

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Champions for men's health needed for UTAS Man-Check program

The University of Tasmania's School of Medicine is developing a program to help doctors-in-training become better skilled in performing sensitive men's examinations.

Under the MAN-CHECK program, men recruited from the community will be trained as "professional patients" who undergo genital and other physical examinations.

UTAS Head of the Discipline of Surgery Professor Richard Turner said the professional patients, or Clinical Teaching Associates (CTAs), will provide valuable feedback to medical students on appropriate technique and etiquette.

"Doctors-in-training must be comfortable and adequately skilled in performing physical examinations. However, because of the sensitivities involved, it is difficult for medical students to obtain the experience they need as part of their standard curriculum," Professor Turner said.

"The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing has declared both men's health and cancer to be major priorities.

"Leading causes of death and diseases in men include prostate cancer, tumours of the sexual organs and bladder cancers. Colorectal cancer is also the most frequently occurring cancer to affect both men and women in Australia."

Professor Turner said all of these conditions depend on early diagnosis and treatment to provide good outcomes for patients, and while in some cases accurate screening tests are available, physical examination still plays a major role in diagnosis.

"For some years, such a need has been recognised in the area of women's health, with the implementation of female CTA programs in medical schools throughout Australia. A successful women's CTA program has been running in Tasmania for over a decade, teaching gynaecological and other sensitive examinations. To date there are no published data on male CTA programs in Australia," Professor Turner said.

As a result, a men's CTA program is now being developed at the Tasmanian Medical School in Hobart.

"The first step is to recruit men who are committed to addressing men's health issues to undergo professional training as CTAs over a four-month period," Professor Turner said.

A comprehensive teaching program will then be delivered to medical students commencing early 2011.

Under the normal privacy provision of doctor-patient confidentiality, information gleaned from the training is treated with the utmost respect and privacy.

"This will be of great educational benefit to students. It will also ultimately translate into better patient care as these students become doctors serving the Tasmanian community," Professor Turner said.

Recruitment for the MAN-CHECK CTA professional training program has already begun. People interested in finding more about the program can telephone (03) 6223 1247 or email: mona@loofs-samorzewski.com for an expression of interest.

Information Released by:

**The Media Office, University of Tasmania
Phone: 6226 8519 Mobile: 0418 510 121
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au**