

Nursing alum a leader in combating heroin, college welcomes Australian adviser for research day

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November was a busy month for the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's College of Nursing.

Faculty, staff and students had the opportunity to reconnect with an alumnus and public health nurse who has become one of Wisconsin's leading heroin awareness and prevention advocates while also welcoming an Australian colleague, counterpart lecturer and nursing adviser during the college Sigma Theta Tau chapter's 2013 Fall Research Day.

Here's a rundown of some of the college's November news:

Meighan visits campus, discusses his, state's efforts to combat heroin abuse

Kevin Meighan, a 2008 graduate of the UW Oshkosh Accelerated Nursing Option, is on the front lines in Wisconsin's battle against the exploding abuse of heroin.

The public health nurse with the Waushara County Health Department returned to campus on Nov. 22 to visit with College of Nursing students. He has been appointed to serve on the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse's Heroin Ad Hoc committee.

Meighan is also on the board for the Northwoods Coalition, comprised of "representatives from coalitions in a 38-county region, including all 11 of Wisconsin Tribal Nations." The members "serve on a non-governing advisory board to help shape policies, practices and programs which address public health issues arising from use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs."

Heroin's tightening grip in the Badger State has led to a flurry of state and local health, law enforcement and business community collaborations to combat the drug's abuse and impact. Meighan has emerged as one of the state leaders on the ground, particular based out of Waushara County. He has helped stress not just the danger illicit heroin poses but also the danger leftover opioid medications that are not properly and safely disposed of pose.

"For me, it's a public health issue," he said. "We had six deaths over there last year... In that small little county, there are six opioid-addicted babies. And you have more here and more in Appleton. If we had six deaths due to pertussis or tuberculosis, it'd be 'Wow.' ... It'd be a crisis."

Meighan has presented to businesses and agencies throughout central Wisconsin, educating them about and encouraging them to support a five-pronged strategy designed to curtail and, hopefully, wipe out

heroin abuse.

Health officials are combatting heroin through prevention, harm-reduction (such as needle-exchange programs and medicated therapies), treatment, law enforcement approaches and business education.

The latter is critical, Meighan stressed, as Northern Wisconsin and other manufacturers' bottom lines may be dependent on labor supplied by recovering addicts. Those workers need support, not disqualification, he said.

In Winnebago County this year, there were nearly 40 deaths from overdose with heroin, Meighan said. "It's a lot. We have had a half-dozen deaths in Waushara County, and that's over a population of only 24,000 people... We're seeing a 296 percent increase in overdose deaths in rural communities, not urban ones. That's over a four-year period."

Blood borne diseases' spread, too, has exploded as shared needle use has increased cases of Hepatitis C in rural areas by more than 300 percent," Meighan said.

"It's a community problem," he said. "There's no question about it."

UWO a stop on Australian lecturer's, advisor's first trip to U.S.

It's not every day UW Oshkosh gets a visit by a colleague from down under.

Victoria University lecturer and Sigma Theta Tau advisor Sujatha "Suja" Shanmugasundaram PhD, RN, was on campus in Nov. 14 and Nov. 15. She serves on the UW Oshkosh Eta Pi Nursing Honor Society Research Chair advisor from the other side of the globe in southern Australia.

"For me, it's Saturday there, and it's Friday evening here," Shanmugasundaram said, explaining how she uses Skype to stay connected with students and the UW Oshkosh nursing program.

She attended the Sigma Theta Tau Scholarship Day on Nov. 15 and also presented her doctoral research. In Australia, she teaches nursing fundamentals and nursing issues in professional practice among other courses. Shanmugasundaram's masters specialty in India was community nursing.

That's where her connection to UW Oshkosh comes in: She has been connected to UW Oshkosh since 1999, when she was at the university in India that UW Oshkosh professor and director of research Jaya Jambunathan, PhD., established a collaborative, educational relationship with.

Her trip to UW Oshkosh was among a few stops in the U.S. It was Shanmugasundaram's first visit to the county. "I have been planning for this trip for more than four years now," she said, also noting her visits to Indianapolis and Washington D.C.

UW Oshkosh assistant professor Paula McNiell, PhD, said having an international partner and advisor further emphasizes to students the global demand for and responsive, culturally-aware modern nurses.

"In my community health lecture, one of the things I lecture on is that anything is only an airplane ride

away – a communicable disease or anything we talk about,” McNiel said. “Our students need an appreciation that this isn’t the center of the world, that there’s a bigger world out there. It makes them better practitioners and better people as well.”

Undgraduate research takes center stage at ‘Fall Research Day’

UW Oshkosh nursing student Tiffany Pilliow was one of about a half dozen undergraduate students to present research findings at the recent fall research day event.

“Eta Pi Chapter 2013 Fall Research Day: Give Back to Pay it Forward” gave Pilliow the opportunity to both participate in research as well as to present her findings to peers and professors.

Pilliow’s research topic – “Cyberprofessionalism: The Posting of Unprofessional Content Online By Nursing Students” – was overseen by faculty member Suzanne Marnocha, who manages UW Oshkosh’s undergraduate program and is an associate professor in the College.

“This is a study she’s grown to love,” said Marnocha of Pilliow’s research topic at the Nov. 15 public presentation. Marnocha and her husband originally began research on the topic and Pilliow was looped in through the McNair Scholars Program. (link: <http://www.uwosh.edu/mcnairscholars>)

In front of a full lecture hall, Pilliow discussed her findings on the topic, her method for surveying and her conclusions. Throughout the course of her research, Pilliow surveyed more than 1,100 deans and directors from accredited nursing schools across the country on the topic of online and social networking posts. She received nearly 300 responses to questions, helping her get to the bottom of the topic examining the prevalence of unprofessionalism of students in nursing schools.

Pilliow was also interested in learning which nursing schools had policies in place to govern students’ online posts and reputations.

In the end, she concluded that nursing schools need to be more active in implementing policies that govern student behavior online, especially as it relates to patient privacy laws. She also concluded students need more education on standards as well as more information about how to report cyberbullying, a finding she stumbled upon throughout her research. She argues professors/instructors need to be more concerned about student posts online.

Pilliow said the research process is what was so good for her and inspired her to pursue graduate school in her future.

“I never really knew how interesting research could be,” she said. “Going through from start to finish with a mentor really gave me insight into the process.”

Marnocha said working with undergraduate students on research is definitely a win-win scenario.

“I gain so much from the students I work with,” she said. “She did all of this as an undergraduate, and that’s phenomenal.”

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh College of Nursing](#)
- [Sigma Tau Theta Honors Society at UW Oshkosh](#)