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What’s New

• Dr Julie Redfern, ANZAC Research Institute, Sydney has won a NSW/ACT Young Tall Poppy Science Award. Julie’s research aims to help patients who survive a heart event but who do not participate in an existing prevention program. She is currently undertaking a series of scientific studies where patients can access a prevention program that involves goal-setting and regular encouragement and where patients themselves are actively involved in making choices about their treatment. If effective, the strategies developed would lower the risk of future heart attacks among thousands of Australians on a daily basis. Professor Stephen Leeder mentors Dr Redfern as a National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS) Fellow.

• Tim Usherwood, Professor and Head of the Department of General Practice, Sydney Medical School – Western, joined the Menzies Centre as an Associate. Professor Usherwood works closely with the SCIPPS team.

• Associate Professor David Dunt conducted the formal review of the Menzies Centre in September. The aim of the review was to: assess the performance of the Menzies Centre against its broad objectives; assess the effectiveness of the governance and operational arrangements for the Menzies Centre; and provide recommendations for future strategies and approaches. His report will be available soon.

• Dr Lesley Russell, the Menzies Foundation Fellow, is currently in Washington DC where she is part of the health team at the Center for American Progress, a Democrat think tank, and a Visiting Professor in the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University.

• Natalie Plant joined SCIPPS as Research Officer. Natalie is working on the Care Navigation RCT being set up at Nepean Hospital. Natalie’s clinical trials experience includes 5 years of running multi-centre oncology clinical trials for St George Hospital in Sydney and the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre at the University of Sydney. Prior to this she worked in laboratory-based research for 5 years, where she also completed a class I honours thesis. She also holds a bachelor’s degree in Biological Sciences.

• Justin McNab joined SCIPPS as Research Fellow. Justin is working on the evaluation of Mt Druitt HealthOne. Justin is an experienced qualitative researcher with a Masters degree in social anthropology. His research experience has involved working on government and non-government evaluation projects including health and community service evaluations using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Justin has recently submitted a PhD focusing on health promotion from a sociology of health perspective through the National Centre in HIV Social Research at the University of New South Wales.

• Dr Angela Beaton commenced as Menzies Centre Research Officer on 6 July. She contributes to the preparation and editing of reports, papers and presentations on health policy topics and provides high level research support to the Director, Foundation Fellow and staff of the Menzies Centre. Angela was formerly Executive Officer at the USyd Cancer Research Network and is a very experienced and capable health and policy research worker. Angela has held a conjoint academic appointment at the University of Sydney, contributing to the FRACP training program for Paediatric Medical Trainees and coordinating an ongoing education program at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, and other teaching within the School of Public Health and Sydney Medical School. Angela is currently enrolled in a Graduate Certificate in Health Policy at the University of Sydney.

• Dr Jennifer Hunter has commenced her PhD under the supervision of Stephen Leeder on the topic, ‘Developing a minimum dataset for use in an Australian integrative medicine clinic’.

• Dr Lesley Russell has agreement with USSC to extend her current research associate position to August 2010.

• Ruth Colagiuri has been elected Vice-President of the International Diabetes Federation for the 2009 – 2012 Triennium.

• Stephen Leeder has been awarded two Sidney Sax medals:
  1. Stephen Leeder was awarded the Public Health Association of Australia Sidney Sax Medal for 2009.
     “The PHAA bestows this competitive award on a person who has provided a notable contribution to the protection and promotion of public health, solving public health problems, advancing community awareness of public health measures and advancing the ideals and practice of equity in the provision of health care.”
  2. Stephen Leeder was awarded the 2009 Sidney Sax Medal by the Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association.
     “The Sidney Sax Medal is awarded to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution in the field of health services policy, organisation, delivery and research (excluding clinical research). The Sax Medal awards outstanding achievement in and contribution to the development and improvement of the Australian healthcare system. To be eligible for the award the individual nominee must still be active in the health services field.”
New Grants

- Stephen Leeder, Julie Schneider and others have been awarded a National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership for Better Health Grant. The project is entitled ‘Developing service policies for Australians with dual sensory impairment: An integrated, collaborative pilot project’. The burden from hearing and vision impairments, greatest for people with dual sensory impairment (DSI), will rise with population ageing. Targeted rehabilitation and support for DSI may improve health and quality of life. This project will pilot an integrated, collaborative service model for assessment and rehabilitation of DSI in older people. The knowledge gained will inform policy development and optimise use of resources to provide the best possible care for older Australians with DSI. NHMRC grant awarded: $318,651; Partner contributions: $197,211 cash and $121,440 in-kind. Project duration: 3 years.

- James Gillespie and Joel Negin have been awarded a new Biosecurity Grant. The project, ‘Securitisation and Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis: Global and Australian Perspectives’ aims to: analyse the different tuberculosis (TB) response strategies contemplated by Australia, the principal regional power and major aid donor; interrogate the use of the concept of ‘securitisation’ to explain and provide remedies for emerging crises around new and emerging diseases; and assess international debates around new forms of regulatory intervention within the framework of the International Health Regulations and policy responses to the TB epidemic. Grant awarded: $46,990 for 1 year.

- James Gillespie, Clive Aspin and Stephen Leeder have been awarded a National Seniors Australia grant. The project, ‘Improving Health Literacy in Seniors with Chronic Illness’, aims to gain an understanding of how seniors living with chronic illness navigate the health system and obtain access to information about available care and management options to assist them in managing their conditions. The study will approach the issue of patient care and quality of life from the patient’s perspective, giving a voice to individuals who often are disenfranchised in the development of care plans. Grant awarded: $49,707 for 1 year.

- Stephen Leeder has been awarded a 2010 University of Sydney International Program Development Fund (IPDF) seeding grant for 2010 for $14,000. The project is entitled ‘Breakthrough Collaborative Research Project to Reduce Mortality from Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)’. The project aims to reduce preventable cardiovascular disease (CVD) mortality and/or morbidity through efforts directed to improving primary and secondary prevention of CVD in countries participating in an international university-health system improvement research collaborative.

Grant Applications

- The Menzies Centre (Sydney) submitted an application for Round 3 of the NSW Health Capacity Building Infrastructure Grants (CBIG) Program. If successful, the program ($1.65M over 3.5 years) will employ additional research staff to strengthen research infrastructure and build capacity to translate research findings into policy and practice reform across the NSW health system. The provision of scholarships for NSW Health staff will create new professional development opportunities and, in turn, this will strengthen links between NSW Health and the Centre, thereby enhancing information exchange and working relationships. In concert with a series of Knowledge Exchange Workshops, the proposal incorporates an integrated set of strategies for the Menzies Centre to build upon its research base and translate findings into policy and practice reform across the NSW health system. The announcement of successful applicants is expected in early November 2009 with Round 3 funding commencing in January 2010.

- Robert Wells and Stephen Leeder have met with the CEO of the Ian Potter Foundation to discuss the Foundation’s funding schemes. The Menzies Centre will prepare an application on prevention and chronic disease for the Foundation’s grant round in early 2010.

- Stephen Leeder is listed as a CI on an NHMRC project grant application that will support a health complaint management system in Vietnam.

- Stephen Leeder is listed as an AI on an NHMRC project grant application that will investigate CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) and snoring.

- Lesley Russell has made an application with Joel Negin for a United States Studies Centre grant to look at “United States development assistance for health in the Pacific: sharing best practice to maximise impact.”
Current projects

Menzies Centre for Health Policy Nous Group Survey

The second health survey will be conducted in early 2010. James Gillespie (Menzies USydney), Laurann Yen and Ian McRae (Menzies ANU) have worked with the Nous Group to finalise a survey instrument which will concentrate on issues around the reform of primary and aged care.

The Childhood Asthma Prevention Study

The Childhood Asthma Prevention Study (CAPS) is the first and only Australian randomised controlled trial of the effectiveness of both house dust mite avoidance and modification of dietary intake of fatty acids, both implemented from birth, for the prevention of asthma and other allergic disease during childhood. The study started in 1997 and recruitment of 616 subjects was completed in January, 2000. Children in the CAPS cohort at 8 years are currently being followed up at 13 to 15 years to examine the longer-term effectiveness of the interventions using skin prick tests, airway hyperresponsiveness (AHR) spirometry and genetic studies.

An NHMRC project grant has also been awarded to the research group to investigate sex-related changes in asthma during the transition through puberty in the CAPS birth cohort.

The cohort has yielded important insights into early childhood dietary behaviour and collatral studies conducted by Professor David Celermajer using ultrasound has shown vessel changes early in life attributable to diet. A recent meeting discussed six new papers that are in production.

What is influential public health research?

Stephen Leeder and James Gillespie are Chief Investigators on an NHMRC Project grant that is looking at how population health research workers and policy makers communicate. The study addresses the question as to what the characteristics are of public health research that leads to policy change. The project commenced in early 2009.

Health Economics Capacity Building Grant

Stephen Leeder is a Chief Investigator on an NHMRC Capacity Building grant that will provide training and development for a team of health economists to research chronic diseases. The program, ‘Using health economics to strengthen ties between evidence, policy and practice in chronic disease’, will address issues such as: What is the value for money from investment in different treatments? How do such diseases affect the economic circumstances of families? How do we ensure that strategies to address illness work in practice and can be sustained? How do these issues get put on the policy agenda?

Ford Foundation projects in Indonesia

Peter Heywood has received funding from the Ford Foundation to conduct a number of projects that examine the health system in Indonesia.

- A study of the district health system in a sample of districts in Java

This project analysed the nature and current functioning of the health system at the district level in Java and made recommendations on how the performance of the system may be improved.

The results of this project are being disseminated in several ways. Informal discussions of the results were held with many of the districts involved, followed by formal workshops and seminars in which the district health personnel from each district were represented. The results have been published in three peer reviewed articles in open access journals, with links to these posted on the MCHP website.

- A study of the characteristics of health personnel and facilities in five districts in West Java, Indonesia

Additional information on the background characteristics of the health personnel and facilities was collected and analysed for this study of the province of West Java. There has been ongoing discussion of the results of this study with the new West Java Provincial Government which is using the results as input to a revised provincial health program.

- Design and preparation of a pilot project to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality through demand side interventions in West Java Province, Indonesia

The main body of the Maternity Study is currently underway. A consultant is conducting an analysis of accreditation processes and standards for health facilities providing delivery services in West Java. The consultant is also conducting an analysis of demographic data in an effort to identify factors influencing mothers’ choices of place of delivery in West Java.

Health policy development in the Pacific

Joel Negin is conducting a consultancy project for the Australian International Health Institute, ‘Pacific Focus: Understanding Health Policy Development and Capacity in the Pacific’. The project has a literature review component and interviews have also been conducted with senior health policy personnel in the Pacific region.
Blue Mountains Eye and Hearing Study

Julie Schneider and Bamini Gopinath, postdoctoral researchers employed on an NHMRC Capacity Building Grant (health policy) and the Blue Mountains Eye Study, to support the study, are preparing papers for publication on vision and hearing impairment policy. Several papers have been accepted for publication and have been presented at conferences. The new NHMRC Partnership grant will continue to support this research program.

Initiative for Cardiovascular Health Research in the Developing Countries

A study conducted in China, India, Argentina and Zambia, estimating the costs of families of heart disease and stroke suffered by one member, is in the final write-up stage. This study has been coordinated from Delhi and Stephen Leeder has chaired the overseeing committee. It complements his work in 2003-4 examining the macroeconomic effects of CVD. Several key publications are currently being prepared and insights from this study may lead to a revision of policy for financing health care and social support for people with CVD in developing countries.

Miscellaneous

Lesley Russell is proceeding with a research project into how general practitioners manage patients in severe financial stress, with Angela Beaton and Tim Usherwood. A survey has been drafted and the study details are being finalized before applications for ethics amendments are prepared and submitted.

Research Students

Jennifer Hunter
Developing a minimum dataset for use in an Australian integrative medicine clinic

Jennifer is reviewing the quality of information routinely collected in a multidisciplinary primary care clinic that integrates natural therapies with mainstream medicine. The project will also short list and pilot test questionnaires for measuring the outcomes of patients who attend the clinic. A minimum dataset will be proposed that aims to measure a broad spectrum of domains including health care use, physical health outcomes, disease prevention, quality of life and positive definitions of wellbeing. From this project, the long-term aim is to develop a standardised online database that is able to monitor health service use and patient outcomes. The database will provide a practical tool to support urgently needed evaluations of multidisciplinary primary care and integrative medicine clinics in Australia. Jennifer’s project is supported by a National Institute of Clinical Medicine seed funding grant.

Anne Marie Thow
The impact of trade and fiscal policy on population nutrition in the Pacific Islands, and future policy implications

Anne Marie is looking historically at the relationship between trade and fiscal policy and population nutrition in the Pacific, and conducting policy analyses of fatty meat bans and soft drink taxes in Pacific Island countries. Her main interest is in the relationship and interaction between economic policy and public health nutrition.

Mr. Abdolvahab Baghbanian
Economic Decision Making in Complex Health Systems

Vahhab is conducting “a study of economic evaluation and resource allocation decision-making” to investigate the role of health economic evaluation information in the decision-making process in Australia’s health care system. It is envisaged that the results of this study can inform decision makers and health economists of the complexity of decision making in the health care system. He has submitted his PhD thesis for marking.

Surianti Sukeri
Heavy Heart: the untold tale of economic and psychosocial impact of CVD on patients and their families in Malaysia

Surianti is conducting a cross-sectional study on the economic and human impact of CVD on patients and their families in Malaysia. This study will seek to address the household healthcare spending in respect to CVD treatment and to determine the effects of the illness on treatment compliancy, employment, household income, expenditures, productivity, quality of life, education, functional limitation and access to health care. At the same time this study will also provide an insight into the human face of the disease, particularly its psychosocial and emotional impact concerning household perceptions, affective responses and adaptation towards the illness.

Adam Capon
The development of an Environmental health policy for nanotechnology in Australia

Adam is being sponsored by NSW Health to complete the first major Australian study of the policy implications of the development of nanotechnologies. He will compare current Australian approaches with overseas initiatives, such as the UK Health Protection Agency. He will consult closely with the different Australian jurisdictions to develop some concrete proposals and regulatory strategies.
Research continued

John Hall
The global politics of Tuberculosis control: an analysis and critique of the international Tuberculosis Directly Observed Short Course (TB DOTS) policy, its development, and transfer to low income countries taking Papua New Guinea as a case study

John Hall is a public health physician with long experience of working in the Pacific Islands and other low resource settings. His thesis looks at the context of emergent MDR TB in Papua New Guinea. He is examining the reasons for widespread failures in health surveillance and implementation of externally funded programs. His main interest is in the troubled relationships between global policies devised with little regard for local realities and the difficulty of implementing these interventions in setting with poor resources, inadequate trained workers and fragile governance structures.

Angela Littleford
NSW models of care that reflect innovation in ageing and chronic disease management and their links to policy

Angela is looking at the development of standardised models of care in chronic disease management in NSW, looking at the policy frameworks, national and state that have influenced these models and the problems of implementation. Her work study is in its first year and she is currently interviewing policymakers.

Nittita Prasopa-Plaizier
What is the impact of research funded through WHO on filtering and use of evidence by policy-makers?

Nittita (who is employed by WHO and based in Geneva) is looking at the interaction between the needs of health policymakers in developing countries and policy development and dissemination by the World Health Organization. She will work closely with several WHO divisions to complete evaluations of their policy exchange and transfer practices. She has just commenced and is currently working out the details of the case studies to gain ethics approval.

Andrey Zheluk
HIV advocacy in the former USSR.

Andrey is completing a study of the work of the Russian Harm Reduction Network amongst HIV positive injecting drug users in the former USSR. His study looks at externally funded public health interventions, the problems of integration into a hostile local context, and the means by which successes could be identified and means of overcoming local barriers to scaling up effective programs.

Visitors

• The Menzies Centre for Health Policy is hosting a WHO Fellow in 2009. Xie Dongfang who has been awarded a Fellowship to work on a supervised ‘Health Technology Assessment’ research project under the supervision of Stephen Leeder and Masoud Mirzaei. The research project will have a special focus on applicability within the context of the Chinese health system.

• Professor Larry Gostin, an outstanding US public health law and ethics academic, from Georgetown University, visited Sydney from mid June to mid October. Larry was hosted by the Menzies Centre for Health Policy, University of Sydney Law School and USSC. During his visit he contributed to teaching in the Graduate Program in Health Policy and presented to staff at a monthly Staff and Associates meeting.

• Professor John Wyn Owen visited from Wales in August and delivered the keynote address at the Emerging Health Policy Research Conference on 19 August.
Work in Progress

HealthOne Mt Druitt

HealthOne Mt Druitt is a system of managing people with chronic illness that integrates both primary and community health services.

A draft of the HealthOne Mt Druitt Evaluation plan has been developed and circulated to SCIPPS team members and the HealthOne Mount Druitt Steering Committee. Suggestions and comments have been incorporated into the draft which will be presented at the November HealthOne Mount Druitt Steering Committee meeting for further comment.

The national ethics application will be circulated to the SCIPPS Team shortly. It is anticipated that this form will be submitted in the November round so that the evaluation research can commence in January 2010.

Care Navigation

The aim of the RCT is to determine if there is any difference between standard care and Care Navigation (a new model for the management for individuals with chronic illness) for individuals with chronic illness who present to Nepean emergency department.

We are still awaiting approval for the ethics amendment submitted last month. And SCIPPS is waiting for Nepean Hospital to hire key Care Navigation staff; once this is done Care Navigation will commence.

Protocols and business plans for the conduct of the study are being developed in collaboration with clinicians and managers at Nepean Hospital.

Natalie Pant, Research Officer in SCIPPS who works principally on this project, has started work on the data management processes such as database, data collection forms and randomisation process and will be working with Patrick Kelly, a biostatistician in the School of Public Health, to ensure that these are appropriate.

Members of SCIPPS have met with staff at Nepean to plan the roll out of the RCT. We have recently been advised that roll out is now expected to happen as late as February, ready for next year’s winter bed plan. The RCT will still be implemented alongside this rollout.

Natalie Plant is meeting regularly with staff to agree on key components of the RCT.

A contract between USyd and SWAHS is being prepared and is expected to be finalised shortly.

Recruitment of additional Aboriginal patients and carers to SCIPPS

The recruitment of additional Aboriginal participants to SCIPPS is underway in Sydney West and ACT; the intention is to double the number of Aboriginal participants recruited to the study to ensure data saturation. A coding frame has been developed to ensure that the transcripts are coded in a manner that captures the experience of living with chronic illness as an Aboriginal person. SCIPPS hopes to have this study completed by March 2010.

Blue Mountains GP Network Evaluation

SCIPPS Sydney has agreed to partner with the Blue Mountains GP Network to conduct the evaluation of a training package that is being proposed as part of the Chronic Disease Self Management/Lifestyle and Risk Modification Program, to be funded by the Department of Health and Ageing.

Members of the SCIPPS Sydney team have met with staff of the Blue Mountains GP Network and consumers to discuss and plan the evaluation of a chronic illness self management program that is being delivered in the Blue Mountains. The evaluation will start in early 2010 and is expected to be completed by June 2010.

SESIAHS Aboriginal Chronic Care Program

Clive and Justin met with Margaret Broadbent, Aboriginal Health Coordinator to discuss and plan an evaluation of Aunty Jean’s Chronic Care Program that has been operating in the southern part of the AHS. A draft evaluation plan has been prepared and the team is now waiting for feedback from SESIAHS before proceeding to the next stage of planning.

Tenders to DOHA

Implementing the sentinel sites component of the Commonwealth Indigenous Chronic Disease Package’s monitoring and evaluation measure. Closing date 2pm on 17 November 2009.

A tender document has been prepared by Quality Management Services in response to this request. SCIPPS has been invited to participate in the tender. If successful, this work will take place in 2010.

Root cause analysis of hospitals admissions (ACT)

The Root Cause Analysis study has been completed as a preliminary study to assess the feasibility of using the root cause analysis method to determine what has led to a hospital admission. The project was carried out as a population health project by medical students with the supervision of the study team. Findings show that the method produces rich results, incorporating the recognition of medical exacerbation leading
to hospital admission, but also identifying other social and behavioural factors which may be more important in any intervention to prevent unnecessary admission. The report of the study was submitted for consideration for publication with the MJA in October 2009.

45 and up data-linkage study (ACT)

Development of a study using the 45 and Up data set to explore patterns of service utilisation by people with cardiac disease and/or diabetes, and the links between those patterns, particularly the use of the Medicare items relating to the management of chronic illness, and health outcomes. An initial bid for access to the data has been submitted so that the full costs of the project can be determined. At this stage, access to linked data incorporating medicare data is problematic, and the study team is working with the data holders to attempt to find a way of obtaining the data.

Impact of chronic illness on socio-economic well being of senior Australians (ACT)

One of the key findings of the SCIPPS study was the experience of economic hardship experienced by people with chronic illness. This experience was reported by people with chronic illness and their carers during interview as well as by health professionals who took part in focus groups. These findings are reported in a paper on Economic Hardship, currently in publication.

Further work has been done, led by Steve Jan and Bev Essue exploring the issue with a group of people with COPD who attend a clinic in the Western suburbs of Sydney.

The current study is designed to examine the ways in which the health of senior Australians influences their economic situation and the way they live their lives. The research will allow the team to develop an in-depth understanding of the financial and day to day living experiences of households where health problems occur and contrast this with those households with less or no health problems. Findings will be used to inform government and the wider community about these issues and to develop policy to assist senior Australians.

The study is being carried out with the assistance and in partnership with National Seniors Australia. A survey, approved by ANU Human research Ethics Committee has been sent to a stratified sample of 10,000 NSA members across all of Australia. The response rate has been over 40%. Data are currently being entered and will be analysed using SPSS. Early analysis suggests that our intention, to describe differences between people with and without chronic illness, and with different numbers and types of chronic illness will be able to be realized.

At the same time, a review of literature is being carried out to identify research in the Australian and international contexts about the impact of chronic illness on social and economic wellbeing which will provide the foundation for our specific analysis, leading to a better understanding of the issues relating to older people and chronic illness.

Other

- Translation of research findings into policy relevant interventions. The purpose of the interventions is to develop and test policy and systems interventions that would be able to add to the evidence available to policy makers in the design of chronic illness models. SCIPPS is making a presentation to DoHA in November as part of the process of engaging policy makers.

- Chronic Care Program evaluation: Dr Yun-Hee Jeon and Ms Laurann Yen worked with Assoc Prof Paul Dugdale on the evaluation of the program. The report of the evaluation is a working paper of the relevant health authority, and not for publication. The work on a linked data project has not been progressed because of the issues associated with obtaining such data in a timely way.

- Support for diabetes management in general practice, where SCIPPS will be involved in the evaluation of a pilot project in which specialist endocrinologist and nursing staff will work with general practices to test whether this is a potential option for testing on a wider scale. The lead clinician with the interest in this study is working on identifying interested practices. A preliminary study of referral patterns and reasons for referral is underway to determine the parameters of and to support the next phase of the project. We do not expect to continue with this project until early 2010.

- A survey study of GPs to explore the ‘no symptoms- no disease’ hypothesis. Practice experience suggests that for many patients the lack of frank symptoms of the disease leads to a belief that the disease has ‘gone away’ and may lead to less than optimal management. This project is underway and participants are being recruited to the study. Data collection has been completed, and analysis is underway.

- The first stage design for three policy studies is being worked up by Robert Wells, Jim Gillespie, Paul Dugdale and Laurann Yen. The first of these, an analysis of the strategies used by the COAG reform processes and their effect on the culture and behaviour of health services provision will be presented at the Health Services Research and Policy Conference in November in Brisbane.
What’s New

The Diabetes Unit is taking the current academic climate which encourages cross disciplinary research very seriously and recently appointed Dr Jenny Jobling from the faculty of Agriculture as part time Senior Research Fellow (Sustainability) to source, manage and co-conduct research projects on health and sustainability in relation to food and the food industry.

The Diabetes Unit welcomes two volunteers who joined in September 2009. They are:

- Madeleine Savit, an architect, who has offered her services as a part time volunteer to undertake a literature review and assist in the preparation of an grant application on the built environment and physical activity.
- Dr Hali Halphen who is assisting with policy analysis and a review on workplace health.

At the 20th World Diabetes Congress held in Montreal in October, Ruth Colagiuri was elected as a Vice-President of the International Diabetes Federation for the 2009 – 2012 Triennium.

Renee Slade commenced maternity leave in mid October.

Ruth Colagiuri and Stephen Leeder have been negotiating with the Head of the School of Public Health and the Medicine Dean regarding a name change for The Diabetes Unit. The title “Health and Sustainability Unit” has been agreed to better reflect The Diabetes Unit’s increasing focus and role in sustainability and the primary prevention of chronic diseases. The new title will take effect shortly.

Projects

The Diabetes Unit has received a research donation from Woolworths Ltd to explore drivers for low SES supermarket shoppers’ comparatively higher purchase of non-core foods.

Type 1 Diabetes NHMRC Guidelines

The Diabetes Unit has been subcontracted by the Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) to assist with the development of an NHMRC guideline on Type 1 Diabetes in children and adolescents and the extension of these guidelines into adulthood. Maria Gomez is working with ADS research staff on systematic reviews to support the guideline recommendations.
University of Sydney Institute for Sustainable Solutions (USISS)

USISS was launched in mid 2008 and has four themes or workstreams - Health, Environment, Energy and Development. The Director of the Diabetes Unit, Ruth Colagiuri was appointed, and funded on a half time basis, by the Faculty of Medicine to lead the Health Theme. The activities of the Health Theme revolve around:

Teaching

A new Masters in Sustainability course has been approved by the Academic Board and Senate to commence in 2010 with a Graduate Certificate in Sustainability. Ruth Colagiuri and colleagues are currently developing the health module.

Research

- Maria Gomez, Seham Girgis, Madeleine Savit and Ruth Colagiuri have recently commenced a systematic review of the relative effectiveness of different urban planning/design strategies on increasing physical activity and improving related health outcomes.
- Negotiations are progressing with the University of Sydney's Human Resource Department and Campus Infrastructure Services to fund a Healthy University Pilot Project to assess the current status of the University as a health promoting environment for staff and students and to make recommendations for improvements.
- Preparatory planning is underway to commence two new research projects in 2010:
  1. Affordable housing and related health and social outcomes - in collaboration with colleagues from the Faculty of Architecture and Affordable Housing Australia
  2. Healthy urbanisation for active transport and health and cost outcomes – in collaboration with the City of Sydney, the Faculty Of Architecture and the (USyd) Institute of Transport

Relationship Building

In its USISS role, over the past few months The Diabetes Unit has concentrated heavily on building relationships with academic staff of relevant Faculties and with external government and non-government organisations including those listed above and:
- Woolworths Ltd
- The NSW Health Department
- The University of Sydney Institute for Social Sciences
- Greenpeace
- Henry Davis York
- Pepsico (global)
- Australian Food and Grocery Council

Events

Past Events

- 20 September 2009: “Breaking Silos, Integrated approaches to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The USISS Health Theme co-sponsored this one day seminar and Ruth Colagiuri participated as a delegate and invited chairperson.
- 13 October 2009: Dr Derek Yach, Pepsico's Head of Global Health gave a public lecture in the USISS Focus on the Future series entitled “Health and Sustainability – Performance with Purpose”.

In planning:

- A one-day workshop on “Where Does Health Fit in the Global Green New Deal” is being planned for February 2010.
- Planning is in progress for a National Summit Meeting entitled “Prescriptions for a Healthy Planet: Acting on Health and Sustainability” which is being co-convened by Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) the USISS Health Theme and the Oxford health Alliance Asia pacific Centre and scheduled for 1-2 March 2010.
Oxford Health Alliance (OxHA)

Sydney Resolution

- The National Heart Foundation has provided a small donation in support of activities to advance the Sydney Resolution.
- Mr Bob Kotic, the University of Sydney’s Chief Operating Officer, has undertaken to adopt and implement the Sydney Resolution throughout the University.
- Negotiations regarding formal adoption of the Sydney Resolution by health and non-health organisations are progressing with Pepsico’s head office in Switzerland, and Henry Davis York (legal firm with a large environmental health section) in Sydney.

Students

- Derrick Wong, a 3rd year medical student, is undertaking his Medicine Honours thesis on the Sydney Resolution, identifying and analysing existing an emerging models for applying the law to change average health behaviours. Derrick graduated and worked in Canada as a lawyer prior to entering the USyd graduate medical program.
- A summer student has been recruited to undertake a literature review on what is known about supermarket food purchasing among people of low socioeconomic status.

Oxford Dialogues

Key opinion leaders from both the public health and private sectors have been recruited to participate in an Oxford Dialogue Meeting on drivers of poor nutrition in people of low socio-economic status which will be held on November 10.
Lesley Russell was invited to be part of policy group on Denticare Australia proposal. October 2009.

Lesley Russell received an invitation from ANCAD to do a report on federal and state programs along the lines of those done previously on mental health. Discussions about the scope of the report are continuing.

Lesley Russell is preparing a report on tackling inequalities in health care in the context of health care reform (US). The first draft of this report for the Centre on American Progress has been completed.

Lesley Russell has almost completed a package of materials for Members of Congress to use to explain health care reform and address myths being circulated. Package includes:

- State-by-state analysis of provisions in House bill;
- Talking points on benefits for small business, rural areas, Medicare beneficiaries;
- Refutation of the 121 myths currently being circulated.

Lesley Russell is following closely the progress of President Barack Obama’s health care reform commitments, and is reporting regularly on what is happening through her “Letters from Washington”. Letters can be viewed at http://www.menzieshealthpolicy.edu.au/hpa_usa_australia_health.php

With Professor Ian Hickie (BMRI) and Sebastian Rosenberg (BMRI and MHCA), Lesley Russell has made a submission to the Department of Veterans Affairs to have access to their linked MBS and PBS data to assess the utility of primary mental health care services as applied to the veteran population.

Stephen Leeder and James Gillespie met with members of the Queensland Social Development Committee Inquiry into Chronic Disease in QLD, 9 September.

Angela Beaton and Lesley Russell have produced an analysis of the 2009-10 Commonwealth, State and Territory Health Budgets and a Scorecard on Government Health Commitments.
Education

One of the principal objectives of the Centre includes training researchers 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. The Menzies Centre has provided a focus for expanding postgraduate programs in health policy at the University of Sydney and a new Master of Public Health program at the Australian National University.

University of Sydney

- The Master of Health Policy offered three units in second semester:
  - HPOL5003 Analysing Health Policy gives an intensive introduction to the language and methods of epidemiology for policymakers. It follows this with a workshop covering the main approaches used in public policy and evaluation of processes and outcomes.
  - HPOL5007 Global Health Policy draws large numbers of Masters of International Public Health and well as Master of Health Policy students. This unit explores the impact of globalization on health policy, and the way in which global health problems – HIV/AIDS and the prevalent chronic diseases, for example – shape policy. The educational goal of the unit is to equip students with skills to appraise critically global health policy proposals and to offer informed advice on how these policies may be made more effective.
  - HPOL5009 Health Policy Project was taught for the first time, offering masters students the chance to consolidate their studies in a ‘capstone’ research-based unit of study

- Baxter Healthcare has confirmed support for a $10,320 University of Sydney student scholarship in 2010. This scholarship will support 50% of the Master of Health Policy course fee.
Publications and Presentations

**Peer Reviewed**


**In Press**


**Submitted**


• Lewis M. Alcohol control policy: politicians, proprietors and public health. Medical Journal of Australia.

• Laurann Yen, James Gillespie, Yun-Hee Jeon, Jo-anne Brie, Stephen Jan, Marjan Kijakovic, Elin Lehnborn, Carmen Pearce-Brown, Tim Usherwood, Health professionals, patients and chronic illness policy: a qualitative study. Submitted to Health Expectations; currently in review

• Yun-Hee Jeon, Stefan Kraus 1, Tanisha Jowsey 1 and Nicholas J. Glasgow The experience of living with chronic heart failure: a narrative review of qualitative studies, Submitted to BMC Research

• M Mirzaei, B Essue, Y-H Jeon, C Aspin, P Dugdale, T Usherwood, SR Leeder. Managing chronic illness: The experiences of patients and carers with health services and the health system. ANZ Journal of Public Health


• Leeder S, Beaton A. Meddling with Medicare will not cure system’s ills, Australian Doctor, 6 October 2009.

• Yen L, Wells R. Too Little Too Late - Care for Older Australians, EoL, Palliative Care Australia, Spring 2009.

• Leeder S. “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...” (WB Yeats), Australian Medicine, 7 September 2009.

• Leeder S. Primary Care for all, Australian Doctor, 21 August 2009.

• Girgis S, Colagiuri R. Physical activity and diet prevent Type 2 Diabetes, intouch, 7 August 2009.

• Aspin C, Leeder S. The resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the face of increasing rates of chronic illness: SCIPPS’ contribution to closing the gap, intouch, 6 July 2009.

Media - Print

• Russell L. Prevention better than hollow words, The Australian, 31 October 2009.

• Leeder S. There’s an optimum size for health areas, The Newcastle Herald, 28 October 2009.

• Russell L. Health reform on US agenda, The Canberra Times, 26 October 2009

• Leeder S. Act locally to combat obesity: preventative health, The Australian, 10 October 2009.

• Russell L. Understanding the link between head and heart, The Canberra Times, 1 October 2009.

• Russell L. Healthy reform likely despite Republican ill will, The Canberra Times, 14 September 2009.

• Russell L. Costly US scheme should be lesson: Medicare, The Australian, 12 September 2009.


• Russell L. Putting health in recovery position, The Canberra Times, 14 August 2009.


• Russell L. Stop blame game and aim for better patient results Health-care reforms need to focus on services and outcomes, The Canberra Times, 27 July 2009.

Industry

• Leeder S. Securing global health demands new energy for chronic disease, Australian Medicine, 19 October 2009


Media – Interviews and Quotes

• Ecowarriors storm Australia dictionary amid climate fears, *Reuters News*, 27 October 2009. **Professor Stephen Leeder** is quoted in this article.

• Cannane S. Govt needs crackdown on doctors union: Academic, *Lateline*, 23 October 2009. **Lesley Russell** is interviewed in this program.

• Hall L. Overgrown with weeds, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 2009. **Professor Stephen Leeder** is quoted in this article.

• Scott S. Swine flu vaccine roll-out cops criticism, *Lateline*, 28 September 2009. **Professor Stephen Leeder** joins the discussion.

• Aedy R. What is Medicare Select?, *LifeMatters, ABC Radio National*, 28 September 2009. **Professor Stephen Leeder** joins the discussion.

• Alarm bells for those with illnesses, *The West Australian*, 23 September 2009. **Tanisha Jowsey** is quoted in this article.

• Patients with multiple illnesses need better health care: Study, *ANU News*, 23 September 2009. **Tanisha Jowsey** is quoted in this article.

• Improving seniors’ health literacy, *Connect*, Issue 142, 11 September 2009. **Dr Jim Gillespie** and the successful grant application to The National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre (NSPAC) are mentioned in this article.

• Hall E. Fixing an ailing health system, *The World Today, ABC News*, 10 September 2009. **Dr Lesley Russell** is interviewed in this story.

• Dragon N. Mental Health: a long way to go, *Australian Nursing Journal*, 17:2, August 09. **Dr Lesley Russell** is quoted in this article.

• Ryan S. Rudd fails to plug medico gap, *The Australian*, 26 August 2009. **Mr Robert Wells** is quoted in this article.

• Dragon N. Mental Health: A long way to go, *Australian Nursing Journal*, August 09 Volume 17 Number 2. **Lesley Russell** is quoted in this article.

• Lunn S. Transparent rationing system will be needed, says expert, *The Australian*, 28 July 2009. **Mr Robert Wells** is quoted in this article.


• Griffiths E. Rudd fends off criticism health is on a waiting list, PM: *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts*, 27 July 2009. **Mr Robert Wells** is interviewed in this program.

• Ryan S. States lack unity on Rudd health agenda, *The Australian*, 13 July 2009. **Mr Robert Wells** is quoted in this article.

• Viellaris R. Hospital bypass, *The Courier Mail*, 4 July 2009. **Professor Stephen Leeder** is quoted in this article.

Online


• Leeder S. The health reform we DON’T need, *Croakey*, 9 October 2009. This article was first published in *Australian Doctor* magazine.


• Russell L. Should health care join up with retail therapy?, *Croakey*, 17 September 2009.


Publications and Presentations continued

- Russell L. FDA expands compassionate access, *Pharma in Focus*, 31 August 2009.


- Russell L. Medical device companies fight back against damning results for spinal procedure, *Croakey*, 7 August 2009.


- Russell L. Has health reform been put on hold? *Croakey*, 28 July 2009

- Russell L. What the US is doing about conflicts of interest in health and medicine. *Croakey*, 21 July 2009

- Russell L. Originators 1, Generics 0 in US reform battle. *Pharma in Focus*, 20-26 July 2009


**NHMRC Guidelines**


**Presentations/Conferences**


- Leeder S. Writing for the Media, *Victor Coppleson Continuing Medical Education Seminar Series*, 13 October 2009, University of Sydney.

**Reports and Discussion Papers**


Publications and Presentations continued

• Leeder S. Facilitator, Panel debate: Three achievable steps to become the best – do we have consensus?, AHHA – AIHPS 2009 Congress: Shaping Up in Health: How does Australia become the world’s best?, 9 October 2009, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart.


• Milton Lewis: Biography and Collective Biography in the History of Public Health in Australia, University of Sydney Medical Graduates’ Association History of Medicine Conference, University of Sydney, 11-12th September 2009.

• Leeder S. Panel discussion on Health Reform in Australia, The 2009 AMSA National Leadership Development Seminar, Canberra, 7 September 2009.

• Leeder S. What capabilities are required to engage in the broader multidisciplinary health care policy world and how we develop those skills in nurses and midwives?, WUN Nursing International Health Policy and Research Roundtable, 2 September 2009, Sydney

• Leeder S. Panellist, Workshop 1:Millennium Development Goals and Development, Global Health Day at the University of Sydney, 28 August 2009

• Tanisha Jowsey: Health system management of chronic disease – making sense of suggestions for improvement, Menzies Centre’s Emerging Health Policy Research Conference, University of Sydney, 19 August 2009.

• Renee Slade: A policy needle in the chronic disease haystack: Pacific Islands, Menzies Centre’s Emerging Health Policy Research Conference, University of Sydney, 19 August 2009.

• Leeder S, Resilience and serious and continuing illness, Michael Ward Symposium on ‘Resilience and Health’, Menzies Centre for Health Policy, Sydney, 12 August 2009.

• Leeder S, Challenges Facing Australia in Managing Chronic Disease ACRA Annual Conference 2009 - ‘Synergy in Cardiovascular Health – Exercise and more’, Sydney, 10 August 2009.

Abstracts Accepted


• Natalie Plant: RCT in health service research: risk identification and contingency planning, to be presented at the 6th Health Services and Policy Research Conference, Brisbane, 25-27 November

Abstracts Submitted

**Events**

*In 2009 the Menzies Centre for Health Policy will deliver regular seminars that address contemporary health policy issues. The Menzies Centre will partner with Minter Ellison to continue the Health Conundrums series and host the inaugural S.T. Lee Lecture. The Menzies Oration and Emerging Health Policy Researchers Conference are regular features of the events program and attract widespread interest. Recent events include:*  

**MCHP Oration: How Preventable is Chronic Disease?, 13 October 2009, Australian National University**

The 2009 MCHP Oration was presented by Dr Derek Yach, Senior Vice President, Global Health Policy at Pepsi Co.

**Policy for enhanced prevention in US and Australia: how much bang for the buck?, 7 October 2009, University of Sydney**

**Speakers:**

- Dr Lesley Russell, Menzies Foundation Fellow and Research Associate, United States Studies Centre, lead the discussion with an account of where prevention sits in the US proposals for reform, especially the three House Committee proposals. How does it compare with the commitment in Australia?
- Dr Garry Egger, Director, Centre for Health Promotion and Research, then looked at health reform in Australia. Do the various reform platforms hit the mark or are they just fiddling around the edges? Is there a link between obesity, climate change and economic growth?
- Professor Glenn Salkeld, Head of the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney then discussed whether prevention is a good investment, and if so, how it should be evaluated.
- Professor Stephen Leeder, Director, Menzies Centre for Health Policy, moderated the discussion.

**Emerging Health Policy Research Conference, 19 August 2009, University of Sydney**

The Menzies Centre for Health Policy held its 4th annual Emerging Health Policy Research Conference. The conference showcased the work in progress of current doctoral and early career research workers.

**Keynote Speakers:**

- John Wyn Owen, Chair, Board of Governors, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff; former Secretary of the Nuffield Trust; and former Director-General of NSW Health
- Dr Christine Bennett, National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission
- Ms Mary Ann O’Loughlin, Executive Councillor and Head of the Secretariat of the COAG Reform Council, and member of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission

**Michael Ward Symposium on "Resilience and Health", 12 August 2009, University of Sydney**

The Menzies Centre for Health Policy and Australia 21 held a symposium to honour Michael Ward, a Founding Director of Australia 21 and a Board Member and Associate of the Menzies Centre for Health Policy. Michael’s personal resilience in the face of enormous health adversity has been an inspiration to his many friends and colleagues.

**Speakers:**

- Dr Brian Walker, Chair of the (International) Resilience Alliance, and Director, Australia 21
- Teresa Burgess, Manager, Australia 21 Project on Resilience in Early Childcare Systems
- Emeritus Professor Bob Douglas AO, Board Chair, Australia 21 and Leader of A21 Project on Resilience of Health and Education Systems
- Professor Stephen Leeder AO, Director, Menzies Centre for Health Policy
- Michael Ward

**Global Health Governance - A Search for Meaning, 16 July 2009, The University of Sydney.**

The University of Sydney, by way of a gift, established the S.T. Lee Lecture Fund in 2008 to invite a distinguished scholar and/or practitioner on the subject of contemporary health policy to deliver an annual lecture. The S.T. Lee Lecture is named for Seng Tee Lee, a business executive and noted philanthropist. Dr Lee is director of the Lee group of companies in Singapore and of the Lee Foundation.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Tikki Pang, Director, Research Policy & Cooperation (RPC/AER), World Health Organization. Dr Pang’s topic was Global Health Governance - A Search for Meaning.
- Roger Magnusson, Professor of Health, Law and Governance, Sydney Law School, responded to Dr Pang’s presentation.
- Robert Cumming, Professor of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, University of Sydney, chaired the discussion.
Appendix 1 – Menzies Centre for Health Policy Staff

**Directors**
- Professor Stephen Leeder, The University of Sydney
- Mr Robert Wells, The Australian National University

**Menzies Foundation Fellow:** Dr Lesley Russell

**University of Sydney**
- Deputy Director: Dr James Gillespie
- Manager: Amanda Dominello
- Administrative and Research Officer: Yvonne Inall
- Events and Communication Officer: Diana Freeman
- Research Officer: Dr Angela Beaton
- Research Fellow: Joel Negin

**Research Students:**
- PhD Student: Anne Marie Thow
- PhD Student: Surianti Sukeri
- PhD Student: Jennifer Hunter
- Honours Student: Jackie Tran

**Visitors:**
- WHO Fellowship: Xie Dongfang

**The Diabetes Unit:**
- Director: Associate Professor Ruth Colagiuri
- Executive Assistant and Program Manager Jenny Tapp
- Senior Research Fellow (Sustainability): Dr Jenny Jobling
- Research Fellow and Evidence Manager: Dr Seham Girgis
- Research and Project Officer: Maria Gomez
- Project and Research Officer: Renee Slade

**Serious and Continuing Illness Policy and Practice Study:**
- Research Director, SCIPPS: Dr Clive Aspin
- Research Fellow, SCIPPS: Justin McNab
- Research Officer, SCIPPS: Natalie Plant
- Program Support Officer, SCIPPS: Kate Corcoran

**Blue Mountains Eye and Hearing Study:**
- Postdoctoral Researcher: Julie Schneider
Directors’ Report
July - October 2009

The Menzies Centre for Health Policy is a collaborative centre between The Australian National University and the University of Sydney. It aims to provide the Australian people with a better understanding of their health system and what it provides for them. The Centre encourages informed debate about how Australians can influence health policy to ensure that it is consistent with their values and priorities and is able to deliver safe, high quality health care that is sustainable in the long term.

The Menzies Centre:
• produces and publishes high-quality analyses of current health policy issues;
• delivers public seminars and education programs on a wide variety of health policy topics;
• undertakes comprehensive research projects on health policy issues.

For more information
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