Gastroenterology & Hepatology Unit
The Canberra Hospital

Overview
GEHU unit is a specialised unit of The Canberra Hospital within the Australian Capital Territory Health (ACTH) authority. It is one of two hospitals serving the Canberra region, being the largest and more specialised (tertiary referral). The population of the ACT is 310,000, but TCH provides referral services in gastroenterology/hepatology for neighbouring regions in NSW, particularly Queanbeyan and South Eastern NSW. The total drainage population is ~750,000.

Activity of GEHU unit
As a specialty unit, we service 22 inpatient beds, frequently over-reaching over our capacity in winter months. Our ward houses both medical and surgical services in the specialty. In addition, the unit conducts more than 4000 endoscopic procedures each year, and provides more than 3000 occasions of outpatient service. The unit provides a 24 hr/7-day/week on-call service for gastroenterological emergencies and in-patient consultation service.

Staffing
Director and administrative staff
Prof Geoff Farrell, is a senior staff specialist within ACTH, and also a Professor of Hepatic Medicine within the Australian National University (ANU) Medical School. He is responsible for staffing and training matters, for overseeing quality insurance (QA), research and educational activities. He has a personal assistant), while an administrative officer is responsible for managing medical aspects of the GEHU (within TCH’s Division of Medicine). Ambulatory Care aspects (endoscopy, outpatient services) are managed by an office staff of 3 persons who report to TCH Ambulatory Care Service Division.

Senior staff specialists
There are currently 3 FT (in addition to Geoff Farrell) and one PT. All have ANUMS appointments.

Associate-Professor Paul Pavli is an international authority in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and also provides general gastroenterology services.

Dr Doug Taupin has a particular interest in familial bowel cancer and provides endoscopic and gastroenterological services.

Dr Shiv Chitturi has a strong international reputation in clinical hepatology, particularly non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and drug-induced liver injury.

Dr Narci Teoh is a Senior Lecturer in Medicine (ANUMS), and part-time gastroenterologist/hepatologist within the GEHU/TCH. She provides a special service for women in gastroenterology, and has a research interest in liver cancer.

Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs)
The four V.M.O’s formally associated with the GEHU include Dr Tony Clarke, a very experienced interventional endoscopist who provides ERCP and endoscopy training services, Dr Andrew Thomson, who is also an interventional endoscopist and is interested in nutrition, Dr Graham Kaye, a highly experienced clinical hepatologist, and Dr Mike Corbett, who conducts capsule endoscopy and provides general gastroenterological services pertinent to colorectal cancer prevention.
Associates
In addition to the staff specialists, academic and V.M.O’s, most (at least 6) other gastroenterologists in Canberra participate in GEHU CME and QA activities to a greater or lesser extent. Notable are A/Prof Libby Hillman who is an expert on reflux oesophagitis/Barrett’s oesophagus, and Prof Mark Bassett who is an international authority on haemochromatosis [technically he is a senior staff specialist, but his major role within ACTH is to lead the Medical Appointments Unit].

Special interests
An unusual feature of our unit is the comprehensive nature of services, training and medical education. However there are special interests, particular inflammatory bowel disease (Paul Pavli) which covers both basic and clinical research in this area. There is a fully developed hepatitis service, which for the last 10 years has been delivering antiviral therapy for hepatitis C and B. More recently, there has been a special research interest in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (Shiv Chitturi and Geoff Farrell). The Unit has an active colorectal cancer screening program funded by ACTH, and reporting to the Commonwealth Government on FOBT program. There is also interest and special counselling on familial bowel cancer.

Training
In 2008, the GEHU had 2 advanced trainees in gastroenterology as part of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians Advanced Training (RACP AT) Program in gastroenterology. One is a year 1 AT and the other a year 2. It is envisioned in the future that there will be a year 3 AT position. Our AT program was reviewed routinely by RACP Specialist Advisory Committee in gastroenterology and received very positive feedback. The amount of in-patient work, consultations, OP services and endoscopy training are all sufficient to fully provide AT for 2 registrars, while the specialty interests, clinics, teaching ward rounds, CME program and research profile are ideal for a year 3 position.

In addition to advance training in gastroenterology, the GEHU supervises 2 basic physician trainees (BPT) of RACP, who are particularly involved with ward care but also attends some consultations and conduct one (each) supervised outpatient clinic a week. For inpatient and on-call service provision, the Unit is divided into 2 teams, each headed by an AT, then with a BPT and one intern or JRMO (ie 3 staff on each of the 2 in-patient teams).

Clinical Fellow
From time to time, the unit takes on Clinical Fellows with a particular aspect of sub-speciality training (hepatology, IBD), and these clinical fellows will be involved not only in service delivery and training (at a higher level of independent performance), but will have fuller involvement in one or more research projects.

Clinical Research
The GEHU is active in clinical trials for inflammatory bowel disease, hepatitis C antivirals, and antiviral therapy in hepatitis B. There is an extensive, funded program of clinical research into NAFLD, with a current emphasis on diet, nutrition and type 2
diabetes. The unit is also active in colorectal cancer screening, and has projects on the follow up of colonic polyps, nutrition, and acute pancreatitis.

**Laboratory Research**
The GEHU has a wet laboratory research program currently involving more than 12 staff. This research is conducted in a designated research space within the pathology building of TCH, and this area comes within the aegis of ANUMS and TCH/ACTH. There are 2 postgraduate (PhD students) on a, NHMRC funded program of liver research. There is also laboratory research into macrophage recruitment in IBD (Paul Pavli), and into molecules involved with gastric cancer development (Doug Taupin).

**Education Program**
Between March and December, the unit convenes a clinical meeting every Thursday morning between 8 and 9 am. By rotation, each of 12 consultants present cases or topics which are reviewed in detail by themselves and registrars. These are interspersed with CPC, reports from international meetings attended (DDW, AASLD, EASL, UEGW), clinical research projects and quality insurance (QA) projects, the latter every 6 weeks.

In addition, each Tuesday between 5 and 6 pm, the GEHU conducts a clinico-pathological and imaging correlation session in which Advanced Trainees or responsible consultants present cases briefly, and the relevant pathology and imaging studies are demonstrated and discussed.

**Journal Club**
The GEHU has a once a month journal club at which all consultants, advanced trainees and clinical fellows present on at least one occasion during the year.

**Grand Rounds**
The GEHU presents 4 times during the year in the medical grand rounds/advances in clinical practice program of TCH. Registrars and consultants share the responsibilities for case presentation and discussion, which is expected to be at a very high level.

**Undergraduate education, RMO training**
The GEHU is among the most sought after attachments for medical students in their year 3 medicine (FIMS) program. Feedback on teaching in the unit has been very positive, and typically mentions the value of both registrar and consultant teaching. GEHU is also appreciated as one of the stronger medical units in RMO/intern/BPT training.