



Anton Breinl Research Centre for Health Systems Strengthening

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

ISSUE 2 NOVEMBER 2015

From the co-directors

Professor Sarah Larkins and Professor Jacinta Elston

Welcome to the second edition of the newsletter for the Anton Breinl Research Centre for Health Systems Strengthening. It seems like a little while since the last one and quite a lot of activity has been occurring behind the scenes in individual work groups and across the Centre as a whole. The formal launch of the ABRC HSS occurred on Tuesday 11th August, as an event affiliated with the Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME) convention hosted this year by JCU in Townsville. This well attended event featured some wonderful didgeridoo playing by local man Jai Cummings, plenty of food, drink and convivial conversation involving centre members and delegates from across the nation and the region, and brief introductory speeches by Professor Ian Wronski, and Centre Co-Directors Professors Jacinta Elston and Sarah Larkins.

As you can see from the output metrics on page 6, despite being a relatively new Centre we can hold our own in terms of traditional research metrics. I suspect that we would do better still with a formal evaluation of the translational impact of our work as a collective – what an interesting piece of work that would be!

In addition, a group of researchers across sites and work groups engaged in a process of strategic planning for the centre in a series of workshops in the middle of the year. This resulted in the [Program Logic Framework for the ABRC](#) available here.

We would encourage you all to have your say in shaping the Centre as it continues to develop. How can we best “value-add” to the fantastic research you are all co-creating? What would be most helpful? Writing retreats? Seeding grants? Skills training? Please let us know! As always, contributions to the newsletter are appreciated, so that we can all hear about the great work going on. Also, please keep us informed of any achievements, publications, or awards (on your own behalf or those of your students) so that we can properly acknowledge these.

Have a great festive season and hopefully a bit of a holiday, and we look forward to working with you in 2016.

Yours in health systems strengthening,
Sarah and Jacinta

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Strengthening Zambia's Prison Health System

Dr Stephanie Topp

College of Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Sciences

Around the world, prison inmates struggle to access good quality and responsive health care. In many sub-Saharan African countries – including Zambia – this is particularly the case. In Zambian prison inmates experience high rates of communicable disease, with rates of TB in one large Lusaka prison for example, 3.9% (3900/100,000) more than four times the prevalence in the local provincial population. In the same facility HIV prevalence in 2011 was twice that of the national population (27% vs 14.3%).

Recognising the urgency of this situation, in 2013, the Zambian Prison Service (ZPS) in collaboration the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia embarked the three-year EU-funded **Zambian Prisons Health System Strengthening (ZaPHSS)** project. The project was founded on recognition that prisons are a high-risk environment for ill-health. Nonetheless, project leaders chose to eschew isolated interventions or strategies based on a disease-specific approach. Rather, consultation between the CIDRZ directors and Zambian prison officials resulted in a proposal targeting long-term and sustainable improvements by focusing on governance structures, management capacity and frontline service organization. Although lacking the glamour of traditional health campaigns such as vaccination or screening drives, this systems-based approach was seen as essential for developing the systems necessary to make any disease-specific activities feasible, routine and cost-effective in the long term.

The project targeted reform at three levels. At the policy-making level, a program of high-level consultations was



Mr Clement Moonga (ZaPHSS Project Manager) presenting findings from formative research conducted as part of the ZaPHSS project, at the European Congress on Tropical Medicine and International Health, Basel, Switzerland (September 2015).



Mr Clement Moonga (ZaPHSS Project Manager) and Dr. Stephanie Topp at official handover of the *Prison Health System Strengthening Framework* to Zambian Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Percy Chato (March 2014).

organised inviting representatives from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Home Affairs to discuss strategies for improving health in Zambian prisons. Over the course of 24 months, these consultations were formalised and finally codified in a Memorandum of Understanding articulating the responsibilities and financial contributions each Ministry.

At the meso-level, a series of workshops with prison and health officials produced a strategic framework, articulating the priorities for health system strengthening, including nominal targets for health professional recruitment, a revised health governance structure and terms of reference for a new facility-level health committees comprising both prison officers and inmates. The project worked with the prison Health Directorate to build managerial and technical competencies through in-service training in health needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation and entry screening.

At the micro level, and based on the terms of reference formalised in the strategic framework, the project supported ZPS to establish the first 11 facility-based health committees, within training in psycho-social counselling, peer education, TB and HIV entry screening and facility level needs assessments.

To support decision making and advocacy the project, from inception, established a program of formative and operational research to inform the discussions and negotiations and provide empiric evidence. Findings from this research – which was led by project Senior Technical Advisor, and JCU and ABRCHSS staff member Dr. Stephanie Topp - were recently presented at the European Congress on Tropical Medicine and International Health.

Health system strengthening in responding to public health emergencies

Ms Tammy Allen

College of Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Sciences

International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) mandate that countries across the globe develop, strengthen and maintain their capacity to respond effectively to public health emergencies, particularly of international concern. Public health emergencies can include epidemic or pandemic disease, or a novel, highly fatal infectious agent or biological toxin that poses a substantial risk of human fatalities, or permanent disability to a population. A recent example being the Ebola virus.

Responding to public health emergencies requires a coordinated response from within and across sectors, and involves training, the development of plans and procedures, and the running of a functioning emergency operation

facility.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has just released an evidence based Framework for Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOC) to guide countries in strengthening their response to public health emergencies. To help inform this framework, a group of researchers from the College of Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Sciences (CPHMVS), conducted a Systematic Review of Public Health Emergency Plans and Procedures to ascertain the evidence for developing public health emergency plans and procedures.

In April 2015, Chief Investigator Rose Spencer and Co-Investigator Tammy Allen presented this review to over 80 WHO Member States at the First

Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Framework Meeting in Geneva. This was one of four reviews which formed the basis of a draft Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Framework. Proceeding this meeting, the Framework was field tested in several WHO Member States. In October 2015, Ms Allen attended the Second Public Health Emergency Operation Centre meeting to finalize the Framework. Ms Allen also led the development of a Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Glossary. The Framework can be found here - http://www.who.int/ihr/publications/9789241565134_eng/en/.

User friendly checklists will now be developed as practical tools to assist WHO Member States in preparing and responding to public health emergencies. The CPHMVS will continue to play an active role in supporting this important work.



CPHMVS Lecturer Ms Allen, WHO Member States Representatives, Temporary Advisors and WHO Staff at the Second Public Health Emergency Operation Centre Framework Meeting, October 2015

Junior doctor training program in Vanuatu

Dr Lachlan McIver has spent the past few months working in partnership with other senior doctors and development partners in the Pacific to develop an Intern Training Program in Vanuatu.

Program participants are graduates of medical schools in Cuba, Fiji and China who are returning to their home country, Vanuatu. The Intern Training Program provides graduates with a three month orientation to the Vanuatu health system, after which time the medical graduates will go into a two year internship at hospitals in Vanuatu. Dr McIver is excited about the contribution that this program makes to health in the Pacific.

“It’s a privilege to be involved in this process, which represents almost a tenfold increase in the annual intern intake in Vanuatu, and an approximate 40% increase in the number of doctors in the country. These new medical

graduates have the potential to transform the health system and improve health outcomes in Vanuatu - particularly for the majority of the population who live in poverty, are geographically isolated and lack access to health services - by providing decentralised care beyond the two main referral hospitals and pursuing postgraduate training in generalist medicine. Australia is a world leader in rural and remote health and JCU is a pre-eminent institution in this field. We are thus impelled to support our near-neighbour developing countries through projects like this and I’m very glad to be able to make this small contribution in Vanuatu as part of JCU’s suite of health systems strengthening activities across the Pacific.”



Welcome Rachael Tommbe, PhD scholar

Dr Michelle Redman-McLaren

Congratulations to Ms Rachael Tommbe, Senior Lecturer/Researcher in the School of Health Science at Pacific Adventist

University, Papua New Guinea, who has been awarded a JCU Scholarship to commence her PhD in 2016.

Rachael began conducting HIV research in PNG in 2009, including male circumcision for HIV prevention, faith-based responses to HIV and other collaborative studies with UNSW, PNGIMR and Divine Word University. Building upon this strong base, Rachael will investigate health system capacity to provide male circumcision for HIV prevention in Papua New Guinea. Recent collaborative research on male circumcision in PNG have indicated that male circumcision can be highly acceptable in PNG as an additional HIV preventative strategy. However, there have been concerns expressed regarding the capacity of the PNG health system to support the roll-out of male circumcision services.

Rachael will be supervised by ABRCHSS researchers Prof John McBride, Dr David MacLaren and Prof Sarah Larkins. Congratulations again Rachael, and welcome to the Centre!

Related articles authored by Rachael include:

- Tommbe, R.**, MacLaren, D. J., Redman-MacLaren, M. L., T., M., Asugeni, L., & McBride, W. J. (2013). [Researching male circumcision for HIV prevention in Papua New Guinea: a process that incorporates science, faith and culture](#). Health research policy and systems / BioMed Central, 11(1), 1-8. doi:10.1186/1478-4505-11-44
- MacLaren, D., **Tommbe, R.**, T., M., Manineng, C., Fregonese, F., Redman-MacLaren, M., . . . McBride, W. J. (2013). [Foreskin cutting beliefs and practices and the acceptability of male circumcision for HIV prevention in Papua New Guinea](#). BMC Public Health, 13(1), 818. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-13-818

Working with communities

Centre researcher A/Prof Judy Taylor (CMD) recently launched her book *Working with Communities*, published by Oxford University Press. The book explores critical ideas about community work and associated concepts such as social inclusion, social capital, community participation, community capacity building, and community partnerships. It provides readers with theoretical and conceptual knowledge of community work with strong links to current practice through case studies, practitioner perspectives and discussions about skills.

Congratulations Judy!



Meg Davis, Rachel Cummins, Judy Taylor and Priscilla Page at Judy's book launch.

Collaborative Advantage Research Database



Associate Professor Ronny Gunnarsson

Increased collaboration in research often provides an advantage and promotes success. There are many ways to collaborate in research such as researchers collaborating over organisational boundaries, collaboration in the process of ethics and research governance and in advising the general public and researchers about current projects. The Collaborative Advantage Research Database (CARD) is an electronic database useful for collating research projects.

CARD is used by the College of Medicine and Dentistry to keep track of all projects. We are happy for other areas of JCU to use it as well. The main idea is to find who is engaged in similar research and hence open to possible collaboration. Once a project has been created in CARD, it may be tagged with work places from JCU, Queensland Health or any other work place involved in the research, promoting project collaboration and transparency. The complete JCU structure (including Anton Breinl Research Centre) and most of Queensland Health is part of the work place database.

It is possible to extract lists from CARD of current projects occurring in different areas of the University. More work places can easily be added to the work place database if needed.

Read more at <https://au.researchweb.org/is/jcu/help/project-database> (Diagram credit)



In September, several Centre researchers (also CMD staff) journeyed to South Africa to meet with other members of the [Training for Health Equity Network \(THEnet\)](#). THEnet is an international organisation of 11 medical schools committed to health equity through socially accountable health profession education.

THEnet members from medical schools in Australia, the Philippines, Canada, South Africa, New Mexico, Sudan and Nepal met at Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha, rural Eastern Cape to update the organisation on their research activities and to plan future research priorities.

The passion and belief in their mission, shared by members of this organisation, was remarkable. Watch for exciting research outcomes from this group!



MORE INFORMATION

<http://thenetcommunity.org/>

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Dr Robyn Preston, A/Prof Sabe Sabesan and Dr Michelle Redman-MacLaren on the completion of your doctorates!

[Dr Preston](#) investigated how contextual issues have influenced social accountability at four medical schools in Australia and the Philippines. A/Prof Sabesan evaluated the safety and acceptability of a tele-oncology model of care for North Queensland. [Dr Redman-MacLaren](#) explored how women in Papua New Guinea experience and manage issues surrounding male circumcision. Well done and best wishes for your future endeavours!

Congratulations also to Dr Lorraine Muller who successfully completed her PhD pre-completion seminar. Her topic is "Shifting the Lens: Indigenous research in mainstream Australian culture". Lorraine's book, "A Theory for Indigenous Australian Health and Human Service Workers: Connecting Indigenous Knowledge and Practice", published by Allen and Unwin was recently awarded the winner of the Educational Publishing Awards Australia for 2015 in the "Scholarly Resource" category.

Congratulations to [Dr Bunmi Malau-Aduli](#) for her recent keynote on assessment at the JCU Learning and Teaching Showcase.

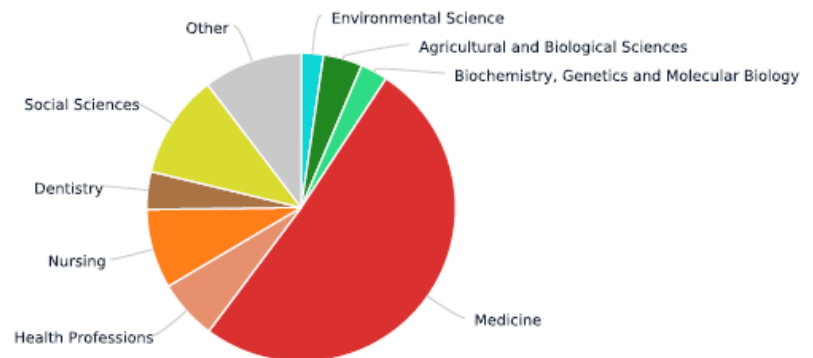
Overview of research output from the ABRCHSS

Researcher members include both JCU employees and adjuncts.

Overview is for the period 2012 to 2015.

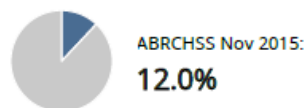
Publications	Citations	Researchers	Field-Weighted Citation Impact	Citations per Publication
501 ▲	3,934	51 ▲	2.56	7.9

Publications by Journal Category

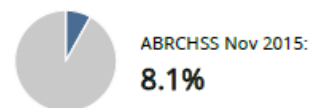


Performance indicators

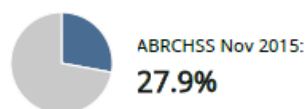
Outputs in Top Percentiles ⚙️
Publications in top 10% most cited worldwide



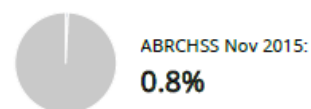
Publications in Top Journal Percentiles ⚙️
Publications in top 10% journals by SNIP



International Collaboration ⚙️
Publications co-authored with researchers in other countries



Academic-Corporate Collaboration ⚙️
Publications with both academic and corporate affiliations



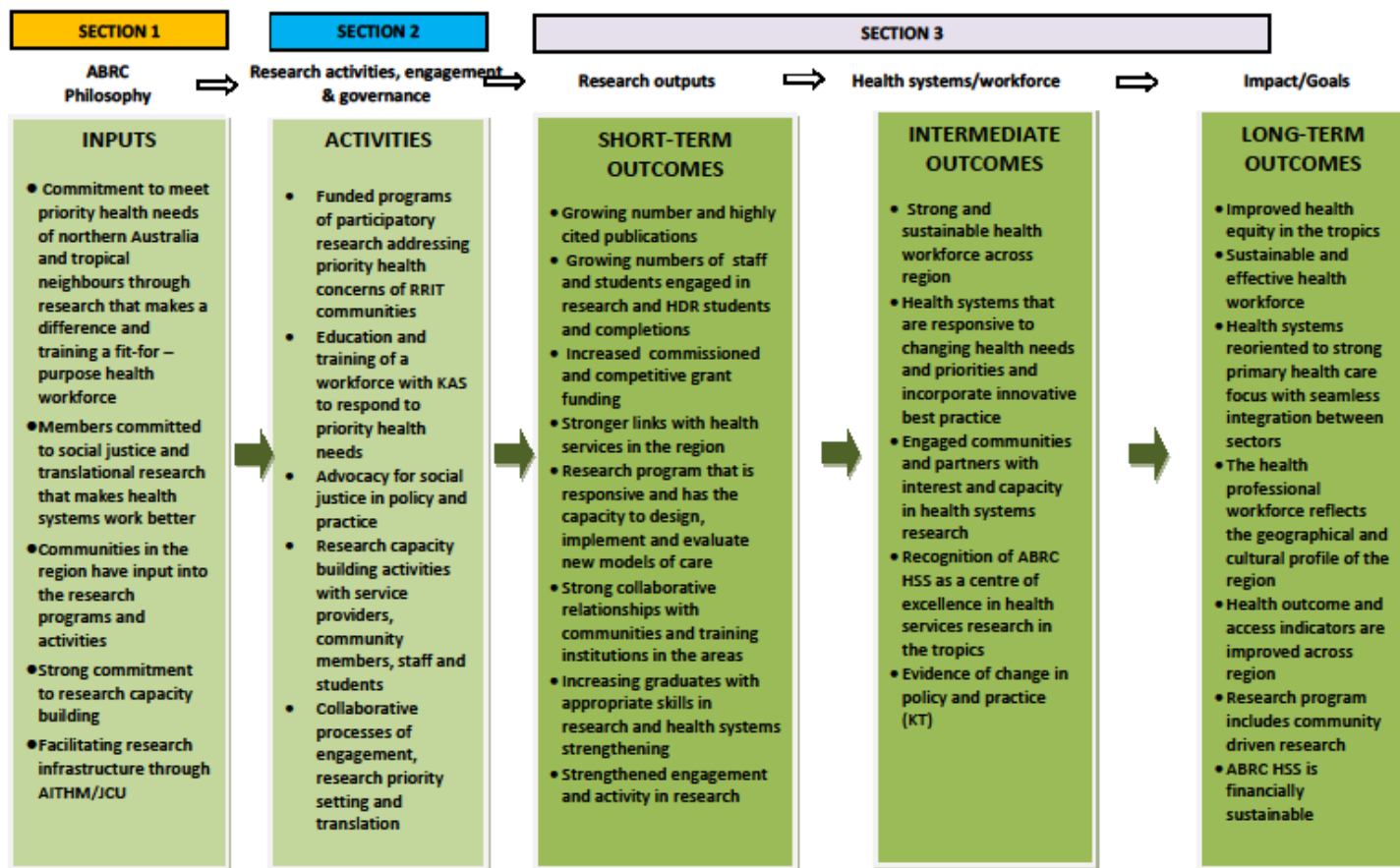
Hot off the press!

Good news about ERA (Excellence in Research Australia) scores for 2015. The JCU ERA score for the 1117 Field of Research (Public health, incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, primary health care, health services and research) has risen to 4 (above world standard). This is a great reflection of the work you are all doing – well done everyone!

Centre Program Logic Framework

The Program Logic Framework aims to outline the Centre's research focus, priorities and future direction. This framework is a work in progress and was discussed at a meeting in July involving ABRCHSS stream leaders. The document is open for comment. Comments may be directed to abrc@jcu.edu.au or directly to the Centre Directors. The [framework](#) may be downloaded from the ABRCHSS website.

The Anton Breinl Research Centre for HSS 'Program Logic'



Upcoming events



International Conference:
Community-Engaged Medical Education in the North
20-25th June, Sault Ste-Marie, Ontario
<http://www.icemen2016.ca/>



Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research
Vancouver, Canada Nov. 14-18th, 2016.
(Abstracts close mid-January)
<http://healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2016/>

Contributions

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

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

SEND IN YOUR NEWS

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

Karen Johnston
abrc@jcu.edu.au
ph 4781 5835

abrc@jcu.edu.au

<https://research.jcu.edu.au/abrc>

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