



AIM HIGH

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FACULTY OF HEALTH RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Did you know?

Faculty Research Committee meeting dates have been scheduled for 2010.

Faculty Research Management Committee

16th March 2010
13th July 2010
12th October 2010

Faculty Research Higher Degree Committee

9th February 2010
12th May 2010
10th August 2010
26th October 2010

For further information on Committee membership or agenda items for these Committees contact [Shirley Savy](#).

VC's Research Excellence Awards

Congratulations to the Faculty winners of the VCs Research Excellence Awards.

- **Dr Kyp Kypri** (School of Medicine & Public Health) – VCs Award for Research Excellence
- **Professor Isabel Higgins** (School of Nursing & Midwifery) – VCs Award for Supervision Excellence.

Finance Contacts for Research Funds

[Tess Webb](#) - SBSP
[Mary Slattery](#) - SMPH (selected researchers)
[Kylee Rankin](#) - SMPH (selected researchers), GH&A, PVC Office, SHS, SNM, FAC, UDRH, CRRMH.

2010 Research Newsletter – Deadline for Articles

February Issue – 19th February 2010
April Issue – 23rd April 2010
June Issue – 25th June 2010
August Issue – 20th August 2010
October Issue – 22nd October 2010
December Issue – 10th December 2010

Contact [Shirley Savy](#) for further information.



SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Congratulations to Kirsti Haracz for receiving a commendation at the OT Australia NSW-ACT Conference for 2009 for her presentation on "Participation of Men in Occupational Therapy".

Fiona Hawke was recently awarded the prize for the Best New Investigator at the Australasian Podiatry Council Conference, Gold Coast, Australia in May 2009.

In December 2009 a special Anniversary Supplement of the *Archives of Environmental & Occupational Health* (AEOH), is being released by leading international publisher, Taylor & Francis. Researched and written by Professor Derek R. Smith from the WorkCover Research Centre of Excellence, it celebrates the 90th Anniversary of the journal's founding.

The successful recipients of the School of Health Science Summer Scholarships for 2009/2010 are:

Student	Discipline	Supervisor
Alex Barwick	Podiatry	Vivienne Chuter
Sarah Sheldon	OT	Kirsti Haracz
Carlia Lozo	N&D	Lesley Macdonald-Wicks
Jenna Hogan	MRS	Naomi Findlay Pauline Chiarelli
Skye Marshall	N&D	Clare Collins
Jared Sharp	Physio	Robin Callister

The University of Newcastle also offered summer scholarships and the recipients of those are:

Student	Discipline	Supervisor
Shane Digby	Physio	Peter Osmotherly
Patricia McKibbin	Physio	Suzanne Snodgrass
Lisa Wilks	N&D	Surinder Baines

Assoc. Prof Clare Collins has recently been awarded a 4 year NHMRC Career Development Award (Level) in Population Health which is a full-time research position in the School of Health Sciences.

Why the FoH should be putting in more ARC grants...

We all know that the Australian Research Council does not fund medical or dental research. That bit is easy. The difficult part appears to be defining exactly what constitutes medical research. With the grant writing season starting in earnest soon it is worthwhile checking out the new guidelines issued by the ARC to determine if your area of research would be considered as potentially fundable. You may be in for a few (pleasant) surprises.

http://www.arc.gov.au/applicants/md_research.htm

There are some interesting questions posed as FAQs: Will the ARC consider funding public health projects that include a medical component (e.g., immunisation) that incorporate behavioural strategies (e.g., self-management) to ensure the result sought (e.g., increasing the rate of immunisation)?

Will the ARC consider funding projects which use animal models to undertake medical/dental research, to investigate disease (e.g., pathologies, genetics) to provide the evidence to lead to the human trials which will be funded by NHMRC and not ARC?

The answers to both these questions are YES. It appears that so long as you don't want to conduct a clinical trial there may be some way of writing your NHMRC grant in a format that would be acceptable to the ARC. There seems little harm at trying to get two bites of the cherry.

As a College of Expert member who sits on the Biological Sciences and Biotechnology panel let me give you three pieces of advice if you are thinking of putting in an application to the ARC:

1. Seek advice from people who have ARC funding or know the ARC well. An ARC grant should not be written in the same style as the NHMRC.
2. Consider that the two most important reviewers of your grant are College of Experts members, and therefore very unlikely to have any in-depth knowledge of your field. Therefore write your grant for the non-expert.
3. ARC offers the best funding chance (40% success rates) if you have a "Partner Organisation" who is willing to part-fund your research. Linkage Projects offer extremely good odds of getting funding and are not as competitive as ARC's Discovery Projects.

Keith Jones

Chair of School of Biomedical Sciences Research Committee

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR GENDER HEALTH & AGEING

The Research Centre for Gender, Health and Ageing hosted a workshop **on Using Linked Data for Health Services Research** on the 9th and 10th November 2009. The workshop was attended by 24 people, and was designed to identify research questions and projects using linked data, and to begin to develop the research plans for these projects. The workshop format allowed a mixture of presentations and small group sessions that enabled participants to work on their

proposals with input from other researchers and from outside experts.

Presentations were organised around three themes: research questions and data opportunities, issues in data analysis, and processes for data access. An initial session featured some of the projects that have already been using linked data, as a way of illustrating some of the types of questions that can be answered and the advantages of using linked data to answer them. Examples of these projects included:

- Linkage of Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) survey data with the Mid-wives data set in order to identify predictors of caesarean delivery (presented by **Dr Deborah Loxton**).
- A study of admissions to hospital for heart failure (presented by **Dr Jane Robertson**).
- Linkage of ALSWH data with hospital separations data to identify modifiable predictors of acute hospital utilisation for chronic disease among women in NSW (presented by **Dr Jenny Stewart Williams**).

Professor Louisa Jorm and **Dr Sanja Lujic**, some of our collaborators from the University of Western Sydney, also presented data on analysis of data from Home and Community Care (HACC) and the NSW 45 and Up Study. This study explored factors associated with HACC serviced use to determine met and unmet needs, and opportunities for prevention. These stimulating presentations were then followed by **Katie Irvine** from the Centre for Health Record Linkage (CHeReL) who provided further inspiration and illustration of other data sets and opportunities for research through the CHeReL data linkage process.

Jenny Stewart Williams and **Xenia Dolja Gore** (RCGHA) spoke about some of the details to be considered when working with hospital separations data, and **Sanja Lujic** (UWS) spoke about working with HACC data. A panel of experts including **Steve Hancock**, **Jenny Stewart Williams**, **Xenia Dolja Gore**, **Sanja Lujic**, and **Daniel Barker** provided further advice on individual projects and general approaches.

Presentations on the second day were designed to help participants through the technicalities of the approvals process for getting access to linked data. In these presentations, **Katie Irvine** and **Lee Taylor** (CHeReL), **Dr Sallie-Anne Pearson** (UNSW ethics committee), and **Catherine Chojenta** (RCGHA) provided excellent practical advice on the various steps and processes involved in acquiring the administrative data and seeking approval for the linkage process.

Following the workshop, participants will be further assisted to complete the design of their projects and to execute the data approval and access processes. The aim is to see at least three further well developed and approved projects by the middle of 2010.



CENTRE FOR ASTHMA AND RESPIRATORY DISEASE

Jay Horvat, Malcolm Starkey, Richard Kim, Simon Phipps, Peter Gibson, Kenneth Beagley, Paul Foster, and Philip Hansbro "Early-life chlamydial lung infection enhances allergic airways disease through age-dependent differences in immunopathology"; In Press *J Allergy Clin Immunol* 20th October, 2009, (IF = 9.773).

Background

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition of the airways with recurring exacerbations of disease that is underpinned by aberrant T-helper lymphocyte type (Th)2 cell responses to environmental antigens. The hallmark features of asthma are promoted by functions of the Th2 cytokines, IL-4, -5 and -13. In particular IL-13 is a key regulator of mucus hypersecretion, airways hyper-responsiveness (AHR) and remodelling. These patho-physiological processes result in the narrowing of the airways, which produces widespread airflow obstruction and breathing difficulties associated with asthma.

Chlamydomphila pneumoniae is a common respiratory pathogen that infects the majority of people by early adulthood. Importantly, a significant proportion of individuals carry *C. pneumoniae* in their lungs without having any disease symptoms. Chlamydial respiratory infections are increasingly linked to the development of asthma in early life; however, the nature of the immunological interplay remains unknown.

Rationale and Key Findings

Since many key events that affect an individual's propensity to develop asthma typically occur in childhood, the study described in our recent *J Allergy Clin Immunol* publication was designed to investigate the affect of early life chlamydial infection on the development of asthma in later life.

We showed that early-life, but not adult, chlamydial lung infections differentially and permanently altered the phenotype of immune responses and lung structure in later-life. Specifically, neonatal infection suppressed, whereas infant infection enhanced Th2 and inflammatory responses. However, both infections increase IL-13 production in the lung and exacerbate mucus hypersecretion and AHR in asthma in later life. These effects were associated with permanent infection-induced alterations to dendritic cell-induced cytokine release from T-cells and dramatic changes in lung structure.

Our findings suggest that the prevention or treatment of early-life pulmonary chlamydial infection and/or associated inflammatory responses may be beneficial in suppressing the development of asthma. Vaccination and treatment strategies that promote the clearance of infection and prevent inflammation may be beneficial for lung function and predisposition to asthma in the long term.

SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES & PHARMACY

PhD Student Dan Johnstone, supervised by Dr Liz Milward, won the 2009 National Research Award at the National ASMR Conference in Hobart held in November. This award was judged by the ASMR Executive Research Committee and the ASMR President who commented that a large number of applications had been received Australia-wide. The award is open to PhD students and Post-Docs (up to 2 years) with only one national award given. This is a great achievement to receive this award as a PhD student in a highly competitive field.

The award will help Dan pursue his studies of gene expression in the CNS and retina in iron disorders. This award recognises both the value of the research area and Dan's research achievements in general.

A/Prof Derek Laver

RHD Co-ordinator, School of Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & PUBLIC HEALTH

Writing Skills Workshop – Orange – November 2009

The School of Medicine and Public Health recently offered a Writing Skills Workshop at the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health in Orange.

Tim Haydon, from The Write Media Network, provided this customised workshop on writing scientific articles; publication processes and publication strategies; and developing papers for publication.

Grant Writing Workshop – Newcastle – December 2009

Tim Haydon, from The Write Media Network, ran a customised workshop on NHMRC Project Grants and NHMRC Fellowships (eg. Training/Postdoctoral Fellowships, Career Development Awards) as well as other grants such as ARC Discovery Grants.

An electronic version of the Powerpoint presentation is available on the Faculty of Health Blackboard site. Please email the SMPH Research office smph-research@newcastle.edu.au for more information.

Research Performance

Congratulations to all the researchers from the School who were successful in the recent NHMRC and ARC rounds. In addition to the list of the successful grants that was provided in the October Faculty Newsletter, A/Prof David Ball from the Trans Tasman Radiation Oncology Group (TROG) received an Enabling Grant from NHMRC worth \$375,000 over 18 months.

Faculty of Staff Health Awards

Also, congratulations to Dr Helen Stain (CRRMH) who has taken out the Faculty of Health Staff Award (Research Award) for providing a distinctive contribution in the leadership of a successful research program in rural and remote mental health.



BEST PRACTICE NUTRITION AND HYDRATION SUPPORT IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE CONFERENCE

On 5-6 November 2009, The Research Centre for Gender, Health and Ageing (RCGHA) presented the Best Practice Nutrition and Hydration Support in Residential Aged Care Conference.

The Nutrition and Hydration project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing under the Encouraging Best Practice in Residential Aged Care (EBPRAC) Program. The project team, lead by Professor Julie Byles, worked closely with UnitingCare Ageing and Baptist Community Services in an action research project that supported the implementation of best practice nutrition and hydration in nine aged care facilities throughout NSW.

The conference gathered staff from the nine aged care facilities involved in the project as well as research staff from the University of Newcastle and experts in the field. Professor Sandra Capra, Professor of Nutrition at the University of Queensland, was invited as a keynote speaker and delivered a talk entitled "Let them eat cake - nutrition, malnutrition and the older adult". Overall, the conference was a great success. It provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and learn more about the range of projects that took place. It also allowed the researchers to present the results of the project and a nutrition and hydration tool kit to the group for feedback.

A WORD FROM THE DEPUTY HEAD OF FACULTY RESEARCH

Though the University's Christmas-New Year shutdown is almost upon us, most researchers aiming to submit funding applications in the New Year are likely to spend some time in the break thinking about their grant. So here are some important points about the new online NHMRC application system.

NHMRC grants will need to be submitted using RGMS, the Research Grants Management System. RGMS is NHMRC's new online system for lodging grant applications, managing the assessment of applications, and managing grants once awarded. RGMS is replacing Informed-Filler and NHMRC's current grants management system.

RGMS has an on-line CV tool. Researchers only need to enter their CV once (and can update it any time), and RGMS automatically extracts the information into research funding applications. The CV can also be exported for other uses.

When you open your account (see below), you will need to fill out your CV. There will be some work associated with filling out this information initially, however keeping it up to date will not be difficult. Existing grant holders will find that much of their CV data has already been entered by the system.

Nobody but you will have access to your CV or be able to edit it. RGMS will automatically extract information from your CV

into grant applications you are associated with. However you will be able to export your own CV for other uses.

If you already hold an active grant with NHMRC, you will automatically be provided with an RGMS account. You will be sent an e-mail on 17 December, containing information telling you how to activate your account and:

- access the system;
- fill out the areas of the 'Profile and CV' relevant to your scheme;
- start an application; and
- access the guide to applicants for the scheme you are applying for.

NB: The CIA MUST be the one to "Create Application", otherwise this will cause problems with the order of CIs.

Don't be alarmed if you do not receive an email within a few days of the opening. In some cases where email addresses have changed, e.g. a researcher has moved institutions since they were awarded a previous NHMRC grant - the RGMS team will be conducting a reconciliation and follow up of 'bounced' or 'undeliverable' emails.

If you don't currently hold an active NHMRC grant, instructions on how to get an RGMS account will be available on the NHMRC website at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/rgms> on 17 December 2009. You will be able to request a new RGMS account through RGMS's automated login/password function called 'RGMS Identity Manager'.

Research Office deadlines for Project Grants:

Drafts: 1 February 2010
Finals: 1 March 2010
NHMRC Closing Date: 17 March 2010

Research and Practitioner Fellowships

Research Office deadlines:
Finals: 20 January 2010
NHMRC Closing Date: 5 February 2010

Please contact stoy.drinic@newcastle.edu.au if you wish to apply for a Research and Practitioner Fellowship and would like a draft review.

Career Development Awards (CDA's)

Research Office deadlines:
Drafts: 4 March 2010
Finals: 18 March 2010
NHMRC Closing Date: 30 March 2010

Enjoy the end of year break and good luck with your research in 2010.

Professor John Rostas

Deputy Head of Faculty Research



Merry Christmas and safe holidays to all staff
*from the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Head of Faculty
(Research) and the Research & Research Training Officer*