Student research opportunities

Training the future leaders of mental health and substance use research
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What is the CREMS?

Established in 2012, the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS) brings together the largest concentration of nationally and internationally recognised researchers to increase the knowledge base regarding the effective prevention and treatment of comorbid mental health and substance use disorders. The Chief Investigators of the CREMS span seven national and international universities and include the Director, Prof Maree Teesson (UNSW Australia), Prof Amanda Baker (Newcastle University), A/Prof Katherine Mills (UNSW), A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin (Newcastle University), Prof Paul Haber (Sydney University), A/Prof Andrew Baillie (Macquarie University), Prof Helen Christensen (Black Dog, UNSW), Prof Max Birchwood (University of Birmingham, UK), Prof Bonnie Spring (Northwestern University, US), Prof Kathleen Brady, (Medical University of South Carolina, US). The primary host institution for the CREMS is UNSW, within the renowned National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC, Faculty of Medicine). Opportunities for student research are available across these world-class research institutions, and potential students are encouraged to visit the links above to find out more.

![Pictured at the launch of CREMS in 2013 (L to R): Prof Paul Haber, Prof Helen Christensen, Prof Amanda Baker, The Hon Mark Butler (former Australian Minister for Mental Health and Ageing), Prof Maree Teesson, The Hon Tanya Plibersek (former Australian Minister for Health) A/Prof Katherine Mills, A/Prof Andrew Baillie, Prof Les Field and A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin.]

The aim of the CREMS is to generate new research to increase the knowledge base regarding the effective prevention and treatment to comorbid mental health and substance use disorders. These aims are achieved via three main research streams focusing on the prevention, treatment, and epidemiology, of comorbid mental health and substance use disorders.

Furthermore, in addition to making the finding of our research available in the scientific literature, an integral component of the CREMS is the translation of these research findings into educational curricula, training programs and clinical resources, as well as resources for the general public.
Why study at the CREMS?

Objectives and benefits

Research students within the CREMS have access to world-class specialised training in the prevention, treatment, and epidemiology of mental health and substance use disorders. These opportunities provide students with the foundations upon which to build their own successful programs of research. Working alongside peers and internationally recognised research leaders in seven different research institutions around the world, students receive training in a variety of methodologies used to undertake comorbidity research. In addition, students have the opportunity to enhance their leadership, management, and research skills in a supportive and collaborative group.

The benefits of pursuing research studies within the CREMS include:

- Access to world-class research supervision and training opportunities;
- Development of a strong professional profile and career trajectory;
- Increased confidence and skills as researchers;
- Ongoing professional and personal development support within a collaborative and friendly workplace;
- Opportunities to attend and present at national and international conferences;
- Facilitation of collaborations with senior academics, peers and service providers in the community;
- Access to ongoing monthly meetings with peers to share ideas and develop skills appropriate to PhD stage.
Feedback from Current PhD Students

Erin Kelly

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as a PhD student within CREMS. I love the fact that students work within the research centre among the academics and research assistants. I had previously feared that doing a PhD could be lonely and isolating, but I have always felt hugely supported and like part of a team. There is a great balance between learning from the experience and wisdom of your supervisors and other senior staff, and being allowed to develop your own ideas and work independently. There is such a vibrant and positive energy at CREMS that I always look forward to coming to “work”. I feel privileged to be part of such a fantastic research centre, and to have made such rewarding connections along the way.

Siobhan Lawler

When I started at CREMS as I research assistant in 2015, I was blown away by the opportunity and position I found myself in, and the calibre of my colleagues. CREMS has a culture of respect and support unlike anything I have experienced before. Whether working as an RA or in my candidature, I have been given so many valuable opportunities for training, development and collaboration. I am incredibly grateful to have a supervision team that provides such a wealth of experience, perspectives, resources and skills. The academics and supervisors at CREMS demonstrate great leadership through their consistent guidance, support and mentoring. I could not imagine a better foundation to embark on this challenging and rewarding adventure.
Research student opportunities with the CREMS

A supervisor is an academic staff member of a university who will provide guidance throughout your research degree. It is common to have more than one supervisor, with each supervisor contributing different content or methodological expertise (see section on Co-Supervision).

Staff members at the CREMS are available to contribute expertise across a broad range of topics relating to mental health and substance use, spanning the epidemiology (understanding patterns and prevalence), prevention and treatment of these conditions. See pages 13-39 to browse individual Supervisor Profiles. The CREMS staff are available to provide supervision and/or co-supervision for research programs including:

- PhD
- Masters of Research
- Masters of Forensic Psychology
- Masters of Clinical Psychology
- Masters of Public Health
- Honours (e.g. Dept Psychology, Criminology)
- Independent Learning Project (ILP; UNSW medical students)

For PhD students, thesis submission may be in the form of a traditional thesis, or a Thesis by Publication, which encourages students to publish research papers throughout their candidacy. For more information about thesis format, see Thesis Submission.
Getting Started and Developing your Research Ideas

Developing your Research Area

In Australia, PhD awards are based on a written thesis reporting the results of a three-to-four-year research program. Similarly, ILP, Honours and Masters programs involve a thesis and research component.

Students are often drawn to Masters or PhD study because they have a passion for developing knowledge, thinking critically, and the process of research. For some, there may also be a particular topic or issue that motivates or interests them. When starting to develop your ideas about a potential research topic, it is useful to consult with an academic with expertise in your area of interest to help refine your ideas, and consider whether the topic is likely to be feasible as a Higher Degree Research project. They can also offer advice about methodological approaches or statistical procedures you might consider. It is common to feel nervous about choosing a topic area, worry about choosing the “right” topic, or feel uncertain about whether the topic will continue to motivate you in 3-4 years’ time. The good news is that your research questions are not written in stone, and your project will develop and evolve over time. For more on getting started, have a look at this thoughtful blog post: Choosing & Developing Your PhD Research Project.

Talking with Potential Supervisors

An important part of the process of beginning a PhD is finding a supervisor who is interested in your research questions and has the skills and expertise necessary to support your candidacy. One way to find out whether an academic has research interests and experience that fit well with your interests is to browse their biography, research and conference publications. It is a good idea to arrange an initial meeting with potential supervisors to get a sense of whether they are likely to be a good match in terms of research interests, expertise, personality and style of working. For some advice on things to consider when
selecting a supervisor, have a look at this thoughtful blog post: How to Choose Your Supervisor.

In pages 13-40 we have provided biographies, research interests and expertise of the academics available for research supervision at CREMS. We would encourage you to contact us individually if you would like additional information about getting started with a research degree. Below are some suggested points of discussion with a potential supervisor:

- Tell them about yourself, what motivates you to pursue research study, and what experience you have had in the past;
- If you have a research topic in mind (you might not, and that’s ok too), discuss your ideas and consider together whether the proposed project is likely to be feasible within the timescale and will make a meaningful contribution to the literature;
- Find out about the potential supervisors’ working style, research area, skills and expertise that might fit with your project and provide you the opportunity for training and development.

If we are not able to provide the support or expertise you need, we will happily point you in the right direction. Don’t be afraid to come and meet us for an informal chat, we’re friendly!

Scholarships and Support

At UNSW, domestic PhD or Masters by Research candidates at UNSW are not required to pay tuition fees. (Please note: Fees vary according to institution, so potential students should clarify the fee structure at their chosen institution). In addition, full-time research students are often eligible to apply for University and Commonwealth Government
scholarships. They provide a living allowance so you can commit to full-time study. Scholarships are granted on the basis of academic merit, which includes your undergraduate grade point average and extra research attainments. PhD scholarships are usually for three years and Masters scholarships for two years.

For more information about applying to do a research degree at UNSW, see https://research.unsw.edu.au/how-apply-enrol-research-degree. See also page 12 for other CREMS member institutions.

Annual scholarship stipends vary depending on type and source.

A scholarship may also include:

- a relocation allowance;
- a thesis allowance;
- a full tuition fee scholarship (international students) overseas student health cover (international students).

Examples of some available scholarships include:

- Australian Postgraduate Award (APA)
- Australian Rotary Health Post Graduate Scholarships
- National Health and Medical Research Council PhD Scholarships
- Australian Indigenous and Health Professional Scholarships Heart Foundation
- National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre PhD Scholarship
- UNSW Scientia PhD Scholarships

Additionally, researchers may be associated with an existing project that includes funding to support a research higher degree student. It is worth asking potential supervisors if any such opportunities exist. Similarly, many PhD students within CREMS have the opportunity to supplement their stipends by working on related projects as research assistants.

Maree Teesson presenting to CREMS members at the annual grant development workshop, Bronte Beach Surf Life Saving club.
Before applying for a higher research degree, or a scholarship, you will need to find a supervisor and develop a research proposal. Most universities require students to contact a researcher and secure their agreement to supervise prior to submitting a formal application for admission.

Co-supervision Models

Research students (whether PhD, Honours or Masters Students), are often required to have more than one supervisor. You may have joint primary supervisors, or one primary supervisor, with one or more additional secondary supervisors. When developing a research project to work with CREMS, you might consider one of the following examples of co-supervision models:

- Supervision by a member of CREMS in collaboration with a supervisor from another university or another department outside of the Faculty of Medicine (i.e., Department of Psychology, Department of Criminology);
- Supervision by a senior member of CREMS (i.e., Professor or Associate Professor level) in collaboration with a supervisor who is an Early Career Researcher.

There are advantages to co-supervision models, in that each supervisor can contribute different methodological or content expertise. There are also advantages to having both a senior and more junior academic involved in research supervision: while senior staff are more established and offer the benefits of broader professional networks and experience, Early Career Researchers have more recent experience of the process of completing a PhD, and may have greater availability to provide you with training and support.
Visit our for more details about CREMS and the CREMS Research Supervision Opportunities. Do not hesitate to contact individual CREMS members directly (see contact emails on individual staff pages); we’d be happy to meet with you to discuss possibilities for supervision or co-supervision.

For general questions about this booklet or student research opportunities, please contact Dr Christina Marel (c.marel@unsw.edu.au) or Dr Mieke Snijder (m.snijder@unsw.edu.au).
Potential supervisors and contact details

Prof Amanda Baker, University of Newcastle  
Dr Emma Barrett, University of New South Wales  
Dr Louise Birrell, University of New South Wales  
Dr Simon Byrne, University of Sydney  
Dr Katrina Champion, University of New South Wales  
Dr Cath Chapman, University of New South Wales  
Prof Helen Christensen, University of New South Wales  
Dr Mark Deady, Black Dog Institute  
Prof Paul Haber, University of Sydney  
Dr Sally Hunt, University of Newcastle  
A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin, University of Newcastle  
Dr Stephanie Kershaw, University of New South Wales  
Dr Mark Larsen, Black Dog Institute  
Dr Christina Marel, University of New South Wales  
Dr Louise Mewton, University of New South Wales  
A/Prof Katherine Mills, University of New South Wales  
Dr Kirsten Morley, University of Sydney  
A/Prof Nicola Newton, University of New South Wales  
Dr Natalie Peach, University of New South Wales  
Dr Katrina Prior, University of New South Wales  
Dr Joanne Ross, University of New South Wales  
A/Prof Tim Slade, University of New South Wales  
Dr Mieke Snijder, University of New South Wales  
Dr Lexine Stapinski, University of New South Wales  
Dr Matthew Sunderland, University of New South Wales  
Dr Wendy Swift, University of New South Wales  
Prof Maree Teesson, University of New South Wales  
Dr Louise Thornton, University of New South Wales  
Dr Alyna Turner, University of Newcastle  
Dr Michelle Torok, Black Dog Institute

See also detailed Supervisor Profiles and Potential Topics listed on pages 13-40.
Background
Professor Amanda Baker is a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Senior Research Fellow and Co-Director of the CREMS. Professor Baker leads a team trialling novel psychological interventions for co-existing mental health and tobacco, alcohol and other drug problems. Her vision is to lead a research program to transform the treatment of a co-occurring triad of disorders that are of utmost importance to health and that have major social and economic ramifications: comorbid mental, substance use and physical disorders. Amanda is renowned for her generous research supervision and mentoring of early career researchers, currently mentoring numerous early career researchers, all of whom hold or have held national competitive fellowships. Amanda mentors academic researchers across a number of Australian universities, and as her mentees experience success internationally, she also mentors postdoctoral clinicians and researchers based in the UK, USA and the Netherlands. Amanda has supervised a total of 40 students, including 13 current students.

Research interests
- Behavioural medicine;
- Treatment of substance use disorders;
- Comorbidity.

Methodological expertise
- Randomised Controlled Trials;
- Clinical Trials.

Potential Projects
- Healthy Lifestyles Interventions for People Living with Mental Illness or Addictions;
- Telephone delivered interventions;
- Motivational interviewing for health behaviour change.

To find out more, contact: amanda.baker@newcastle.edu.au
Dr Emma Barrett  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales

**Background**
Emma joined NDARC in 2007 and completed her PhD in 2012. Her research examined the relationships between substance use, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and aggression using population-level and clinical sample data. Emma is currently a Research Fellow and registered Forensic Psychologist and her postdoctoral research continues to focus on links between substance use, trauma and aggression. She has experience in the conduct and co-ordination of randomised controlled trials of innovative treatments for individuals with comorbid conditions in a range of settings.

**Research interests**
- Treatment of comorbid substance use and mental health disorders and associated harms (particularly in relation to comorbid substance use and PTSD);
- Clinical and forensic implications of comorbidity;
- Mental health treatment in forensic settings;
- Associations between substance use and crime;
- Substance use prevention and early intervention.

**Methodological expertise**
- Analysis of large-scale epidemiological data sets;
- Analysis of randomised controlled trial data;
- Longitudinal analysis (including GEE analysis);
- Data linkage.

To find out more, contact: e.barrett@unsw.edu.au
**Background**

Louise joined NDARC in 2013 and completed her PhD in 2017. Her PhD focused on the development of anxiety disorders, mood disorders and alcohol use during adolescence, using population-level and prevention trial data. During her time at NDARC Louise has worked on large school-based randomised controlled trials of online substance use and mental health prevention programs, and an online toolkit to disseminate evidence-based information about crystal methamphetamine to the Australian community. Her research focuses on the links between alcohol use and mental health in adolescents. She also has experience in systematic reviews of substance use related mobile apps and app development.

**Research interests**

- Anxiety disorders;
- Mood disorders;
- Adolescent alcohol use;
- Comorbidity;
- Adolescence;
- School-based prevention;
- e-Mental Health.

**Methodological expertise**

- Analysis of large-scale epidemiological data sets (e.g. discrete-time survival models);
- Analysis of randomised controlled trial data;
- Analysis of longitudinal data;
- Latent variable modelling (e.g., latent class analysis, parallel latent growth modelling, growth mixture models).

**Potential Topics**

I am available to supervise honours, ILP, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above. Some examples of potential topics are listed below:

- Examining trends and/or links between adolescent alcohol use and mental health;
- Identifying teacher-related factors associated with adolescent mental health and substance use;
- Reviewing the evidence on effective mental health and substance use programs targeted at teacher wellbeing;
- Systematic review of e-health apps.

**To find out more, contact:** l.birrell@unsw.edu.au
Background
Dr Simon Byrne completed a PhD/Masters of Clinical Psychology at Macquarie University in 2015. His PhD focussed on the augmentation of exposure therapy for children, using the cognitive enhancer, D-Cycloserine. Simon has also conducted research in the effects of the antipsychotic risperidone for treatment of PTSD and behavioural problems in children. He recently returned from a postdoctoral position at Yale Child Study Centre. He is currently working in at the Discipline of Addiction Medicine at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, where he is conducting research into psychosocial treatments for addiction.

Research interests
- Treatment of anxiety disorders;
- Novel use of psychotropic medication to mental health problems;
- Exposure therapy for anxiety disorders;
- Treatments for children and adolescents.

Methodological expertise
- Experimental study of treatment mechanisms;
- Experience writing review papers;
- Conducted research examining the effects of off-label psychotropic medications.

To find out more, contact: simonbyrne51@hotmail.com
Background
Dr Katrina Champion joined NDARC in 2011 and completed a PhD in Public Health and Community Medicine in 2016. As part of her thesis she developed the *Climate Schools: Ecstasy & Emerging Drugs module*, the first online school-based prevention program designed to prevent ecstasy and new psychoactive substance use. Katrina evaluated this program through a cluster randomised controlled trial in 11 secondary schools. She is currently an Early Career Fellow at NDARC, UNSW and Northwestern University, USA. Her research interests include the development and evaluation of innovative resources to improve the health and wellbeing of young Australians, multiple health behaviour change and school-based interventions.

Research interests
- Use of the internet and other technologies to address risk factors and improve health;
- Health risk behaviours in young people (including substance use, smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour);
- School-based interventions;
- Substance use prevention and drug education.

Methodological expertise
- Development and evaluation of preventive interventions;
- Design and coordination of randomised controlled trials, particularly in school settings;
- Longitudinal data analysis (mixed models).

Potential topics
- Development and evaluation of an online intervention to prevent multiple lifestyle risk behaviours among secondary school students;
- Examining the prevalence and co-occurrence of lifestyle risk behaviours among adolescents;
- Understanding the relationships between multiple risk behaviours and physical and mental health outcomes.

To find out more, contact: k.champion@unsw.edu.au
Dr Cath Chapman
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Cath is a part-time senior research fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) and a member of the Senior Leadership Advisory Board for the CREMS. She joined NDARC in October 2010 to aid in the analysis of the 2nd Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, a large cross-sectional epidemiological survey examining the prevalence of mental and substance use disorders in the general population. She works closely with both the epidemiology and prevention teams within the CREMS.

Research interests
• The descriptive epidemiology of mental and substance use disorders;
• Changing patterns of mental and substance use disorders among young people;
• Service utilisation and pathways to care;
• The way in which epidemiological data can inform prevention, treatment and health service planning.

Methodological expertise
□ Epidemiology;
□ Analysis of Survey Data;
□ Examining gender differences and delay to seek treatment.

To find out more, contact: c.chapman@unsw.edu.au
## Background

Dr Mark Deady is a UNSW postdoctoral research fellow at the Black Dog Institute’s Workplace Mental Health Research Program. Prior to taking up this role he worked for the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW and has over ten years research experience in the field of mental health and substance use disorders. In this time he has worked on a range of projects at a coronial, epidemiological, and clinical level. He was conferred his PhD in 2015 for his thesis entitled, ‘Comorbid Depression and Problematic Alcohol Use in Young People: The Development and Evaluation of an Online Intervention.’ He has a particular interest in eHealth in the treatment and prevention of a range of mental health and substance use conditions. He has specific interest in using these technologies in workplace settings and among difficult to reach populations. Currently He leads the employee arm of the Well@Work project. The project—a $2.88 million world-first study funded by beyondblue, with donations from the Movember Foundation—aims to develop a range of eMental health tools for workers and employers. Dr Deady is funded through a iCare postdoctoral position to work on a range of programs to improve mental health in the workplace.

## Research Interests

- The treatment and prevention of mental ill health and substance use, and suicide prevention;
- Co-morbidity between health risk behaviours and mental health problems;
- Role of workplace factors in employee wellbeing
- The potential role of the new technologies for better mental health (eg mobile, wearables, and online);
- User engagement with services.

## Methodological Expertise

- Design and coordination of randomised controlled trials, particularly among youth and in workplace setting
- Epidemiology
- Design, collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data
- Development and evaluation of treatment and preventive interventions (especially mobile and online).

## Potential Topics

- Evaluation and utility of mobile applications to address health behaviours, mental health problems or substance use;
- Workplace programs for improved wellbeing
- Accessibility and quality of online mental health and/or substance use treatments;

Projects would suit an honours or post-graduate student interested in ehealth, workplace mental health, and/or mental ill health/suicide.

To find out more, contact: M.Deady@unsw.edu.au
Dr Sally Hunt
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Sally is a clinical psychologist who has worked in research since 2005. She completed her PhD in 2015. Her PhD focused on the neuropsychological profile of people with comorbid depression and alcohol misuse and the impact of cognitive functioning on the effectiveness of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) in this population.

Since completing her PhD Sally has worked on the development, evaluation and dissemination of eHealth interventions for co-occurring psychiatric and substance use problems. She also has a research interest in the closing gender gap in alcohol use and is working to stop the trend in increased alcohol use by women.

Research interests
- Alcohol use disorders;
- Mood disorders;
- Maternal mental health;
- Comorbidity;
- Implementation science;
- Health service reform;
- e-Mental Health.

Potential Topics
I am available to supervise honours, Clinical Psychology masters, and PhD projects related to any of my research interests listed above. Some examples of potential topics are listed below:
- Examining factors related to motherhood and alcohol misuse in women;
- Systematic review of gender specific alcohol interventions;
- Developing and testing the reach and effectiveness of alcohol harm reduction messages for women;
- Systematic review of gender specific alcohol interventions.

To find out more, contact: sally.hunt@newcastle.edu.au
A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
AND
Centre for Translational Neuroscience and Mental Health
The University of Newcastle

**Background**
Frances is a Psychologist and Lecturer in the Faculty of Health, University of Newcastle, and Associate Professor at National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South. She is internationally recognised for her innovative computer-based interventions for mental health and substance use disorders. She has also worked in a clinical research capacity with people experiencing psychotic disorders, personality disorders, and substance use problems. A/Prof Kay-Lambkin has a strong publication and funding record. She is a Chief Investigator on several projects that are being conducted as part of the CREMS.

**Research interests**
- Health equity;
- Accessibility of psychological treatment;
- Co-occurring mental health and substance use problems;
- Computerized and internet-based treatments.

**Methodological expertise**
- Randomised controlled trial development and coordination;
- Psychological intervention development and evaluation;
- eHealth tool development and evaluation;
- Translation of psychological interventions into practice.

*To find out more, contact: f.kaylambkin@unsw.edu.au*
**Background**

Steph completed her PhD in 2015, which focused on the impact of genetic predictors of opioid dependence on neuroimmune and endocrine markers in healthy adults. Following her doctorate, she undertook an internship and several appointments at the World Health Organization (WHO) Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. These appointments focused on the impact of illicit drugs on public health and the translation of evidence-based research into international policy outcomes, through the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence.

Steph joined NDARC in 2018 as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. She is responsible for managing ‘Cracks in the Ice’; a Commonwealth Department of Health funded project to disseminate and maintain an online community toolkit and mobile app for crystal methamphetamine.

**Research interests**

- Epidemiology, prevention and treatment of substance misuse
- Translation of evidence-based research
- National and international policies for illicit drugs
- Improving health outcomes for individuals and communities

**Methodological expertise**

- Design and analysis of randomised controlled trials
- Design, collection and analysis of online survey research

To find out more, contact: s.kershaw@unsw.edu.au
Dr Mark Larsen
Black Dog Institute
University of New South Wales

Background
Mark joined the Black Dog Institute in 2014, and is currently a Research Fellow in the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention and the Digital Dog research programs. He has a DPhil in Biomedical Engineering and his research examines the use of new technologies for mental health, with a focus on suicide prevention. His research projects include detecting changes in mental health from smartphone sensor data, and delivering mobile health interventions for those who have had a suicide attempt.

Research interests
- Ehealth and mhealth interventions for mental health;
- Suicide prevention;
- Smartphone apps and data collection.

Methodological expertise
- Design of online/mobile interventions;
- Database design/working with information from different sources.

To find out more, contact: mark.larsen@blackdog.org.au
Dr Christina Marel
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Christina is a Research Fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. Her research focuses on improving our understanding of, and responses to, co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders in complex populations. This include projects examining the long-term patterns and predictors of heroin use and mental health, and understanding individual periods of risk. She led the recent revision of the Australian Government Department of Health-funded Guidelines on the management of co-occurring alcohol and other drug and mental health conditions in alcohol and other drug treatment settings (2nd edition), and coordinated the 11-year follow up of the NHMRC funded Australian Treatment Outcome Study (ATOS), which is the largest and longest running study to examine treatment outcomes for heroin dependence in Australia. Christina also leads a project with the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service in the Northern Territory to evaluate the impact of their service on young people’s involvement in crime and petrol sniffing in communities across Central Australia.

Research interests
- Comorbidity;
- Heroin dependence;
- Patterns and predictors of substance use and mental health problems;
- Translation;
- Relationship between crime and substance use over time.

Methodological expertise
- Longitudinal analysis;
- Finite mixture modelling.

Potential Topics
- The Australian Treatment Outcome Study is a naturalistic, prospective longitudinal study of heroin dependence, examining the natural history of heroin dependence and mental health over time. The project would suit an Honours or postgraduate level student interested in public health, psychology or criminology.
- Examining patterns and predictors of substance use, mental health disorders, and/or crime over time;
- Translating research into practice.

To find out more, contact: c.marel@unsw.edu.au
Background
Louise is a Senior Research Fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. As part of her doctoral research, Louise used epidemiological data and latent variable modelling techniques to examine the epidemiology and classification of substance use disorders in young adults. Since the completion of her PhD in November 2011, she has also developed a program of research that focuses on internet-delivered programs for anxiety and depression. Louise is particularly interested in the application of innovative methods and techniques to further our understanding of the epidemiology, classification and prevention of substance misuse and mental illness during the critical adolescent period. She is currently leading the Brain Games study which aims to determine whether online brain training (“Brain Games”) can reduce risky behaviours, anxiety and negative emotions in adolescents which may lead to mental illness in the future. She is supported in her role by an Australian Rotary Health Bruce Edwards Fellowship.

Research interests
- Epidemiology of psychiatric illness;
- Accuracy and validity in psychiatric classification;
- Prevention of psychiatric illness, particularly in adolescence;
- Internet-delivered treatment platforms;
- Biostatistics.

Methodological expertise
- Latent variable modelling;
- Analysis of large-scale survey databases;
- Longitudinal and repeated measures data analysis;
- Design and analysis of randomised controlled trials.

Potential Topics
The Brain Games study aims to determine whether online brain training (“Brain Games”) can reduce risky behaviours, anxiety and negative emotions in adolescents which may lead to mental illness in the future. This project would suit an Honours or postgraduate level student interested in neuroscience, psychology or public health.

To find out more, contact: louisem@unsw.edu.au
Associate Professor Katherine Mills  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales

**Background**
Katherine has worked at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales, since 2001. She is Director of Treatment Research for the CREMS. Her research focuses on the epidemiology and treatment of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, in particular, post traumatic stress disorder. A/Prof Mills has published widely in the area and has been an investigator on numerous grants. She has received a number of awards for excellence in science and research, and in recognition of the impact of her work on the community.

**Research interests**
- Mental Health;
- Epidemiology;
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder;
- Comorbid disorders;
- Population health;
- Drug related harm / addiction.

**Methodological expertise**
- Epidemiology;
- Clinical research;
- Randomised controlled trials;
- Design and analysis of longitudinal and repeated measures data;
- Design and analysis of randomised controlled trials;
- Development and evaluation of psychosocial interventions.

*To find out more, contact:* [k.mills@unsw.edu.au](mailto:k.mills@unsw.edu.au)
**Background**
Kirsten completed her PhD in Psychopharmacology and an MPH before beginning her postdoctoral fellowship in clinical research at the Discipline of Addiction Medicine. Kirsten is currently a Research Fellow investigating the efficacy and bio-behavioural basis of treatments for substance use and associated comorbidities (e.g. suicide risk, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and liver disease) through integration of neuropharmacological and psychosocial frameworks.

**Research interests**
- Pharmacological and psychosocial treatment of substance use and comorbidities;
- Neurobehavioural basis for the pharmacotherapy of alcoholism;
- Clinical predictors of treatment response;
- Neurobiology of addiction.

**Methodological expertise**
- Clinical and experimental research design;
- Analysis of randomised controlled trial data;
- Meta-analysis.

**Potential Topics**
These potential projects (Masters/PhD) are all connected to current or future clinical projects at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital/University of Sydney:

- Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorders (pharmacotherapy);
- Mechanisms underlying addictive behaviours or response to treatment (clinical psychology, neurogenetics and/or neuroimaging);
- Substance use and deliberate self-harm;
- Pharmacoepidemiology of alcohol treatment.

*To find out more, contact: kirsten.morley@sydney.edu.au*
Background
Nicola Newton is an Associate Professor at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) and Director of Prevention Research at the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use. She leads a large program of research developing and evaluating innovative approaches to the prevention of substance use, mental health problems and risky health behaviours in adolescents. Her main focus is on developing internet-based preventive interventions and improving the sustainability and translation of programs into schools. Nicola has worked extensively on the CLIMATE SCHOOLS series for drug prevention, the first online programs shown to prevent substance use. She has contributed significantly to the body of knowledge around prevention and e-health interventions and received national and international recognition for her research.

Research interests
- Substance use prevention;
- Mental health promotion;
- Healthy lifestyles and chronic disease prevention;
- Adolescent health;
- Personality-targeted prevention;
- E-health and new technologies;
- Translation.

Methodological expertise
- Cluster randomised controlled trials;
- School-based trials;
- Intervention development;
- Online trials.

Potential Projects
- Development and evaluation of effective interventions to prevent substance use and mental disorders;
- Exploring the mechanisms of effective prevention;
- Exploring the development and co-occurrence of substance use and mental disorders;
- Development and evaluation of an online healthy lifestyles intervention to prevent multiple lifestyle risk behaviours.

To find out more, contact: nickien@unsw.edu.au
Dr Natalie Peach  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales

**Background**

Natalie joined NDARC in 2018 as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. She currently works as the Project Coordinator on the COPE-A clinical trial, investigating the efficacy of integrated exposure-based therapy for co-occurring post-traumatic stress and substance use disorders in adolescents. She has recently completed a combined Masters/PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Melbourne and Orygen Youth Health. Her PhD focused on phenomenological relationships between childhood trauma, PTSD symptoms and psychotic symptoms in young people with early psychosis.

**Research interests**

- PTSD
- Childhood trauma
- Adolescent mental health
- Comorbidity
- Early intervention and treatment
- Psychosis

**Methodological expertise**

- Cross-sectional studies
- Regression analyses
- Qualitative research

*To find out more, contact: n.peach@unsw.edu.au*
Dr Katrina Prior  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales

**Background**
Katrina joined NDARC in 2013 after completing a Bachelor of Science (Psychology)/Commerce and Honours in Psychology at ANU in Canberra. She completed her PhD at NDARC, in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, in 2018. Her PhD focused on the prevalence, impact and persistence of social phobia among individuals with depression and substance dependence. Whilst at NDARC Katrina has worked on a randomised controlled trial (RCT) for behavioural activation therapy among people with depression and substance dependence, and an RCT of a new online CBT-based intervention for anxiety and hazardous alcohol use among youth. Her research interests focus on improving our understanding of, and responses to, mental health disorders among people with substance use disorders.

**Research interests**
- Comorbidity;
- Anxiety disorders;
- Mood disorders;
- Substance use;
- e-Mental Health;
- Early intervention and treatment for comorbid mental and substance use disorders;
- Trauma.

**Methodological expertise**
- Analysis of large-scale epidemiological data sets;
- Analysis of randomised controlled trial data;
- Analysis of longitudinal data (e.g., generalised estimating equations);

**Potential Topics**
I am available to supervise honours, ILP, masters, PhD and undergraduate student placements related to any of my research interests listed above.

**To find out more, contact:** k.prior@unsw.edu.au
Dr Joanne Ross
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Joanne is a Senior Lecturer at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and has over 20 years’ experience in drug and alcohol research. Joanne was awarded her PhD in 1999 for her work on benzodiazepine use among heroin users, and is also a Clinical Psychologist. Her research interests include treatment outcomes for substance use disorder, and the development of clinical interventions for the treatment of psychiatric comorbidity.

Joanne was the principle investigator on the Suicide Risk Assessment study that led to the development of the Suicide Assessment Kit, and is currently directing an NHMRC funded clinical trial of behavioural activation for the treatment of depression among substance users.

Research interests
- Clinical Psychology;
- Drug Related Harm / Addiction;
- Comorbidity between depression, anxiety and alcohol/drug use;
- Development of novel treatment and preventative interventions.

Methodological expertise
- Epidemiology;
- Analysis of large cohorts: prevalence, patterns and disorder co-morbidity;
- Clinical Trials Research.

To find out more, contact: j.ross@unsw.edu.au
**Associate Professor Tim Slade**  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales

**Background**  
Tim’s research interests centre around the diagnosis and epidemiology of alcohol and drug use disorders, mental disorders and their comorbidity. He focusses on adolescent and young adult health and studies the influence of individual, peer and family factors on the emergence and development of alcohol use and mental disorders. Other interests include the development of school-based programs for the prevention of alcohol-related harms among adolescents.

**Research interests**
- Epidemiology;
- Social Networks;
- Drug-related harm / addiction;
- Biostatistics;
- Clinical Research;
- Population Health;
- Classification;
- Youth alcohol use;
- Alcohol dependence.

**Methodological expertise**
- Epidemiology;
- Biostatistics;
- Social network analysis;
- Latent variable analysis.

**Potential Projects**
- Social networks and the spread of risky health-related behaviours in adolescents;
- Examining the patterns and predictors of the emergence of DSM alcohol use disorder symptoms.

**To find out more, contact:** TimS@unsw.edu.au


**Supervisor Profile**

Dr Mieke Snijder  
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre  
University of New South Wales

**Background**

Mieke joined NDARC in 2012 as a student completing her Master’s degree in Public Health, following which she undertook her PhD at NDARC, which she finished early 2017. Her research currently focuses on drug and alcohol prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. In her PhD, she worked closely with Aboriginal communities in the development, implementation and evaluation of community-based programs that were effective in reducing alcohol related harms. As a Post-doc, she is collaborating with schools, Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders to develop a school-based prevention program that is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Her passion for research is driven by a desire to improve the health and wellbeing of the most disadvantaged members of our society.

**Research interests**

- Inter sectoral collaborations and community-driven research;
- Evaluation of existing services and community-based programs promoting health and wellbeing;
- Health promotion and empowerment;
- Promoting equity and reducing disadvantage;
- Substance use prevention and early intervention.

**Methodological expertise**

- Qualitative research methods (including interviewing, focus groups, thematic analyses);
- Participatory research methodologies;
- Analysis of large-scale epidemiological data sets;
- Multiple baseline (or stepped wedge) designs and interrupted times series analyses;
- Realist evaluation.

*To find out more, contact:* m.snijder@unsw.edu.au
Background
Lexine is a Clinical Psychologist and Senior Research Fellow based at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC). She currently manages a collaborative project to develop and disseminate illicit drug resources for Australian teachers, parents and students. She completed her PhD and Masters in Clinical Psychology in 2009 at Macquarie University. Prior to joining NDARC she worked at the Centre for Emotional Health investigating the relationship between and treatment of co-morbid anxiety and alcohol use disorders. She also spent two years within the School of Social & Community Medicine at the University of Bristol where she explored longitudinal patterns of substance use and mental health in adolescents.

Research interests
- Prevention & drug education;
- Use of the internet and other technologies (for drug education);
- Patterns of alcohol and substance use in adolescence;
- Anxiety disorders (particularly Social Phobia, Generalised Anxiety Disorder);
- Inter-relationship between anxiety disorders and alcohol/drug use.

Methodological expertise
- Experimental Psychology (including psycho-physiological assessment, alcohol; administration studies);
- Latent variable modelling (latent class analysis, latent growth modelling, trajectory analysis);
- Psychological intervention development and evaluation (randomised controlled trials);
- Analysis of large epidemiological data sets (including procedures for handling missing data).

Potential Topics
- Exploring patterns and predictors of alcohol and drug use among young people;
- “Drinking makes me more interesting...”: Examining motives for alcohol use among young people;
- Can we modify alcohol expectancies through brief intervention, and does this reduce alcohol-related harms?
- Understanding the inter-relationship between anxiety disorders and substance use.

To find out more, contact: l.stapinski@unsw.edu.au
Dr Matthew Sunderland
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Matthew completed his PhD at the University of New South Wales in 2010. His PhD focused on novel methods to develop short form instruments when measuring common mental disorders in the general population. Since then Matthew has received a NHMRC early career fellowship to develop efficient diagnostic instruments for co-morbid conditions using underlying dimensional constructs (internalising, externalising, thought disorders) as the guiding theoretical framework rather than the existing categorical framework of the DSM. Matthew has also received NHMRC project grant funding to look at diagnostic bias in the epidemiological instruments when assessing major depressive episode in older Australian adults. This program of research seeks to improve how mental disorders are assessed in clinical and research settings in the future.

Research interests
- Psychiatric classification and diagnosis;
- Co-morbidity;
- Old age psychiatric epidemiology;
- Dimensional forms of assessment;
- e-Mental Health screening tools.

Methodological expertise
- Latent variable modelling (e.g., factor analysis, latent class analysis, factor mixture analysis, growth mixture models);
- Psychometrics and test construction;
- Cognitive interviewing and survey research;
- Analysis of large scale epidemiological and clinical data sets (regression, decision tree analysis, mixed models).

Potential Topics
- Establishing the predictive validity of broad transdiagnostic dimensions of psychopathology on treatment and prevention outcomes over and above categorical indicators (PhD/Masters);
- Development and validation of computerised adaptive tests to measure broad levels of comorbid mental and substance use disorders in adults and adolescents (PhD/Masters);
- Identifying factors that are associated with the transition from first experiencing panic attacks to panic disorder in the Australian population (Honours/ILP).

To find out more, contact: matthews@unsw.edu.au
**Background**
Wendy’s current research interests and projects include the epidemiology and natural history and consequences of cannabis and alcohol use and dependence, cannabis potency and marginalised groups.

**Research interests**
- Drug related harm/addiction;
- Epidemiology, life-course and natural history of use;
- Population/public health;
- Alcohol;
- Cannabis;
- Harm reduction.

**Methodological expertise**
- Epidemiology;
- Analysis of large cohorts: prevalence, patterns and disorder co-morbidity;
- Clinical Research.

*To find out more, contact:* [w.swift@unsw.edu.au](mailto:w.swift@unsw.edu.au)
Professor Maree Teesson
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Professor Maree Teesson is Director of CREMS, an NHMRC Principal Research Fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and most recently an Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences Fellow. She is a ministerial appointed member of the NHMRC Health Care Committee and Professorial Fellow at the Black Dog Institute, UNSW. Maree was recently awarded Australian Museum Eureka Prize for Outstanding Mentor of Young Researchers. Maree has made a major contribution to Australia’s health and medical research effort in the field of mental health and substance use. In particular, she is known nationally and internationally for her research on the comorbidity between mental health and substance use disorders. Prof Teesson has a strong track record of winning competitive scientific grant funding and has published extensively. She maintains strong links with treatment services and is a founding member (since 1990) of The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS) Inc, the largest mental health services conference and learning network in Australia.

Research interests
- The epidemiology mental health and substance use disorders;
- The effects of alcohol on brain development;
- Internet delivered prevention and treatment programs;
- New treatments for individuals with comorbid mental health and substance use disorders;
- Improving treatment delivery.

Methodological expertise
- Intervention development and evaluation;
- Randomised controlled trials;
- School-based trials (cluster RCTs);
- Analysis of large cohorts: prevalence, patterns and disorder co-morbidity;
- Translation of psychological interventions into practice.

To find out more, contact: m.teesson@unsw.edu.au
Dr Louise Thornton
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Background
Louise completed her PhD in 2012 at the University of Newcastle. Her doctoral research investigated tobacco, alcohol and cannabis use, and attitudes towards these substances, among people with and without mental disorders. Louise currently holds the position of a post-doctoral research scholar within CREMS and was hosted by Professor Bonnie Spring in the Department of Preventive Medicine at Northwestern University, Chicago between April 2013 and May 2014. During her time at Northwestern University Dr Thornton spearheaded the development of an intervention aimed at addressing smoking cessation and weight gain prevention among people with mental disorders. In 2015 she began a UNSW Vice-Chancellor Post-doctoral fellowship at NDARC in which she plans to develop and evaluate a mobile app addressing health risk behaviours among people with mental disorders.

Research interests
- Health risk behaviours including tobacco use, excessive alcohol use, poor diet and physical inactivity;
- Co-morbidity between health risk behaviours and mental health problems;
- The potential role of the Internet and mobile technologies to improve health and health research;
- How patient engagement with drug and alcohol, and lifestyle, interventions can be improved.

Methodological expertise
- Design, administration and analysis of survey research (particularly online);
- Design, collection and analysis of qualitative data;
- Development of online and mobile e-health tools.

Potential Topics
- Use and quality of mobile applications to address health behaviours, mental health problems or substance use;
- Accessibility and quality of mental health and/or substance use treatments online;
- Cardio-vascular disease risk reduction among vulnerable populations e.g. people with mental health and/or substance use problems.

Projects would suit an honours or post-graduate student interested in ehealth and/or health behaviour change.

To find out more, contact: l.thornton@unsw.edu.au
**Supervisor Profile**

**Dr Alyna Turner**
Centre for Translational Neuroscience and Mental Health  
University of Newcastle

**Background**
Alyna is a Clinical Psychologist at the University of Newcastle, and a Research Fellow at Deakin University. She has worked with people with comorbid conditions (mental health/ substance misuse/ physical health conditions) in a clinical and research capacity for over 13 years. In a research capacity, she has experience in the development, delivery and evaluation of psychological interventions for people with comorbid conditions (heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cardiovascular disease risk behaviours, depression, anxiety, substance misuse, psychotic illness), based on cognitive behaviour therapy, problem solving therapy, motivational interviewing, and mindfulness based stress reduction techniques. She has significant experience with coordination of randomised controlled trials, including most recently coordination of a multi-site RCT of a pharmacological intervention for depression in people with bipolar disorder.

**Research interests**
- Treatment of coexisting physical and mental health conditions, particularly post-stroke depression and depression and anxiety disorders in people with cardiovascular disease;
- Psychological interventions for coexisting mental health and substance use disorders
- Depression screening in physical health settings;
- Psychological interventions for cardiovascular risk behaviour reduction.

**Methodological expertise**
- Randomised controlled trial development and coordination
- Psychological intervention development and evaluation

To find out more, contact: alyna.turner@newcastle.edu.au
Dr Michelle Torok  
Black Dog Institute  
University of New South Wales  

**Background**
Michelle currently works as a Research Fellow at Black Dog Institute/Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention (2015 – present), but prior to this, worked at NDARC for 10 years, where she completed her PhD in Public Health and Community Medicine in (2015). Her research focuses primarily on suicide prevention, where she is currently co-Director of the research and evaluation of an Australian first large-scale multi-level suicide prevention trial in NSW. In 2018, she will also be principle investigator a feasibility pilot trial of a primary school intervention that aims to reduce mental health burden and suicide risk.

**Research interests**
- Early childhood, school-based, interventions for mental health/substance use;
- Suicide prevention, particularly among young people;
- Comorbidity;
- Knowledge translation;
- Substance use;
- Violent behaviour/criminality;
- Developmental research.

**Methodological expertise**
- Epidemiology;
- Quantitative analysis of large-scale survey data;
- Survey design;
- Development and evaluation of preventive interventions (including RCTs, stepped wedge trials, quasi-experimental).

**Potential topics**
- Examination of how media reporting of suicide changes as a result of a large-scale intervention in NSW;
- How well the identification of suicide ‘hot spots’ in intervention sites translates to behavioural or structural changes, and barriers to change.
- Peer network changes and the spread of suicidal behaviours in adolescents as a result of a school-based intervention.

*To find out more, contact m.torok@unsw.edu.au*