporary Art.*



*Professor Bruce Robinson with Professor Marie Bashir.*

## Hanoi Centenary

Hanoi Medical University celebrated its Centenary in November with a two-day scientific conference and a ceremony attended by 3000 people. The event attracted senior government leaders, ambassadors and representatives from foreign hospitals and institutions.

Professor Kerry Goulston presented a plaque to Professor Ton That Bach, the Dean of Hanoi Medical University to mark the occasion.



## Hoc Mai helps to set up ethics program

Hanoi Medical University has successfully developed a medical ethics curriculum thanks to A/Professor Merrilyn Walton from the University of Sydney. This project was further advanced with the assistance of an International Development Fund Grant, which enabled Dr Hoa from the Department of Medical Education to work with A/Professor Walton for one month at the Faculty of Medicine.

Dr Hoa researched the literature to find appropriate resource material for the new curriculum. A Medical Ethics Reader for Vietnamese students has been constructed. The Reader is now being translated into Vietnamese. Key medical ethics textbooks have also been purchased for the University.

A/Professor Walton has given several workshops in Hanoi and during the last visit she gave a seminar at Viet Duc Hospital on managing and understanding medical errors.

She has been invited to return to give ethics lectures to clinicians at Viet Duc. The Dean, Professor Bach, has also requested that she continue her partnership with Hanoi Medical University.

**The Board of Hoc Mai wish to thank all of our supporters and we wish you a very Merry Christmas.**

**'Forever Learning'**

## IN BRIEF..

### Vietnam Symposium

Hoc Mai will host a Symposium next year for all health workers with an interest in Vietnam. It is hoped that the Patron of Hoc Mai, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, will attend, along with Mr Michael Mann, the former Ambassador who is now the President of RMIT in Vietnam.

The Symposium will be held at RNSH in March. Anyone interested in attending should contact Maggie Drummond on 9926 6408.