



Anton Breinl Research Centre for Health Systems Strengthening

Strong and equitable health systems for rural, remote, Indigenous and tropical communities

ISSUE 22 MAY 2015

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From the co-directors

Professor Sarah Larkins and Professor Jacinta Elston

Welcome to the first edition of the Anton Breinl Research Centre for Health Systems Strengthening newsletter (ABRC). We aim to produce a newsletter every six months, and I would like to congratulate Karen Johnston on her magnificent work in pulling this newsletter together and constructing the website. I think you'll agree that it all looks very professional and highlights some fantastic research and capacity building that is going on within the centre. We plan a strategy meeting with centre researchers in the next couple of months – details to follow.

I write this from Atoifi, East Kwaio province, Malaita, Solomon Islands where I am privileged to attend a research symposium hosted and presented by the Atoifi Research Group. This symposium highlights the excellent research and health system development work that has been going on here (led by local researchers and health service staff supported by centre members Dr David MacLaren, Michelle Redman-MacLaren and Emeritus

Professor Rick Speare). Seeing firsthand the logistical, geographical and resource based challenges faced by health service providers on a daily basis highlights for me the huge importance of the needs based health research and system development work that the ABRC prioritises.

We would be delighted to receive input from other Centre researchers to feature in future additions or on our website. Please don't hesitate to contact us at abrc@jcu.edu.au and please visit the website <https://research.jcu.edu.au/abrc> and follow us on twitter http://twitter.com/@ABRC_HSS



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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CONFERENCE NEWS

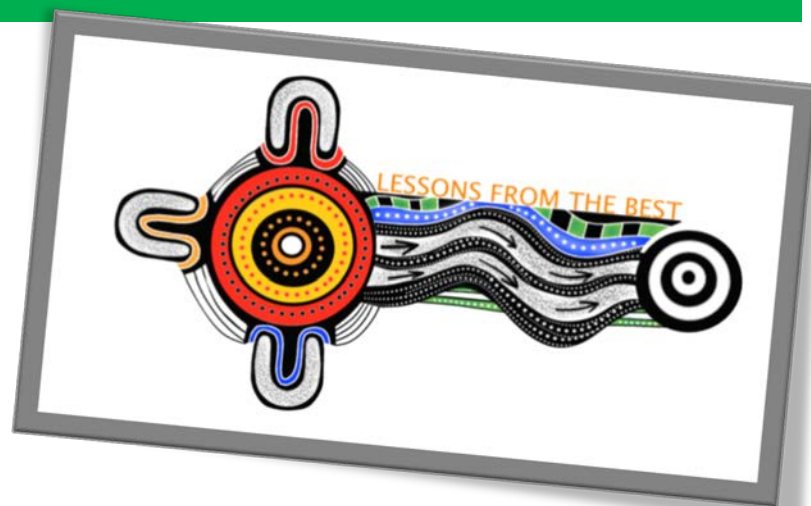
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OTHER NEWS AND EVENTS

Other centre news.....p5, 6

Quality improvement in Aboriginal primary health care: learning from the best to better the rest

Research team: Prof Sarah Larkins, Prof Sandra Thompson, Dr Christine Connors, Prof Jacinta Elston, Prof Komla Tsey, Dr Cindy Woods, Ms Annette Panzera, Dr Veronica Matthews, Ms Ru Kwedza, Mr Chris Henaway and Ms Moana Tane.



This project aims to enhance understanding of how the quality of Indigenous primary health care can be improved, through understanding of how contextual factors interact to facilitate the success of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiatives within a service.

The project team includes researchers and representatives from the Menzies School of Health Research, ABCD National Research Partnership, QAIHC, AMSANT, Goldfields-Midwest Medicare Local, Northern Territory Government and the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health. The project is funded by NHMRC funding to the value of \$618 000 over 3 years.

The past year has been very busy with the project team holding their first project workshop in August. Discussion

included research methodology, data collection tools and the “high-improving services” case study sites. These sites were identified from a sample of 165 primary health care centres in the ABCD National Research Partnership that demonstrated consistent improvement over consecutive cycles in performance, in more than one audit domain. The sites are Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service (Katherine), Darnley Island Primary Health Centre (Murray Island), Yorke (Masig) Island Primary Health Centre (Torres Strait), Yarralin Health Centre (Yarralin), Batchelor Primary Health Care Centre (Batchelor), the Fitzroy Valley Health Partnership (WA).

Next steps involve further detailed qualitative data collection visits to all sites to identify what strategies have been used at each of these services to facilitate their improvement.

THE PROJECT LOGO

The design of the project logo represents knowledge and education, history and culture. Learning from the best to better the rest; sharing, learning, educating. The key to better understanding Primary Health Care and breaking down the barriers improving access and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also represents unison working together hand in hand having the same goal and passion to work closer in closing the gap. The project team thanks Luke Duffy of Duffy's Artworks, Mount Louisa, Townsville, north Queensland for his beautiful design.

MORE INFORMATION

[PROJECT WEBPAGE](#)

[LESSONS FROM THE BEST NEWSLETTER VOLUME 1](#)



The research team together at the first workshop in Cairns, August 2014.

From left to right: Back row (standing): Chris Henaway, Ru Kwedza, Brian Pedwell, Kerry Copley, Robyn White, Sandy Thompson, Bruce Hocking, Jacinta Elston, Margaret Brice, Sarah Kanai, Sinon Cooney, Tania Patrao, Jacki Ward, Tomi Newie, Cindy Woods.

Front row (kneeling): Bec Gooley, Rebecca Bond, Robyn Taylor, Sarah Larkins, Annette Panzera.

RECENT ARTICLES FROM THENET



[Impact of selection strategies on representation of underserved populations and intention to practice: international findings](#)

[The training for health equity network evaluation framework: a pilot study at five health professional schools.](#)

MORE INFORMATION

<http://thenetcommunity.org/>

COLLABORATION WITH WHO

Early in 2014, Prof Sarah Larkins travelled to Lisbon as a member of the WHO Technical Working Group on Health Workforce Education Assessment Tools. The group contributed to development of a global tool that will help governments to improve health by assessing the quality and relevance of education for health professionals. The World Health Organisation has since released the toolkit. The tool was launched at the [Global Community Engaged Medical Education Muster 2014](#), Uluru.

[Dr Erica Wheeler from the World Health Organisation spoke with ABC radio from Uluru.](#)



Meeting the health needs of underserved populations through strategies in health professional education

The JCU medical college is strongly focused on meeting the priority health needs of underserved communities, and communities in rural and remote tropical regions. The college aims to improve health inequities through selection strategies and curriculum focus on local health needs. A study by ABRCHSS centre researchers Professor Tarun Sen Gupta, Mr Torres Woolley and Professor Richard Murray has shown that the JCU model of medical education is making a positive impact on workforce shortages in regional, rural and remote Australia.

READ MORE ABOUT IT HERE

[Positive impacts on rural and regional workforce from the first seven cohorts of James Cook University medical graduates](#)

*Social accountability in health professional education: how is JCU and THEnet involved?
Infographic created by Maria Bellei*

THE TRAINING FOR HEALTH EQUITY NETWORK

The Training for Health Equity Network (THEnet) is a strong contributor to the global movement of tertiary institutions improving health equity through health professional education. THEnet are leading socially accountable health professional education through evidence building, increasing research capacity and actively contributing to global learning in the field.

THEnet is a community of practice involving 11 health professions institutions in 9 countries, all with a social accountability mandate. For their work in transformative health professional education, THEnet was recently recognised with the Charles Boelen International Social Accountability Award from the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada.



Atoifi Health Research Group

Solomon Islands

The Atoifi Health Research Group was formed in 2009 to strengthen research capacity and facilitate a Pacific Islands approach to understanding the health of communities in the Pacific Islands. The group includes ABRCHSS members Dr David MacLaren, Emeritus Professor Rick Speare and Ms Michelle Redman-MacLaren. Other members of the group are health professionals from the Atoifi Adventist Hospital in the Solomon Islands, and researchers from Hunter and New England Health (Tamworth), Central Queensland University and the University of Michigan.

The Pacific Islander cultural understandings of health are central in the group's research capacity strengthening activities. Research activities are conducted through partnership between local health professionals, East Kwaio community members and academic researchers. Areas of research aim to improve local health outcomes through research into tuberculosis, soil-transmitted helminthes, lymphatic filariasis, malaria, head lice and biodiversity in East Kwaio.

Local health policy, health service delivery and health strategies have been informed by the group's research outcomes. A recent example involves

tuberculosis, a major health issue in the area. To raise awareness of tuberculosis the research group has engaged with the community through production of a DVD. A set of culturally sensitive video clips aimed at informing East Kwaio villagers about tuberculosis was locally created and shown in 41 East Kwaio villages late last year. A second set of video clips currently in production, aims to incorporate local beliefs with tuberculosis facts.

VIEW THE TUBERCULOSIS
VIDEO CLIPS

[CLICK HERE](#)

Similarly across the group's other projects, research conducted in partnership with local health professionals and villagers is bettering health outcomes for the local community.



MORE INFORMATION

**Atoifi Health
Research Group**

<http://www.atoifiresearch.org.sb/>

RECENT ARTICLE

[Steps on a journey to TB control in Solomon Islands: a cross-sectional, mixed methods pre-post evaluation of a local language DVD.](#)

RECENT EVENT

HEALTH RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

March 12 2015

2014 research projects presented and discussed with community leaders, health administrators and international partners

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)



Dr David MacLaren presented [Toilets and taboos in the tropics](#) at a TEDxJCU event in Cairns, October 2014. David described his experiences working with communities in the Solomon Islands to reduce intestinal worm infections and better health outcomes for villagers. This was a powerful presentation that highlighted the intricacies of combining science with culture and community engagement to improve health inequities.

Tropical Research Network address tropical challenges

By Michelle Redman-MacLaren, PhD Candidate and Senior Research Officer, College of Medicine and Dentistry



Working across disciplines is not new to me- I am a social worker with expertise in community development completing my PhD in the College of Medicine and Dentistry ☺ However, the opportunity for me to participate in the Tropical Research Network has taken trans-disciplinary opportunities to a whole new level.

In 2012, I joined the [TRN](#) along with 24 PhD candidates from eight universities, established to push the boundaries of tropical research and educate future tropical research leaders. Each year since then our numbers have grown, as new cohort members and mentors join the Network. This year [Dr Avishek Singh](#), a fellow PhD from JCU's College of Medicine and Dentistry, joined the group.

For the past week, we have attended the 3rd TRN conference in the beautiful city of Cairns, Queensland. Hosted by The Cairns Institute at James Cook University, the conference was a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with fellow PhD Candidates and some seriously clever senior academics (that were also great mentors). The TRN

conference discussed innovative ways to address challenges specific to living and working in Tropical environments and participated in skills-based workshops, such as dealing with wicked problems and working with the media (thanks [@TynanLiz](#))

The highlight for me was a Keynote presentation by Professor Sharon Bell, Deputy Vice Chancellor at Charles Darwin University. DVC Bell discussed her research about [women in science](#) and the gendered experience of academics in the university sector. As I come towards the end of my PhD Candidature, it was timely advice presented in a generous and informed manner. Other highlights included fabulous presentations by [Professor David Plummer, OAM](#) about robust qualitative research and [Distinguished Professor Sasha Aikhenvald](#) about challenges of conducting field work in Tropical environments.

It wasn't all sitting and listening. We each presented our current PhD research, with mine being about the implications of male circumcision for women in Papua New Guinea. We also

worked in groups designing research projects to address issues relevant to the Tropics (with topics such as informal settlements in Pacific islands, fire management in Northern Australia and challenges to biodiversity in Madagascar). What is obvious is that none of the health, social, environmental or economic challenges of the Tropics is going to be solved by one discipline, using one approach. I have come away feeling more optimistic about the potential of trans-disciplinary approaches to research and with some real-life collaborations that will enhance our health research in the Pacific.

SUN SAFETY

Recent findings from a study conducted by doctoral student Denise Turner and Dr Simone Harrison could lead to greater protection from skin cancer for school children. The researchers investigated sun safety in over 100 schools in Townsville, Cairns and Atherton. The study found that increasing the amount of skin covered by uniforms through lengthening uniform shorts, skirts and sleeves, could increase sun protection by as much as 9%. The study findings could inform the Australian and New Zealand Standard for assessing sun protective clothing.

READ MORE

[Sun protection provided by regulation school uniforms in Australian schools: an opportunity to improve personal sun protection during childhood.](#)



TRN Conference 2014.
(Photo courtesy of Adrian Van Rossum)

Congratulations!



Big congratulations to Professor Sarah Larkins, Professor Jacinta Elston, Professor Janes Mills, Associate Professor Jenni Judd and Ms Simone Ross on your recent academic promotions. Congratulations also to Associate Professor Sabe Sabesan and Ms Robyn Preston who are both in the final stages of their PhD thesis examinations.



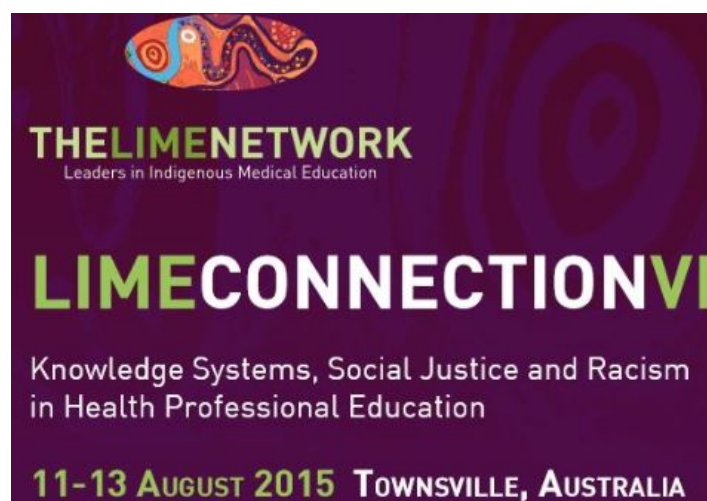
Upcoming events

5th ACFID University Network Conference

4-5th June, Monash University

"...will provide a unique opportunity to bring together researchers and practitioners to surface emerging evidence around inequality and discuss what this means for development policy and practice."

<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/acfid/>



Contributions

The ABRCHSS newsletter will be published biannually in April and October. We are always keen to hear from you! Newsletter contributions may be news items, awards/recognition, grants, new publications, conference feedback, upcoming events, postgraduate students' news and personal stories.

If you have a new publication, or have an upcoming media release, please forward the details to the centre so that we can publicise your research through Twitter and the centre website. By the way, if you haven't already, follow us on twitter [@ABRC_HSS](https://twitter.com/ABRC_HSS) and we'll follow you back!

SEND IN YOUR NEWS

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