AGENDA ITEM 2: DIRECTORS’ REPORT

Key Activities July to October 2008

- Detailed analyses of the health provisions in the 2008-09 Commonwealth Budget and spending on Indigenous health and mental health by the Rudd Government have been completed and are now on the website. There is also an analysis of 2008-09 State and Territory health budgets and a scorecard of the Government's election commitments against funding and implementation announcements, updated regularly. All these continue to attract great interest.
- First edition of MCHP newsletter to be tabled at meeting.
- An informal partnership arrangement has been established with the Health Services Research Association of Australia and New Zealand (HSRAANZ), focussing on developing research capacity in health services and policy.
- Steve Leeder is a Chief Investigator on three 2008 NHMRC Capacity Building Grant applications: Health economics (Steve Jan); Health Policy (Richard Taylor); and Respiratory Health (Guy Marks). One of these was short-listed (Jan) and the interviews will be held shortly.
- Stephen Leeder and James Gillespie are part of a team that will investigate what is influential public health research. The study will look at how population health researchers and research consumers understand research impact. The team have been awarded $433,500 over 3 years.
- Stephen Leeder and a research team from the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research have been awarded $783,875 over 3 years to look at sex-related changes in asthma during the transition through puberty in the Childhood Asthma Prevention Study birth cohort.
- Robert Wells is included in a NHMRC project grant to commence in 2009 investigating factors in delisting from public subsidy treatments or medications where evidence shows they are either ineffective or less effective than other available therapies.
- The Menzies-Nous National Survey of Attitudes towards the Health System received Human Research Ethics Committee approval. The survey has been conducted and initial data analysis is underway. The results will be of great public interest!
- MCHP staff have been involved in a number of consultations with the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and Preventative Health Services Task Force:
  - MCHP is part of an academic consortium which includes experts from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Brain and Mind Institute, and ANU which has submitted a tender to the Department of Health and Ageing for the evaluation of the Medicare Better Access mental health program.
- Over the next twelve months Lesley Russell will work with the US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney to produce a series of papers on health reform issues in Australia and the US.

Events

- 22 July: seminar with Brain and Mind Research Institute on Re-finding the plot: how to regain direction for mental health policy in Australia. *Extremely well attended and has led to several developing partnerships in mental health policy development in Australia.*
- 31 July: Indigenous health: closing the gap for metropolitan communities. *This seminar had a star panel and was extremely well received. Several continuing relationships have developed as a result.*
- 27 August: The hospitals admission merry-go-round: how to get off! *This seminar heard from interstate and local health service managers about ways in which unnecessary admissions to hospital can be avoided and prevented.*
9 September 2008: jointly hosted a seminar with Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health titled sustainable funding for Australia’s future health care. The seminar examined alternative models for involving private health insurance in the national health insurance system.

30 September: Public and private hospitals: competition or cooperation? This Health Conundrums seminar was jointly conducted with Minter Ellison in Melbourne and attracted a wide ranging and prestigious audience. It concerned the vexed question of public-private partnerships in health care.

9 October: Emerging Health Policy Research Conference. This conference is held annually (this year in Sydney) and is designed to build capacity among policy research workers. Research abstracts were received from young policy research people wishing to present their work at this annual event. Professor Don Nutbeam and Professor Helen Zorbas were the key presenters, examining the relationship between research evidence and policy development and evidence research and clinical practice.

Education

One of the principal objectives of the Centre includes training research workers to such a level that they will have the capacity to participate meaningfully in national and international research programs on health policy and to undertake research training activities and programs that are consistent with these objectives. Over the last quarter the Menzies Centre has provided a focus for expanding postgraduate programs in health policy at the University of Sydney.

- Staff of the Menzies Centre have continued to expand the health policy teaching programs based in the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney. The program has a national profile – drawing students employed in health policy organizations in the ACT, Victoria and Queensland as well as NSW.
- Steve Leeder and Jim Gillespie convene the Graduate Certificate and Diploma in Health Policy. Lesley Russell and Masoud Mirzaei contribute to this teaching program. Jim Gillespie teaches the health policy components of the Masters of Public Health and Masters of International Public Health.
- The Faculty of Medicine has agreed that the postgraduate health policy program should be offered at Masters level from 2009. The extended program will be taught in association with the Sax Institute (NSW Health) and the George Institute for International Health. Planning is continuing apace.
- International education programs are also being developed. Jim Gillespie prepared a course on the Australian health and pharmaceutical regulatory systems for a Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific (RIAP) Executive Education Program on Comparative Management and Distribution of Pharmaceuticals: The Australian Experience for the China State Food and Drug Administration, May 6-12. In late September, Jim had discussions with RIAP and the World Bank Institute about short courses that might be offered to health service executives in 2009.
- Menzies Centre staff now supervise 10 PhD students (SRL 4 students; JAG 3 students as principal supervisor and 3 as associate supervisor).
- Maher Salahi, a medical student at Vanderbilt University, completed an internship commencing in May for 2 months. He was sponsored by his university to do a comparative study of the American and Australian health care systems, with particular reference to the way in which CVD patients are treated. Lesley Russell was his supervisor.
- Grace Chung and Elisa Aponte, medical students at School of Medicine of New York University, completed their internship and their paper titled: ‘The approach to chronic disease: A comparison of type 2 diabetes strategies in Australian states’ was accepted for oral presentation by the Population Health Congress 2008 which was held early July. They drafted a manuscript based upon their research which is under review by co-authors from the MCHP. Masoud Mirzaei was their supervisor.
- Kathy Zhang, medical student from the Sophi Davis School of the City College of New York, commenced an internship in 1st of July 2008 for 2 months. She had a scholarship from her university to do a comparative case study on Indigenous chronic illness management policies of one state of Australia, United States and Canada. Masoud Mirzaei was her supervisor.
- Surianti Sukeri, a PhD student from Malaysia, is on a scholarship from the Malaysian Government. Her thesis titled: ‘The impact of cardiovascular disease on families in Malaysia’ and she has been reviewing the literature and designing her project over the last three months. Stephen Leeder and Masoud Mirzaei are her supervisors.
- Robert Wells presented a course for health executives from India and Malaysia on health system reform as part of international leadership program conducted by the Crawford School of Government at ANU.
Policy Inquiries and Submissions

With the election of a new federal government there has been a spate of inquiries into the future reform of the health system. The Menzies Centre has been prominent in assisting these commissions and in providing expert media commentary. At state level, the continuing problems of the NSW health system has given the Centre opportunities to intervene in debates over the future of acute care.

- Bob Wells is assisting the NHHRC on primary health care issues and convened a one day seminar on primary care workforce issues on behalf of the NHHRC. He was also an invited participant in the NHHRC consultation workshops on primary care and health and medical research.
- Bob Wells convened a dinner meeting with NHHRC members and leaders in primary care.
- Steve Leeder participated in combined meeting of NHHRC and Preventative Health Task Force 28 August.
- Lesley Russell was invited to participate in the forum to develop the key directions for the Fourth National Mental Health Plan, 11 September.

Discussion Papers

September 2008: This paper has been distributed to members of the National Mental Health Advisory Council and the NMHAC has commissioned an update.

Conferences/Presentations

- Lesley Russell attended Australian American Leadership Dialogue meeting in Washington DC on June 23-27, 2008. This Washington visit included meetings with Dr Jeff Levi, ED of Trust for America’s Health and advisor to Senator Barack Obama on health policy, Dr Lawrence Deyton, Chief Public Health Officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO), who has taken the lead in the Congress on stem cell legislation, and Phil Schiliro, newly-appointed Congressional liaison for the Obama campaign.
- Lesley Russell was a keynote speaker at the YWCA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s health and wellbeing community consultation, 15 September 2008.
- Robert Wells presented on health workforce at the 10th International Medical Workforce Collaborative, Edinburgh, Scotland and on providing sustainable rural health care services at the centre for Rural health, Inverness, Scotland.

Research – The Serious and Continuing Illness Policy and Practice Study (SCIPPS)

- Work continues on the manuscripts currently being drafted from the qualitative research study. Two of these manuscripts are at a final draft stage and will be submitted shortly. There is a plan in place to complete and submit the remaining five manuscripts by the end of the year.
- Members of the research team will be presenting papers at two upcoming conferences: (1) The International Congress on Chronic Disease Self-Management Australia (26 - 28 November 2008, Melbourne) and (2) the 9th Global Forum on Bioethics in Research (3 - 5 December 2008, Auckland). The following papers will be presented:
MENZIES CENTRE FOR HEALTH POLICY

The International Congress on Chronic Disease Self-Management Australia

- Jowsey T, Essue B, Jeon Y-H, and the SCIPPS Team. *You're on a different planet: examining needs of family carers in the management of people with chronic illness* – Accepted for oral presentation

- Jowsey T, Jeon Y-H, Essue B, Pearce-Brown C, Rubin G, Aspin C, and the SCIPPS Team. *Addressing the educational needs of people with chronic illness and co-morbidity* - Accepted for oral presentation

- Pearce-Brown C, Jowsey T, Jeon Y-H, Usherwood T, Gillespie J, Glasgow N, Leeder SR, and the SCIPPS Team. *The process of learning: chronic disease patient and carer experiences, and the implications these have for health policy in the Australian context* - Accepted for oral presentation

- Corcoran K, Yen Laurann, Essue B, Leeder S, and the SCIPPS Team. *Beyond the health silo - transport issues for people with chronic illness* - Accepted for poster presentation

9th Global Forum on Bioethics in Research

- Essue B, Mirzaei M, Corcoran K, Gordon E, Davison J, Aspin C, and the SCIPPS Team. *Recruitment of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse participants in Western Sydney for the Serious and Continuing Illness Policy and Practice Study (SCIPPS): Overcoming inclusion barriers in health policy research* - Accepted for oral presentation

- SCIPPS has spent the past few months strengthening its relationships with key stakeholders involved in chronic illness service delivery, policy development and policy implementation in the two study areas. The research project is now in the process of finalizing several collaborations with these stakeholders. These collaborations provide an opportunity to contribute to programs that have been designed to address the key challenges identified by patients, carers and health care professionals in the first phase of SCIPPS. The following projects are currently in development:
  - HealthOne Mt Druitt – development and implementation of a local evaluation
  - Sydney West Area Health Service
    - Care Navigation model for chronic illness management – project in development
    - Mobile Connectivity Pilot – evaluation of the use of alternate connectivity for community health staff to improve the efficiency of community health encounters
    - ACT Health
      - with ACT Divisions of General Practice: Diabetes Outreach Project – development, implementation and evaluation of diabetes masterclasses for GPs
      - ACT Chronic Care Program – development and implementation of an evaluation framework
  - Several SCIPPS sub-studies are in progress in both study areas:
    - The economic impact of chronic disease on households: 651 study questionnaires were mailed to COPD patients who have attended the Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program in Western Sydney. 130 questionnaires have been returned to date. A follow up mail out is scheduled for early October. Data analysis will commence shortly.
    - Data linkage: A data linkage element will be implemented into a number of the evaluations listed above. A case series study using linked data is also in development.
    - SCIPPS as an intervention: all members of the research team are diligently recording all meetings and instances where SCIPPS’ encounters could influence chronic illness policies and practice. The team will be organizing a meeting of key Federal & State Policy individuals shortly.
  - NHMRC Partnership Grants Program:
    - SCIPPS is in the process of developing proposals to be submitted for this grant scheme that build on existing relationships with stakeholders in both study areas (as indicated above). There is a plan in place for both the Sydney site and the ACT site to submit at least one Grant application each.
Governance

- See agenda.

Peer reviewed Publications


Medical Newspapers (SRL)


Media/ public engagement

Gillespie, J. Interview on private health insurance: Issues (Diabetes Australia), Winter 2008.


Russell L. Can we close the gap? Not at this rate. Crikey / Croakey 1 August 2008


Russell L. Running mates game will end political silly season. Canberra Times 15 August 2008.


Russell L. Joe may be man for all seasons. Canberra Times 26 August 2008. This article was reprinted on the university of Sydney website http://www.usyd.edu.au/news/84.html?newscategoryid=10&newsstoryid=2539

Russell L. US senators have an energy fight on their hands. Canberra Times 2 September 2008.

Russell L. Pregnancy counseling: is it being used? Interview with Elly Varrenti, Life Matters, ABC Radio National 9 September 2008

Russell L. Women hold the key to result in the US. Canberra Times, 11 September 2008. Interview with radio 2SER on this paper 12 September 2008.


Gillespie J & Leeder S, Privacy obsesses lawyers, not patients, The Australian, 4 October 2008

Leeder S. Interview with Janice McGilchrist, ABC Central West NSW, 16 October 2008. …


Leeder SR. Facing the Facts on Obesity, Centre for Policy Development, 18 July 2008


Leeder. Was invited to deliver the Michael Price Lecture. He presented the paper, ‘Looking forward to better health: how doe we get to the promised land?’
Leeder Chaired a National Academies Workshop that was held in response to the Cutler Review of Australia's National Innovation System.