



Anton Breinl Research Centre for Health Systems Strengthening

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

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From the co-directors

Professor Sarah Larkins and Professor Jacinta Elston

Yawo from Thursday Island where Karen Carlisle and I have just been reporting back findings from the "Lessons from the Best" quality improvement project to health staff and community on Masig Island, and Thursday Island. Not surprisingly, we have found that in addition to the previously reported factors of clinical leadership, staff stability, education and training and teamwork, key features that are vital for improvement in quality of care are allowing the community to drive quality improvement, and taking steps to ensure that the health service is culturally embedded.

Senior health staff are very keen to see a focus on health systems strengthening and workforce development in AITHM developments here on TI and we would be delighted to work with them to this end.

In other news, the Tropical Australian Academic Health Service is coming to fruition and a strategic planning meeting was held recently with Chairs and Chief Execs from the HHSs and PHN and key AITHM/JCU personnel and Centre Directors. From my perspective it was really heartening to see the increasing emphasis from senior HHS staff on strengthening primary care and a focus on chronic disease management and

prevention at a community and regional level. Similar views have been expressed at the consultations for the Medical Research Futures Fund. This all bodes well for the future of health research that goes on under the umbrella of the ABRC_HSS.

Thanks once again to the staff and crew from MICRRH for putting on another wonderfully hospitable and informative "Are You Remotely Interested" conference last month. It was the first official outing for the new Assistant Minister for Rural Health, Dr David Gillespie and a gathering of CRANA (Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia) royalty.

Please keep us informed of your activities and what is going on so we can promote your great work to a wider audience. The google analytics and research quality analytics have shown that ABRC_HSS is hitting above its weight in terms of field weighted citation impact and website hits – congratulations everyone.

We have included in this newsletter a few updates – would like to hear from a wider group of people for next time please. ☺



Photo: Dr Karen Carlisle on the beach at Masig Island, Torres Strait

IN THIS ISSUE

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- The Rural ECOH Project: Engaging communities in oral health.....p2
- FNU and JCU Research Training Fair ...p3
- THEnet update.....p6

RESPONDING TO PRIORITY HEALTH CHALLENGES IN OUR REGION

- News from ATOFI Health Research Gp.p4
- Making an impact on clinical practice...p5

MESSAGES FROM THE FIELD

- Participatory approaches at Solomon Islands.....p4

OTHER NEWS

- Congratulations & upcoming events...p6

The Rural ECOH Project: Engaging communities in oral health



Dr Karen Carlisle
College of Medical and Dentistry

The Rural ECOH (Engaging Communities in Oral Health) is a 3 year NHMRC partnership project involving researchers from James Cook University and La Trobe University working with Townsville Mackay Medicare Local (now Northern Australia Primary Health Ltd) and Loddon Mallee Murray Medicare Local (now Murray Primary Health Network), Royal Flying Doctor Services and Dental Health Services Victoria. The project invited local people in six rural communities across Victoria and Queensland to engage in discussions about their community needs and contribute to the design of evidence based initiatives to address oral health challenges. The study was designed to systematically evaluate the usefulness of an evidence-based method of community participation that has been successfully used in the United Kingdom called 'Remote Service Futures'.

The 'Remote Service Futures' method comprised of representatives from local community organisations, service providers and community members participating in a series of four workshops. The structured workshops explored community perceptions of oral health, local oral health services, views on strategies to improve oral health in their community and a planning exercise to develop an oral health plan. The oral health plans were then implemented and community members monitored implementation.

The project is in the final 6 months and our findings to date indicate that communities recognised the importance of oral health in maintaining overall well-being and the role of prevention to achieve good oral health. The community-led oral health plans focused on initiatives that were based on local knowledge, low cost, sustainability and aimed to empower communities.

The study has generated extensive evidence on the value of communities working alongside health professionals to bring different perspectives on the issue of oral health. Furthermore evidence suggests that this method of community participation for local health planning highlights the importance of involving local community people in driving both planning and implementation of services for feasible, affordable and sustainable services.

WHAT HAPPENED IN COMMUNITIES

- ❖ Oral health screening and education sessions at Year 8 immunisations
- ❖ Integration of oral health screening and education as part of child health
- ❖ Checks and immunisations
- ❖ Strengthened partnerships between Universities, local schools, health and oral health services
- ❖ Accredited and non-accredited training for non-dental professionals in oral health including Lift the Lip training
- ❖ Toothbrushing program in schools
- ❖ Advocacy for water fluoridation and changes of 1300 dental number
- ❖ Oral health infographics and plain language local service brochures
- ❖ Stickers for maternal and child health nurses

MORE INFORMATION

Follow us on twitter [@ruralecoh](https://twitter.com/ruralecoh)
Read more on our blog
<http://ruralecoh.com/t>

Photo: Project team at launch December 2014



(L-R back row) Jane Farmer, Mandy Kenny, Virginia Dickson Swift, Tracy Cheffins, Jacinta Elston, Felicity Croker, Sarah Larkins, Matt Jones, Andrea De Silva, Gary Layton, Penny Wilkinson. (L-R front row) Mark Gussy, Karen Carlisle, Rhonda Fleming.

Fiji National University and JCU Research Training Fair

“No time, no idea, no money”: research for busy clinicians

Dr Robyn Preston & Professor Sarah Larkins
College of Medicine and Dentistry

On Wednesday 15th- Friday 17th June, four CMD staff members (Sarah Larkins, Ronny Gunnarsson, Robyn Preston and Karen Johnston) worked with the team from the Fiji National University (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences to deliver the inaugural research training fair. This arose in discussions about possible reciprocal arrangements to balance the large contribution FNU staff and affiliates are making through hosting our year 5 and year 6 selective students in O&G and ED.

The background is a relationship since around 2010, involving developing and delivering the Grad Cert Health Professional Education (led by A/Prof Louise Young), with distance supervision of a range of FNU clinician scholars by JCU staff for their research projects.

The aims of the research fair were to:

- strengthen the involvement of clinicians and academics in research activities;
- strengthen the interest and support in mentoring amongst non-clinician academics;
- build capacity in the research support unit; and
- strengthen the relationship between our schools.

Approximately 50 participants attended the 3 day workshop with FNU and other representatives from the disciplines of medicine, nursing, mental health nursing, midwifery, pharmacy, medical imagery, dentistry, biomedical sciences, public health and pharmacology.



Photo: Prof Rajanishwar Gyaneshwar (Associate Dean Research FNU), Prof Sarah Larkins (Associate Dean Research JCU), Dr William May (Acting Dean FNU)

We had FNU academics (Dr Ayodele Akinremi, Dr Masoud Mohammadnezhad and Dr Sabiha Khan) and staff from the research office (academic and professional/technical) co-facilitating and supporting.

The first two days of the workshops included introductory seminars from JCU and FNU researchers included project development, project management, ethics, qualitative research, quantitative research, reviewing the literature and publishing, academic writing and dissemination. On day one, five local researchers presented their stories of getting started in research; from collaborating on a large national project, to developing small medical education projects (co-supervised by JCU academics), to undertaking Masters to a “PhD gone wrong”. The diversity of the JCU team: ECR (Robyn), PhD student (Karen) and experienced researchers (Sarah and Ronny) was also appreciated by the FNU team. Busy early career academics were keen to share how they could integrate research into their teaching and clinical work, while more established researchers discussed how to mentor and develop a research culture in their discipline.

Day three was dedicated to Action Planning: developing a project, with small group work and one on one mentoring. This was very successful with a number of small discipline groups and individuals developing questions, proposals or plans for data analysis or publications. There was energy and enthusiasm about continuing the work, particularly due to the upcoming FNU/College Research symposium (involving visitors from other Pacific countries) to be held in September. Some of the clinicians had quite a lot of data already and needed help writing it up, whilst others had ideas for projects that we helped to develop into proposals.



Photo: Research Fair attendees after an intensive day of workshoping research ideas. The enthusiasm and optimism over the three days continued even into this last workshop of the final day!

The emphasis from the CMD JCU was that this partnership was collaborative, two way learning and that the initiatives should be led by the FNU research unit. There was a lot of interest in Researchweb as a tool for Matchmaking projects and students from Fiji with potential advisors at JCU or vice versa, and in "<http://science-network.tv>" as a research methods website and our recently developed introductory research methods i-book. There is interest in continued collaboration with individuals, research teams and with the research unit, with each of us having plans with particular individuals and groups for follow-up. We have been asked to review abstracts for the research symposium and to also attend and be part of a judging panel for presentations. To encourage novice researchers we offered a prize for a scholarship for the best

presentation to present their work at a JCU research meeting.

We are committed to developing and strengthening enduring reciprocal partnerships with our regional tropical neighbours, with the objective of improving health across the tropics. There are at least three areas that we discussed in which collaborations might be of mutual benefit, in addition to the highly successful undergraduate student placements currently funded under New Colombo plan. These three areas: MBBS Honours training; part-time cohort models of PhD training for current medical/health faculty; and broader research collaborations around tropical infectious diseases and health systems strengthening.

Messages from the Field: Participatory approaches at Solomon Islands

Dr David MacLaren

Dear friends,

I am on my way home from Solomon Islands where (among other things) we had a workshop with 25 community members to establish the next phase of the 'traditional knowledge about medicinal plants' project. All is in place for the project to start as soon as the funding is released.

The participatory approaches that are being embedded across our projects is increasingly becoming recognised. Yesterday there was a story on ABC 'World Today' on the project we are collaborating with Australian Museum and University of Queensland. I was very proud to hear the tone of the story – including the words:

"Unlike expeditions of a century ago more than half of the group is made up of Solomon Islanders who are playing a crucial leadership role"

The story then features two of the [Atoifi Health Research Group](#) members Chief Esau Kekeubata and Mr Tommy Esau. There is even a fantastic photo of Chief Esau standing on the top of a ridge looking across his traditional land.

You can see the full story at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-08/australian-museum-expedition-close-finds-good-evidence-for-2-ne/7700556>



Photo: Atoifi Health Research Group member Chief Esau Kekeubata from Kwainaa'isi in Solomon Islands.

Photo credit: Tyrone Lavery

News from Atoifi Health Research Group: Kwaio Medicinal Plants Project

Dr David MacLaren ran a plant documentation workshop with a group of 28 people from the East Kwaio mountains, in preparation for the next phase of the medicinal plants project. The medicinal plants project documents traditional knowledge of plants used locally for their medicinal and cultural properties. The first phase of the project produced a bilingual book (English/Kwaio) of 15 plants complete with plant names, photos and information about uses.

MORE INFORMATION:

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

Vale Emeritus Professor Rick Speare

A great man, enthusiastic and inspirational scientist, lover of worms and people, and mentor to many. We miss him but his work goes on.

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/@jcu/vale-emeritus-professor-rick-speare-am>

Rick Speare Memorial Fund

“One of Rick’s great passions was to understand and improve the health of people, and animals, in the Pacific. In recent years he was central to establishing the [Atoifi Health Research Group](#) in Solomon Islands. This Group brings together people from community, health services, research institutes, universities and professional organisations in a remote provincial setting that face numerous health challenges. The Atoifi Health Research Group is committed to train and support a generation of young Pacific Islander health professionals and researchers to investigate local health issues and create locally appropriate solutions to those problems.”

To donate: <https://alumni.jcu.edu.au/RSpeareMemFund>



Making an impact on clinical practice

Professor Clare Heal’s work on the use of sterile gloves versus non-sterile gloves for minor skin surgery is gaining recognition around the world. The North American Primary Care Research Conference (NAPCRG) Pearl awards recognise the best research studies that will impact clinical practice, that are presented at the NAPCRG Annual Meeting. This award was presented to Professor Heal and Shampavi Sriharan, the JCU MBBS Honours graduate who undertook the project as part of their Honours study.



The study has also been named as one of the top 20 POEMs of 2015. POEMs are research studies that meet the criteria for Patient-Oriented Evidence that Matters. Research studies published in 110 journals are stringently assessed for validity, relevance and potential to change clinical practice. In 2015, 20,000 studies were published in the journals and 251 were further assessed. Congratulations Professor Heal on this outstanding achievement!

Aspiring towards social accountability in health profession education

Dr Robyn Preston (CMD) has been appointed taskforce chair of the Integrating Medicine and Public Health Taskforce of the global network [Towards Unity for Health – The Network](#). This is a global network with a commitment to improving health through health personnel education, partnerships between education institutions, health services and communities, and research into priority health problems.



Robyn has also been appointed to the Scientific committee of the World Summit on Social Accountability to be held in Tunisia April 2017.

On other news, Robyn also won the 3 Minute Thesis competition for ECR and will be representing the Division of Tropical Health and Medicine at the JCU 3MT final in September! Congratulations Robyn!

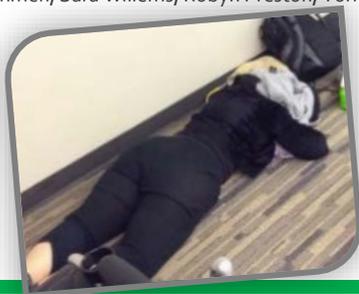
JCU CMD collaborate with The Training for Health Equity Network

Dr Robyn Preston, College of Medicine and Dentistry



THEnet researchers Penny-Moody Corbett, Marykuty Mammen, Sara Willems, Robyn Preston, Torres Woolley.

Five JCU CMD staff, Prof Sarah Larkins, Dr Torres Woolley, Ms Simone Ross, Ms Karen Johnston and Dr Robyn Preston met with their colleagues from the Training for Health Equity Network (THEnet) in Sault Ste Marie, Northern Ontario last month. The evidence group meeting followed the three day ICEMEN conference jointly convened by Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Flinders University and THEnet. Ms Ross and Ms Johnston are also THEnet staff members, working for the collaborative on research and evaluation projects. The JCU team are actively involved in a number of research projects on innovative health professional education, including a Graduate Outcomes Study, Competencies Plus...ALPSATS...



Meeting face to face was fruitful, but exhausting, with the trip cumulating in a 45 hour flight back due to delays in LA and Brisbane. If you think international travel for work is glamorous, to put it in perspective Dr Preston has provided this photo of her sleeping on the floor in LAX.

Warm wishes

We send our warm wishes to ABRCHSS researchers Associate Professor Suzanne McKenzie and Associate Professor Ruth Stewart as they both undergo treatment for serious illnesses.



Congratulations!

ABRCHSS researchers have many achievements to celebrate.

Dr Mangalalaxi Paranahegama has recently completed his PhD investigating how different forms of male circumcision prevent HIV infection. Dr Tri Susilawati has also recently completed her PhD investigating infectious causes of acute undiagnosed fevers using cutting-edge technologies. Congratulations to you both.

Congratulations also to Ms Emma Anderson on successful completion of her mid-candidature review and upgrade to PhD. The Centre also welcomes PhD candidates Ms Elizabeth McDonald and Mr Peter Akosahtwasi. Elizabeth's research will explore academic and early career profession practice for JCU medical students who have experienced academic difficulty. Peter will investigate the influence of African migrant parents on their childrens career choices in a new culture.

Associate Professor Ronny Gunnarsson was awarded the NAPCRG prize. Congratulations Ronny!

Congrats to NQFLS poster prize winners dental students Thomas Munro, Ethan Zappala, Eden Ambrose, Marcus McShane and Thomas Meath for

their poster 'Evaluating Oral health Literacy of Rural Teens'. Also to Dr Karen Carlisle, Prof Sarah Larkins and Prof Jacinta Elston for their winning poster on research, 'Lessons from the best: to better the rest'. Well done!

Congrats also to Dr Jenni Judd on her Professorial appointment in health promotion at CQU in Bundaberg.

Centre achievements: Engagement with the Centre website may be measured using Google Analytics and the results for our Centre are encouraging. Since the website went live in April 2014, over 2,400 people have visited the website and engaged with its elements over 4,500 times. Over 18% of website sessions were from international visitors. We are certainly reaching people through our website!

Make sure that you send through your stories, messages from the field, publications, awards and other achievements. Send them to abrc@jcu.edu.au at any time - we can help you spread news of your research and achievements.

Three Minute Thesis

James Cook University Final

Division of Tropical Health and Medicine

V

Division of Tropical Environments and Societies

September 8th 2016

Upcoming events



Call for abstracts now open. Close 30th September 2016.
More information
<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/14nrhc/homepage>



Call for abstracts now open. Close 31st October 2016.
More information
<http://www.aworldofruralhealth.org.au/>

Save the Date!

Ageing Symposium

28th and 29th November 2016

Townsville Regional Council of Aged, together with researchers from JCU, are hosting Townsville's first ever Ageing Symposium.

The symposium will run for two days. Attendees will hear from keynote speaker Dr Robin Ray of CMD, Mark Tucker-Evans (CEO) of the Council of the Aged Queensland and other researchers and experts in the field. The program is packed with a diverse range of topics addressing issues of ageing in our region.

This event is open to all members of the community.

More details will follow.

Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research
Vancouver, Canada Nov. 14-18th, 2016.
(Abstracts closed mid-January)

<http://healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2016/>



A poster for the World Summit on Social Accountability. The background is blue with a circular graphic on the left. The text reads: "In conjunction with the Annual Meeting of The Network : Towards Unity for Health (TUFH) Improving the Impact of Educational Institutions on People's Health WORLD SUMMIT ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY 8-12 april 2017 · Hammamet · Tunisia". At the bottom, there are logos for "Presented by" (including Réseau francophone pour la responsabilité sociale en santé - REFRÉSSSE, THE NETWORK, University of Tanta & Mansour Faculty of Medicine of Tanta, Global Congress for Social Accountability, and THERNET Training for Health Equity Network). A yellow banner at the bottom contains the text: "We can't solve the world's health problems in silos This summit will provide the synergy needed to make global changes together!"

Contributions

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

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

SEND IN YOUR NEWS

Please direct your newsletter contributions and other media related material to:

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