REPORT FROM THE SA ABORIGINAL HEALTH RESEARCH NETWORK MEETING: ONE MOB - GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Held on Tuesday, 24 September 2013 and entitled “One Mob – Getting to know each other”, the South Australian Aboriginal Health Research Network meeting was designed for sharing stories about research in Aboriginal health. Approximately 50 network members gathered to hear the following people’s stories:

- Jeffery Newchurch, Narrunga/Kaurna Elder
- Andrew Stanley and Almond Sparrow, Uni SA (SA NT DataLink)
- Carmel McNamara and Lauren Maksimovic, Cancer Council SA
- John Boully, GP
- Kristin Carson, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital
- Mandy Anderson and Anna Seamark, Women’s and Children's Hospital
- Arwen Nikolof, The Lowitja Institute
- Judith Streak-Gomersall, Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI)
- Wendy Keech, Heart Foundation
- Rosie King, AHCSA.
Over the past 12 years, Jeffrey has been working closely with archaeologists, the museum and the state government on the Aboriginal repatriation program, which involves the reburial of Aboriginal remains after burial sites have been disturbed during excavations. Jeffrey feels he has the responsibility for the sake of his people to ensure their ancestors are respectfully reburied in their traditional country / area.

Jeffrey has been working towards ensuring Aboriginal consultation and involvement is used in the way South Australian museums manage the 40,000+ Aboriginal collections they hold. More recently, he has been working with Dr Susan Hayes from Wollongong University on the 3D facial approximation project. Jeffrey also wants to make sure that Aboriginal people are acknowledged as co-author or recipient when appropriate.

Jeffrey expressed the importance of family and country to Aboriginal people and the cultural significance of life events such as funerals and how important it is to do it “our way”. Aboriginal people have a lot to give to society and research has to be conducted in a manner which is respectful of Aboriginal communities to ensure better pathways, journeys and outcomes.

JEFFREY NEWCHURCH, Narrunga Kaurna Elder

Jeffrey was born and raised in Point Pearce and was fortunate to spend some of his early school years in New Zealand after being selected as part of the Point Pearce education program.

ALMOND SPARROW AND ANDREW STANLEY, SA NT DataLink

SA NT DataLink facilitates local and national linked data research, focusing on issues of State, Territory and national importance by producing ‘linkage keys’ that allow for sophisticated, de-identified and cost effective research using population wide data from multiple sectors. This research method can provide unique insights to the often complex relationship between health determinants and outcomes and offers investigators the opportunity to examine multi-factorial causes of poor health and disadvantage, using highly representative study populations.

SA NT DataLink is working with Dr Paul Yerrell, Senior Research Fellow of the Wardliparingga Unit at SAHMRI, on an innovative project – Aboriginal Cancer Stories Study (ACceSS). This project will explore the linkage between a sample of coded Aboriginal cancer patient stories and quantitative population wide cancer incidence, treatment and survival related data from South Australian health administrative datasets. This advanced data monitoring system is being developed by Professor David Roder, of UniSA and SAHMRI. Using data linkage to analyse the patient experience in conjunction with population administrative data will be a first in South Australia.

SA NT DataLink is committed to supporting Aboriginal population research using linked data. Our network of linked-data researchers are offered specialised study design, data access, and technical feasibility advice. Our approach is informative and wherever possible collaborative. Technical review of grant and ethics applications as well as coordination of data access approvals ensures that researchers who are new to this method feel guided and supported.

For more information please visit www.santdatalink.org.au.

CARMEL MCNAMARA AND LAUREN MAKSIMOVIC

“Yarning About Cancer” Project

The “Yarning About Cancer” project is a partnership between Cancer Council SA and the Aboriginal Health Council of SA, and aims to:

- Develop cancer support group facilitator training that is relevant for Aboriginal health professionals and Aboriginal community members and
- Support the piloting of culturally appropriate cancer support group model/s for Aboriginal people affected by cancer.

The need for culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal people affected by cancer was highlighted at the Perko Ngurratti Healing Messages Cancer Forum, held in 2006. It was also included in the recommendations of the Aboriginal Companion Document to the Statewide Cancer Control Plan 2012 - 2015.

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Carmel McNamara
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In 1973, as a final year medical student, John spent three months immersed in the daily clinical care responsibilities on Yalata ‘Mission Reserve’ (as it was then), in the Far-West of South Australia near the Head of the Great Australian Bight.

His early and extended exposure to the situation of the Western Desert ‘Anangu Pitjantjatjara’ (who had been moved off their lands due to the British atomic bomb tests) caused him to reflect on the inadequacies of health services of that time, and, indeed, to question the fundamental principles that underpin standard and routine practices of health and medical care practices that persist to this day.

He subsequently worked for the establishment and development of Aboriginal medical services, believing that community-based and community-driven initiatives were essential if people were to have more opportunities for improving their health. He has worked as a GP across three states in many different communities.

John has had a particular interest in child respiratory and ear disease. In the 1970’s he worked alongside Dr Archie Kalokerinos at Redfern AMS, and this working relationship reinforced his understanding that good nutrition is essential for health, and that nutrients need to be incorporated into standard medical practice to support immune systems if ever we are to address the high rates of morbidity that occur so early in life, remain so prevalent, and lead to so much chronic ill-health and pathology.

John believes that, children need to grow up with intact eardrums, and a clear middle ear cavity, to have a chance of a decent life. He believes that achieving this requires a re-orientation of approach so that all forms of respiratory ill-health (including the viral component of inflammation) are more effectively managed.

He advocates that so-called ‘cold’s need to be treated as serious illnesses, for if they are not, they tend to recur and/or persist, and lead to serious conditions such as chronic rhinitis and sinusitis, recurrent tonsillitis, otitis media and chronic ear disease, rheumatic carditis, glomerulonephritis, among others. Pneumonia and bronchiectasis are other serious consequences that remain so prevalent today.

By attending the Network meetings John was hopeful of finding colleagues within the research community so that he may add his voice to research in this area.

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KRISTIN CARSON, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Tobacco use is known to cause premature death and contributes to a large number of chronic diseases including heart, lung, liver, brain and kidney disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke and vascular diseases.

For this reason research that tries to identify the barriers and enablers around smoking cessation programs for adults and tobacco abuse prevention programs in youth can be considered important areas of research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Following meetings and consultation with over 100 Aboriginal Elders, researchers, key community stakeholders and doctors from around Australia we have developed a research project that uses qualitative techniques (focus groups and one-on-one interviews) to find out what works, what doesn’t and why for these tobacco programs.

We are also intending to look at some of the barriers and facilitators for doctor visits by Aboriginal people who have these tobacco-related conditions and to identify what are the key health priorities in the eyes of our participants that should be a focus for future research and clinical practice improvement initiatives.

This work is being done through the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the University of Adelaide, led by senior researcher and PhD scholar Kristen Carson.

Kirsten can be contacted at Kristin.Carson@health.sa.gov.au or 8222 8685 for any further information relating to this work.

MANDY ANDERSON AND ANNA SEAMARK FOR MARIA MAKRIDES, SAHMRI Healthy Mothers, Babies & Children

Maria Makrides is SAHMRI Healthy Mothers Babies & Children Theme Leader, and also leads a multi-disciplinary research group at the Child Nutrition Research Centre (CNRC). The team at the CNRC is comprised of over 36 staff who are highly skilled in conducting large scale randomised controlled nutrition intervention trials. The focus is on nutrients that are hypothesised to be involved in overcoming aberrations in cognition, growth and immune function/allergy. Particular attention is given to interventions that are applied during pregnancy and the first two years after birth, the first 1000 days, designated by the WHO as the “window of opportunity” that is critical to ensuring a healthy start to life and improved long term health of populations.

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Our next network meeting is Thursday 28 November, 9-12pm at the Hindmarsh Education Centre. More information is outlined in our news and opportunities section.
ARWEN NIKOLOF, Lowitja Institute

Arwen works for the Lowitja Institute, Australia’s National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research. It is the only research organisation in Australia with a sole focus on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

There are 14 partner organisations from across Australia, who are a mix of research institutions, health services and government organisations. There is an independent Board, with a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members.

Based in Melbourne with offices located in Adelaide, Darwin and Brisbane, the Institute:

• Works with Australia’s leading health research institutions, policymakers and community organisations to commission and invest in targeted, world-class health research that will improve the health and lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
• Ensures that knowledge arising from research is communicated widely and that innovations identified by research are implemented and evaluated.
• Collaborates with Australian educational and training organisations to support the growth of a professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, and health research, workforce.

Information about the approach to research, information on research projects and access to resources for researchers and health services is available at: http://www.lowitja.org.au/about-us.


Sharing our knowledge about the research happening across Australia is important. You can contact the Lowitja Institute via email: Arwen.nikolof@lowitja.org.au or phone on 08 211 0401.

WARDLIPARINGGA BREAKING NEWS

Professor Alex Brown wins two NHMRC grants; Aboriginal Cancer Data and Disparities & Aboriginal Cardiovascular Omega-3 Randomised Controlled Trial. For more information, please see www.sahmri.com/research/research-themes/aboriginal/.

JUDITH STREAK GOMERSALL, Joanna Briggs Institute

Judith is currently involved in research and associated knowledge translation activities of the newly established NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence for Translational Research (CRE) in the Management of Chronic Disease in Indigenous Populations. This project is going to be implemented over the next five years. It encompasses 12 systematic reviews and related knowledge translation projects (evidence based implementation projects involving clinicians that use evidence based audit and feedback to promote best practices) on questions identified by Aboriginal community representatives and leading Aboriginal health researchers as priorities to address for improving health outcomes in Aboriginal chronic disease related health outcomes. Aside from making a contribution to closing the inequality gap that exists between health outcomes of Aboriginal and other Australians, objectives of the CRE include: developing understanding of how to conduct systematic reviews and knowledge translation projects that are sensitive to Aboriginal cultural and other characteristics; developing Aboriginal health research capacity and creating a group of clinicians delivering primary health care services in Aboriginal communities that are well versed in evidence based best practice.

The CRE is a partnership between the School of Translational Science at the University of Adelaide (Chief Investigator Professor Alan Pearson), SAHMRI Wardliparingga Unit (Chief Investigator Professor Alex Brown), School of Public Health at the University of Adelaide (Chief Investigator Professor Annette Braunack-Mayer) and NACCHO (Professor Ngiare Brown). A large number of associate investigators from each of the Chief Investigator institutions will support the implementation of the project.

Four research fellows have been employed in the CRE (one at each institution) to focus on the research and knowledge translation activities of the project.

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SMOKING CAMPAIGN, “REWRITE YOUR STORY” AWARDED DEADLY AWARD

The “Rewrite Your Story” health promotion campaign, a partnership between Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc., the Aboriginal Health Council of SA, Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service, and the Cancer Council SA, was awarded the Excellence in Health Through the Promotion of Healthy and Smoke Free Lifestyles Award at the Deadlys in September.

WENDY KEECH, Heart Foundation

In South Australia, the Heart Foundation has been looking at in hospital disparities in the rates of coronary angiography (investigation) and revascularisation (intervention) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal South Australians. The project is being led by the Heart Foundation and supported by the Statewide Cardiology Clinical Network and Wardliparingga. The first phase of the research has recently been completed, and we are now in the process of finalising ethics to undertake a case note audit of 274 Aboriginal people who were admitted for an acute coronary syndrome between 2007 and 2013, with a non-Aboriginal ‘matched’ patient. We will also undertake a systematic literature review to look at the experiences of Aboriginal people in hospital for acute cardiac events.

Outside of research, the Heart Foundation (SA) is working with SA Health and the Health Advisory Council at Amata in the APY lands to support and training for youth and community workers to promote heart health messages across the community, particularly regarding healthy food, walking, tobacco control and warning signs of a heart attack messages. We are also connecting with the new healthy lifestyle workers at Ngarampa Health Service to look at a region wide approach to promoting heart health.

Additionally, through a partnership with SA Health and the SA Cardiology Clinical Network, the Heart Foundation is providing a suite of Heart Health resources and training across the state to health professionals (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) on how to work with patients, carers and families to prevent and manage heart disease. There are two resources specifically designed for Aboriginal people that are available free of charge. “My Heart, My Family, Our Culture” and “Living Everyday With My Heart Failure”.

The Heart Foundation is also very pleased to support the development and implementation of SA Health’s Rheumatic Fever/Rheumatic Heart Disease registry and hope to see this registry really drive changes across the state in identification and management of these preventable conditions.

ROSIE KING, Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia

The Next Steps project is a collaborative project between the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) and the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit, led by AHCSA and funded by Wardliparingga.

The Next Steps project seeks to develop agreed priorities for research in Aboriginal health in South Australia through a mixed method qualitative study approach. The research is being conducted within the South Australian Aboriginal community, with significant involvement encouraged from the members of AHCSA, but also inclusive of other Aboriginal organisations in the state.

This project builds upon work commissioned by AHCSA in 2005, which was a scoping study reporting on the issues related to Indigenous health research in South Australia. It was the first Indigenous health research collaborative initiative involving AHCSA, the Department of Health and each of the three universities: Flinders University, the University of Adelaide, and the University of South Australia.

For more information on the Next Steps project, contact Rosie King at AHCSA (rosie.king@ahcsa.org.au or 8273 7200)

WARU HOSTS COUNCIL OF ABORIGINAL ELDERS SA

On Wednesday 2 October, the Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit hosted a meeting of the Council of Aboriginal Elders SA. The Elders from around the state heard of SAHMRI’s developments to date, and the plans and proposed work of Wardliparingga. The Elders were very interested to know about how Wardliparingga intends to go about research; particularly our engagement with the community and how we will translate our work to ensure it makes a difference in Aboriginal peoples lives.
News and Opportunities

WARDLIPARINGGA FEATURED IN IN DAILY
The Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit was recently featured in InDaily. To read the article and see the team, follow the link: (http://www.sahmrinews.com/?iid=82043#folio=1).

FOLLOW WARDLIPARINGGA ONLINE!
Wardliparingga is now on Twitter and Facebook! If you are on Twitter, you can follow us @SAHMRI_WARU and if you are on Facebook, like us: www.facebook.com/sahmriwaru

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL HEALTH RESEARCH NETWORK MEETING: HEALTH CAN'T DO IT ALONE
When: 9am - 12pm - Thursday 28 November, 2013
Venue: The Education Development Centre, 4 Milner St Hindmarsh
Theme: Health can’t do it alone: How is the health of Aboriginal South Australians influenced by their education, and how is education influenced by their health?

IMPLEMENTATION IN ABORIGINAL HEALTH: EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA
When: 9:30am – 4:30pm, Wednesday, 20 November, 2013
Venue: Victoria Square Campus, Flinders University
This workshop will be framed around implementation in Aboriginal health in the local South Australian context. For more information and to register, follow the link: (http://www.flinders.edu.au/events/event/implementation-in-aboriginal-health).

HEALTH SERVICES, RACISM AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH: GAINING TRACTION FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE
When: 21-22 November 2013
Venue: Flinders University
This event is presented by the Network of Poche Centres for Indigenous Health, Wardliparingga Aboriginal Research Unit at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), and the Southgate Institute for Health, Society and Equity at Flinders University.
For more information, visit www.flinders.edu.au/events or address any enquiries to Ms Di Autio, ph. 08 7221 8604; email: di.autio@flinders.edu.au.

INDIGENOUS ALLIED HEALTH AUSTRALIA (IAHA) 2ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE
When: 26-27 November 2013
Venue: Hilton, Adelaide
Theme: Healthy Footprints Leading Generational Change
The conference will focus on how allied health professionals are leading the way to create generational change and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead healthy lives and create brighter futures for themselves, their families and their communities.

2014 ROBERTA SYKES HARVARD CLUB SCHOLARSHIP
The Roberta Sykes Indigenous Foundation, in conjunction with the Harvard Club of Australia, is offering a fully funded scholarship for one Indigenous Australian to undertake a postgraduate degree at Harvard University commencing in August 2014. Applications close 15 December 2013.
The value of the scholarship is up to AU$60,000 per annum to be paid over the course of the scholar’s study. The Scholarship covers university fees, travel costs and living expenses. For more details, visit www.robertasykesfoundation.com.au or contact Tess Crellin on tess.crellin@auroraproject.com.au.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARDS: OFFICE FOR YOUTH ABORIGINAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Applications for the South Australian Young Achiever Awards – Office for Youth Aboriginal Achievement Award are now open.
This award is open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged up to 28 in South Australia.
The award recognises young Aboriginal people who are using their stories and life experiences to build up their community and encourage others to strive for their dreams. It is these passionate and dedicated young Aboriginal people who make a difference in South Australia. The Office for Youth Aboriginal Achievement Award is to acknowledge and congratulate their commitment in achieving excellence.

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