

Bringing Research to LIFE

In Brief

Research in the media

Martin Nyachoti, animal science, and Dilantha Fernando, plant science, were recently featured on Farmscape, a radio segment that airs on CKLQ, CFYR and other stations. Martin was interviewed on the feeding of fusarium infected grain to pigs. Dilantha was interviewed on the 2008 situation of fusarium head blight disease in the prairies, and in particular about the toxin changes that have been identified through research in his lab. The audio interview and the writeup can be seen at: <http://farmscape.ca>.

Dilantha's work was also quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press (October 4) in the article "Infected wheat toxins another worry on farm" by Laura Rance.

Rick Holley, food science, continues to provide the media with his food safety expertise - he was recently interviewed about the *E. Coli* outbreak in North Bay, ON, with coverage on www.cbc.ca, the Globe and Mail and others.

Upcoming

Research Seminar Series

Canadian Women's Health Practices, Perceptions, and Behaviors During Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period: Results from the Maternity Experiences Survey

Presentation by:
Dr. Maureen Heaman

November 19, 2008

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Room 370, Helen Glass Centre

To register contact the Manitoba Centre for Nursing and Health Research at 474-9080 or nursing_research@umanitoba.ca

Clinical Research Project and Documentation Management Lectures

Thursday, December 4, 2008

1:30 p.m.

N1026 St. Boniface
General Hospital

For more information, contact:
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Phone: (204) 237-2226

Tough choices made easier

BY SEAN MOORE

Why, clinical health psychologist John Walker asks, can we learn about televisions from an unbiased and accurate source before buying one, but when we need medical treatment we have no comparable source to first turn to?

"When it comes to getting help for anxiety there are several different treatments," Walker said. "They look different and have very different characteristics. But often people wind up at a treatment not having made a thoughtful decision about what they want to do, and often they don't realize what sort of commitment a treatment comes with."

Medical treatments – be it for anxiety or for problems pertaining to the prostate or high cholesterol – should not be decided upon in a cavalier fashion. Yet, many people do just that.

So on November 19, Walker will give a free public lecture as part of the Bringing Research to Life speaker series (details below) that will discuss what we can do to help people with treatment decisions. His presentation is titled, Tough Choices: Help for Anxiety and Depression.

For the past 25 years Walker has been working with patients experiencing levels of anxiety or depression that interfere with their daily fulfillment. One in 10 Winnipeggers experience this and it is a leading cause of work absenteeism.



Submitted Photo

Clinical Health Psychologist John Walker will give the next presentation in this year's Bringing Research to Life speaker series.

Treatments abound, but good information does not. There is no "Consumer Reports" for health care. It is this point that Walker is trying to rectify.

He has conducted surveys with adults and parents asking them what information they would want to know if they, or someone they knew, experienced anxiety or depression. Turns out, they want to know a lot of things science doesn't yet know – like, what the long-term implications of some medicines are.

"I think the public needs, in the long-run, something like Consumer

Reports. For 30 years I've known where to go when I want to buy a car or TV. It's not perfect, but it's solid. We need a consumer report for health care. A lot of the information we have is sketchy, not consumer friendly, and produced by people selling a product."

On the anxiety treatment front, Walker notes that things have improved significantly in recent years. For instance, 20 years ago, it may have taken dozens of therapy sessions to resolve a problem. Today, six sessions can sometimes be all one needs.

"There are a lot of reasons to be positive," Walker said. "We know more and more about how to treat anxiety and depression. The treatments are getting better and we're getting better at intervening earlier on."

Indeed, one research program Walker conducts focuses on ways parents can take early action to arrest the development of anxious tendencies in kindergarteners, which is found in about 10 per cent of children. It's been found that children who are hard-wired to be anxious are more likely to experience depression later on.

"A lot of people think that just because something is caused in part by genetic factors, like anxiety appears to be, that it is uncontrollable, and that is far from the case."

To learn more, come to Walker's free lecture on November 19, at 7 p.m. in the Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre, St. John's College. For more information, call 474-9020.

Helping our violent homes

BY SEAN MOORE

Every year in Winnipeg, the police receive about 16,000 calls pertaining to family violence – more than any other call category. This is a disturbing statistic considering that only those who feel considerably threatened call 911.

Interpersonal violence has long been the subject of study for sociology's Jane Ursel. She is the director of RESOLVE Manitoba (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse), a tri-provincial research network with centres at the Universities of Manitoba, Regina and Calgary.

Every year the RESOLVE Centres host a conference, enabling researchers and community groups to share ideas on innovative treatment and prevention programs.

This year, the University of Manitoba was the host of the two-day affair on November 6 and 7. The conference, incidentally, coincided with the launch of Ursel's latest book, *What's Law Got To Do With It?*

"Everyone who works in this field envisions a world of violence-free homes and strongly desires that outcome, but I also think service providers and researchers are realistic," Ursel said.

"We understand that this is a deeply embedded pattern in our society and change won't happen rapidly. What sustains those who work in this very difficult field is the courage of the victims, the real possibility of change among abusers and the hope that their children will not be caught in the intergenerational cycle of violence."

Such changes usually become evident only in the long-run. But policy changes can sometimes have more immediate effects.

In the decade prior to 1993, Manitoba had one of the highest female domestic homicide rates in Canada. That year, police implemented a more comprehensive arrest policy. In the following decade (1993 to 2003) Manitoba's domestic homicide rate dropped to the lowest in Western Canada and the third lowest in Canada.

"RESOLVE works closely with service providers and policy-makers to collect the data and provide the evidence for effective programming in our community. We work with the community to identify gaps in services and possible program and policy initiatives to address those gaps," she said.

One area of particular interest to

Ursel is specialized courts – the subject of her book, *What's Law Got To Do With It: The Law Specialized Courts and Domestic Violence in Canada*.

Edited by Ursel, Leslie Tutty and Janice le Maistre, it examines the impact of specialized domestic violence courts and Protection Order Legislation in a number of provinces in Canada.

Six jurisdictions now operate specialized courts in Canada. Manitoba opened Canada's first domestic violence court in 1990 and Ursel has led a longitudinal study of its impact since its inception.

She has found its functioning to be correlated with improvements in safety, as noted in the drop in domestic homicide rates from 1993-2003.

"With specialization, crown attorneys are able to develop an expertise in working with these very complex cases and prioritize victim safety in their prosecutions," Ursel said.

One of the most dramatic results of specialization was the change in sentencing. Conditional discharge, which comes with little consequence and offers no treatment for the offender, has become rarer while probation and court mandated treatment has become the most frequent court outcome.

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