

Mercy's partnership holds global hopes for poor

Nga mihi atawhai – greetings to all in Mercy! It's six years since the Sisters of Mercy in New Zealand began their partnership through Mercy Hospital Dunedin with the University of Otago, funding the McAuley Chair of International Health. The project aims at supporting the United Nations' millennium objectives, particularly those to reduce child mortality, to improve maternal health and to combat diseases like HIV/AIDs, malaria and TB.

As part of its work, the Centre for International Health sponsors an annual International Health Research Network Conference, which last month drew a record number of around 80 health professionals to the two-day event at the Otago Museum.

This year's McAuley Oration at the conference was given by Australian paediatrician Prof Kim Mulholland, whose key message was that Western nations supporting vaccination programmes in developing countries should also ensure that some key related research is done.

His topic for the McAuley Oration was 'New Vaccines for the Developing World – Who is Responsible?' He noted that Western advocates of vaccination programmes have been sharply divided about research relating to the process. Some have insisted that every dollar spent on research is 'a dollar wasted', and would be better spent on vaccination.

But he believes that research before, during and after vaccination programmes in developing countries is a vital part of best practice, especially for protecting patients from unintended adverse effects.

Research is also a 'moral imperative', ensuring that costly vaccination campaigns are run in the most efficient and effective way.

The Otago Centre for International Health has been undertaking important vaccination-related research, especially on tuberculosis in Indonesia, Prof Mulholland said. He believes there is a moral duty for governments involved in supporting such programmes to ensure that the proper research is also carried out.

The Australian and New Zealand Governments should use

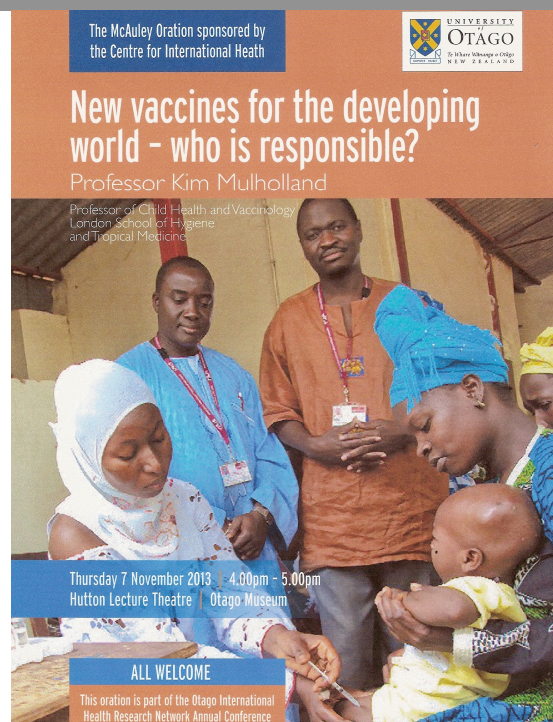
Emmanuel: God with us still

E te Atua, atawhai kaha,
God, whose name is abundant mercy,
your grace is best seen
in the hopes of the powerless.
Give us ears to hear
the prophets of our day,
to see where your mercy still waits to go.

Earth-maker, pain-bearer, life-giver,
enfold us in your love this Advent,
that wherever we live and work
your life may abound, in mercy's name. Amen.

This column is produced for Tiaki Manatu Sisters of Mercy NZ Ministries Trust. Any comment should be addressed in the first instance to the Trust chairman RONEill@somauck.org.nz © Nov 2013

Imaging Mercy Today



The McAuley Oration sponsored by the Centre for International Health

UNIVERSITY OTAGO
The Otago Library at the University of Otago
NEW ZEALAND

New vaccines for the developing world - who is responsible?
Professor Kim Mulholland

Professor of Child Health and Vaccinology
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Thursday 7 November 2013 - 4.00pm - 5.00pm
Hutton Lecture Theatre | Otago Museum

ALL WELCOME
This oration is part of the Otago International Health Research Network Annual Conference

their good offices to ensure that more vaccine-related research is undertaken, he said.

Evidence was given at the two-day conference of gains relating to the UN's Millennium Goals. Around the world, maternal mortality has almost halved since 1990. Since 2000, measles vaccines have averted more than 10 million deaths; deaths in children under five declined from 12.4 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 2012. Access to HIV care and treatment has increased everywhere; treatment of TB has saved 20 million lives between 1995 and 2011.

But despite the gains, there is no room for complacency about the health challenges facing many Asia-Pacific countries, warned Prof John Crump, co-director of the Otago Centre for International Health. Children born into poverty are almost twice as likely to die before age 5 than those from wealthier families, he noted.

Funding from New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is helping to support an exchange of post-graduate students, who conduct research on health problems relevant to their country and then return to contribute to education and health at home.

"The idea is that we'll build this relationship over time, focusing on the areas of our expertise," says Prof Crump. "As trust grows and we get a track record of success, we'll create a mechanism for others with expertise on global health problems to plug in."

Given that Catherine McAuley lost so many of her own family to tuberculosis before falling victim to the illness herself, there is something very appropriate about this partnership between our Sisters of Mercy and those engaged in continuing the battle against diseases that still haunt the poor of our world. - Dennis Horton