Allied health professionals work hand in glove with medical staff to provide the best care possible for patients. Sue Silveira is an orthoptist who partners with ophthalmologists to provide eye care for children with vision impairment and low vision.

From anaesthesiology assistants through psychologists, medical interpreters, podiatrists, social workers and surgeon’s assistants — allied health professionals fill the holes doctors can’t, or won’t.

It’s easy to forget sometimes that for every surgeon wielding a knife, there’s a team behind her preparing the patients, helping them recover, rehabilitate and return to the community as functioning, productive citizens.

Sue Silveira is one of that huge group of allied health professionals. She is a paediatric orthoptist.

According to the Orthoptics Australia website, orthoptics is “a discipline in eye healthcare specialising in the assessment, diagnosis and non-surgical management of eye disorders”.

“Orthoptists were traditionally involved in the management of patients with eye movement disorders and specifically with strabismus (squint), double vision and amblyopia (lazy eye). Over the last several decades orthoptists have expanded their role and not only specialise in eye movement disorders but are also involved in the care of patients with eye disease such as cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, age related macular degeneration, systemic or neurological vision disorders and low vision”, says the blurb.

Sue Silveira is proud of the work she does and the role orthoptists play, hand-in-hand with ophthalmologists.

“We’re quite proud of the fact that there are no professional boundary issues [between orthoptists and ophthalmologists]”, she tells the MJA.

In fact, it was an ophthalmologist who mentored Ms Silveira at the beginning of her orthoptics career.

“My best friend’s mum was an ophthalmologist and she had orthoptists working in her practice”, she says.

Ms Silveira graduated in 1984 and has spent most of her professional life working in practice with ophthalmologists. She has seen many changes in her profession over 31 years.

“There’s a recognition now of the role we have in eye care”, she says.

“There’s a recognition that we have

continued on page C2
a stand-alone role to play, and not just as an adjunct to medical roles. We’re also involved in policy making.

“There are never enough medicos to go around and the fact is allied health can do a bloody good job.”

Ms Silveira is a JAFF research fellow at the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIBDC) Renwick Centre in Sydney.

Part of her role is to manage the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register.2

“The aim of the Register is to collect data to build an accurate picture of Australian children with vision impairment”, she says. “The data is used by groups who provide services to children with vision impairment and also by researchers working in the field of childhood eye and vision disorders.”

“There was no data about childhood vision impairment in Australia until the register was set up [in 2008]”, she says.

“We have 1100 children between 0 and 18 years registered now and we’re starting to see trends in the data.”

Among those trends — 60% of registered children are boys; ages 7-13 years represent the biggest band of registered children, reflecting the time when children are starting school and families feel the need to do something; 65% of all diagnoses are for either cortical vision impairment, retinal dystrophy or albinism.

“Retinal dystrophy makes up 24% [of diagnoses and that’s] actually much higher on our list than in other countries”, Ms Silveira says.

Three-quarters of children on the Register also have nystagmus or “wobbly eyes”, and 50%–60% of them have intellectual disabilities.

“The challenge is encouraging people to register”, Ms Silveira says. “Visual impairment in children is rare. We think we should have about 3000 but recruitment is very hard.

“It’s an important project. Apart from collecting data which tells us causes and what services are needed, where, we can also align families with any research that’s happening, as well as new technology, apps and devices.”

She is also working in the academic wing of the RIBDC Renwick Centre, helping orthoptics students understand the processes of eye disease, clinical information and how this can lead to vision impairment.

Ms Silveira also hosts the Paediatric Vision Forum as an annual event, where paediatric eye and vision professionals exchange information on childhood eye vision care.3

Cate Swannell

Around the universities

Bond University has appointed Professor Helen O’Neill to the newly created position of Chair of Immunology and Stem Cell Biology. Professor O’Neill will bring three researchers with her to Bond, taking the total team working on regenerative medicine and stem cell-based immunotherapies at the university to eight. Professor O’Neill is a leading immunology and stem cell expert. After graduating from the University of Adelaide with an honours degree in genetics, she has worked in medical research at Stanford University in California and the Australian National University in Canberra. She has been awarded several prestigious fellowships including the National Health and Medical Research Council CJ Martin Fellowship and a Cancer Research Fellowship working at Stanford University under Irv Weissman.

Monash University researchers have secured $65.5 million in funding to continue research on combating antibiotic resistance. Of the funding awarded by the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH), $2 million will be directed to Monash-led research. Polymyxin B is able to kill “superbugs”, but it can also cause kidney toxicity. The new NIH-funded multi-national, multicentre clinical study will investigate the pharmacology of polymyxin B in critically ill patients infected with a superbug. Professor Jian Li from the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS) is a co-principal investigator of this 5-year project and will lead the Monash team conducting all laboratory investigations. The Monash team also comprises Professor Roger Nation from MIPS and Professor Anthony Purcell from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Faculty of Biomedical and Psychological Sciences.

The University of Sydney has released a second discussion paper in its strategic planning process for 2016 to 2020. Investing in research excellence follows on from an education strategy discussion paper released in June and a survey of staff and students earlier in the year. The paper explores how the University could support strategic investment in key areas of existing and emerging research excellence over the next 5 years. It outlines the case for the University to make strategic investment in areas of disciplinary and multidisciplinary research, and the criteria and processes by which such areas might be identified. Find out more and have your say about the research discussion paper at http://sydney.edu.au/strategy/

University of Tasmania Faculty of Health researcher Dr Romy Singh Sohal recently travelled to the US to receive a Scholarship Award from the National Emphysema Foundation, Honouring Claude Lenfant, MD, by the American Thoracic Society (ATS). In April, he was also presented with the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand Early Career Development Award at its annual meeting. He has been invited by the Japanese Respiratory Society to speak and chair sessions at their annual scientific meeting in April next year. Dr Sohal’s award recognises his work over the past 9 years on a process called epithelial–mesenchymal transition in the airways.

University of Wollongong’s medical historian Associate Professor Louella McCarthy has won a coveted Harvard Fellowship to research the history of female doctors. Professor McCarthy, from the School of Medicine, will travel to the Countway Library Harvard in October as part of the 2015–2016 Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine Fellowship. While there, she will scour Harvard’s Centre for the History of Medicine archives to investigate the history of the internationalist ambitions of American medical women, particularly during the period up to the 1970s. This project extends Professor McCarthy’s current work with a team from the Australian Federation of Medical Women.

An exceptional contribution to stem cell research by Professor Ryan Lister, of the University of Western Australia’s Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, has been recognised with a major award. He won a $50,000 Metcalf Prize from the National Stem Cell Foundation of Australia. Professor Lister generated the first comprehensive maps of the human epigenome, and discovered that when specialised human cells were converted into adult stem cells, the reprogrammed adult stem cells retained a memory of the cell they once were. Professor Lister’s work on human epigenome mapping was rated by TIME magazine as the second most important scientific discovery of 2009.

Professor Greg Woods, the immunologist who leads the scientific hunt for a vaccine against the Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD), has been formally recognised for his 30-year contribution to medical research, teaching and the community. The awarding of the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) Certificate in Recognition of Distinguished Service to Medicine, Science and Community in Tasmania was announced at the ASMR Medical Research Week annual dinner in Hobart. Professor Woods, who works for University of Tasmania’s Menzies Institute for Medical Research and the School of Medicine, joined the University’s School of Medicine Pathology Department in 1988.

Professor Helen O’Neill to the newly created position of Chair of Immunology and Stem Cell Biology.
Calendar of events

This calendar will be updated each month. If you have an event you would like to add, please include relevant details in an email to cswannell@mja.com.au

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUGUST</th>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>16th World Congress on Lung Cancer, Denver, USA</td>
<td>Regional Congress of the World Federation for Mental Health, Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>9th European Congress on Tropical Medicine and International Health, Basel, Switzerland</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Rim International Counselling and Psychotherapy Conference, Perth, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>23-26</td>
<td>NFMR Medical Research Innovation Conference, Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress 2015, Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>23-29</td>
<td>2015 RACMA Conference — Inequality and Healthcare: recognising the healthcare costs of inequality, Auckland, NZ</td>
<td>Inaugural Scientific Conference of the Asia Association of Medical Laboratory Scientists 2015, Yogyakarta, Indonesia</td>
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<tr>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>3rd International Oncology Conference, Abu Dhabi, UAE</td>
<td>43rd Annual Meeting of the International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery, Izmir, Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>4th Annual International Medical Conference — More awareness of chronic pelvic pain in women, Cairo, Egypt</td>
<td>21st FIGO World Congress of Gynaecology Obsterics, Vancouver, Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-29</td>
<td>11th Annual Australian Diseases Management Conference — Count me in: partnerships in chronic care, Brisbane QLD</td>
<td>16th International Conference on Alzheimer's Drug Discovery, Jersey City, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Aug-2 Sep</td>
<td>The Viral Hepatitis Congress 2015, Frankfurt, Germany</td>
<td>15th International Nutrition and Diagnostics Conference, Prague, Czech Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Aug-2 Sep</td>
<td>2nd International Symposium on Clinical and Basic Investigation in Glioblastoma, Toledo, Spain</td>
<td>18th International Conference on Medical Imaging Computing and Computer Assisted Intervention, Munich, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Aug-1 Sep</td>
<td>Innovation in Medicine and Healthcare 2015, Kyoto, Japan</td>
<td>15th International Conference on Progress in Vaccination Against Cancer, Tübingen, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Aug-1 Sep</td>
<td>International Society for Hemodialysis Congress 2015, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>45th Annual Meeting of the International Continenence Society, Montreal, Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Aug-3 Sep</td>
<td>18th International Symposium of Functional Food Center, 6th International Symposium of Functional and Medical Foods for Chronic Diseases, Boston, MA, USA</td>
<td>6th International Symposium on Microsurgical Anatomy, Istanbul, Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>22nd World Congress on Controversies in Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Infertility, Budapest, Hungary</td>
<td>20th World Congress on Advances in Oncology and 18th International Symposium on Molecular Medicine, Athens, Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>30th International Papillomavirus Conference, Lisbon, Portugal</td>
<td>47th Congress of the International Society of Paediatric Oncology, Cape Town, South Africa</td>
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<td>2-4</td>
<td>Australian Indigenous Doctors Association annual conference — Collaborate, communicate and celebrate, Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>Australasian Military Medicine Association Conference 2015, Hobart, TAS</td>
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<td>3-4</td>
<td>RACGP Conference GP15, Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>11th International Congress on Coronary Artery Disease, Florence, Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>3rd International Students’ Association of Robotic Urologic Surgery Conference, Cluj-Napoca, Romania</td>
<td>5th Annual Next Generation Sequencing Asia Congress, Singapore</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>17th Annual International Meeting of the Institute of Human Virology, Baltimore, MD, USA</td>
<td>2015 International Psychogeriatrics Association International Congress, Berlin, Germany</td>
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<td>3-6</td>
<td>World Congress on Interventional Therapies for Type 2 Diabetes and DSS II, London, UK</td>
<td>14th International Congress of the International Neuropsychiatric Association, Jerusalem, Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>International Congress of Inmate Immunity, Marbella, Spain</td>
<td>International Symposium on Obstetric Anaesthesia: Effect on Mother and Newborn, Budapest, Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Sep-2 Oct</td>
<td>17th Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology Congress, Chennai, India</td>
<td>RANZCOG ASM, Perth, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Sep-3 Oct</td>
<td></td>
<td>15th International Thyroid Congress, Orlando, USA</td>
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**Important Notes:**
- **ALM**: active learning module
- **ASM**: annual scientific meeting
- **CPD**: continuing professional development
- **CT**: computed tomography
- **ECHO/echo**: echocardiography
- **EMAC**: effective management of anaesthetic crises
- **MRI**: magnetic resonance imaging
- **OSCE**: objective structured clinical examination
- **SAT SET**: supervisors and trainers for surgical education and training
- **MJA Careers**: please include relevant details in an email to cswannell@mja.com.au

**Dates:**
- **MO**: Monday
- **TU**: Tuesday
- **WE**: Wednesday
- **TH**: Thursday
- **FR**: Friday
- **SA**: Saturday
- **SU**: Sunday

**Locations:**
- **AUS**: Australia
- **ENG**: England
- **USA**: United States
- **NZ**: New Zealand
- **SG**: Singapore
- **CA**: Canada
- **DE**: Germany
- **UK**: United Kingdom
- **JP**: Japan
- **FR**: France
- **GB**: Great Britain
- **IRL**: Ireland
- **HKG**: Hong Kong
- **IND**: India
- **MAL**: Malaysia
- **SGP**: Singapore
- **TWN**: Taiwan
- **KOR**: Korea
- **USA**: United States
- **JPN**: Japan
- **MYS**: Malaysia
- **PHL**: Philippines
- **THA**: Thailand
- **IDN**: Indonesia
- **CHN**: China
- **ASEAN**: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- **EU**: European Union
- **WMO**: World Meteorological Organization
- **WHO**: World Health Organization
- **UN**: United Nations