

“Making Dollars and Sense” of staff’s inventions

A rather unique breakfast forum was held on Thursday 29 May 2008 when the morning program Daybreak’s host Russell Carrington brought the show to the breakfast.

Russell, who is also Manager of SWAHS Office of Commercialisation, was joined by Dr Martin O’Brien, Principal of Spruson and Ferguson Patent Attorneys and Dr Deborah Kuchler, CEO of Biomed North.

The program was about showcasing SWAHS inventions and their dollar making potential, for their early morning segment, “Thinking Dollars”.

Deborah Kuchler defined SWAHS intellectual property as “the creative and innovative ideas or inventions that staff come up with to help them do their work better”. She said that staff often find better ways of doing things as a result of frustration.

The AHS has an intellectual property committee who then liaise with the Office of Commercialisation to do the leg work in relations to legal arrangements, copyright issues, etc. The Office of Commercialisation ensures that the invention is defined as an asset, properly protected, and quarantined so no one else can sell it.

Revenue from the invention is split three ways: one third to the department, one third to SWAHS and one third to the inventor(s). This acknowledges the resources that SWAHS and departments put into developing products that are commercially attractive.

Russell kept the show moving by introducing some light-hearted fun into the show, showcasing some fictitious inventions such a centrifugal birthing device and a purpose-built snore stopper.



Steven Boyages thanks Deborah, Martin and Russell at the conclusion of the forum.

Dr O’Brien explained the processes of obtaining a patent for a new product through the employ of a patent attorney, who helps an organisation apply for a patent. The attorney determines the invention has sufficient commercial interest and prepares the patent specification.

The patent is applied for in a number of countries that will have the most interest in the product.

The attorneys assess an invention’s potential for patent by the three important factors:

- the invention is new and novel
- the technology must provide an innovative step
- the invention is useful.

Prior to patent, inventions need to be kept confidential to protect it as a commercial property.

Patents in each country are usually granted for 20 years, during which time the inventor pays recurring rent to maintain the monopoly in that country.

Two SWAHS inventions were then showcased:

- Assoc Prof Peter Klineberg, Director of Anaesthetics, with a laryngoscope with an improved light source and lighter handle.
- Stewart Stubbs, Health Education Officer Drug & Alcohol Unit, with the mental health board game called SO: Spaced Out, part of a dual diagnosis program around substance misuse.

When the program ended, Steven Boyages thanked the panel of the breakfast show and concluded the forum.