It is with pleasure that I write this foreword for this inaugural report.

Over the last five years much has happened for the School and its context in which research activity occurs and evolves. The achievement of an ERA rating of ‘above world standard’ in the specific research field of nursing in 2012 was a surprise to some but not all, within the University.

Research is an important force in generating a body of scientific knowledge that adds a vital perspective to the delivery of the nation’s healthcare and for the benefit of society. The recently released McKeon Report, 2013, the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research, suggests a different future for researchers within the health field.

Dr Sue K Donaldson, of John Hopkins University, described a model of nursing research that focuses on the laws and processes that affect the wellbeing and optimum functioning of human beings, whether sick or well, (Donaldson, 1996). I would suggest that this model is appropriate for others engaged in the health and social care fields as we seek to build a knowledge base that will support optimal person-centred care and enhance overall independent functioning.

In reading this report, one will become struck by the multi-disciplinary integration of the School’s research activity and output, all done in an attempt to create robust science and better learning for our students.

Increasingly it is necessary to integrate basic, applied and health services research utilising a broad range of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The disciplines represented in the School of Health and Human Sciences are playing a major role, regionally and nationally, in this integration with promotion of a collaborative approach to research. We are actively drawing upon various disciplines and professional groups to bring the perspectives of diverse knowledge areas to bear on the complex issues of human health and wellbeing and patient care.

The collaborations we have and are establishing with colleagues in the aged care sector, the health and hospital local health districts, Medicare Locals and the Indigenous community are being built upon mutual interest, respect and desire to develop knowledge to aid a better understanding of prevention, treatment care and wellbeing. This includes social and cultural contexts of health and the human condition; as well as efforts to enhance the capacities of communities and individuals to become directly involved in promoting the health of its members.

The School’s journey in establishing a research identity is growing, we have advanced considerably over the last five years. The next five years will be a time of even greater innovation and accomplishment.

I hope you enjoy reading the story of our journey thus far.

Congratulations to those who have contributed to this report and thank you to our partners in research for helping it to happen.

Prof Iain Graham, Phd RN FACN
Dean of School, Head of School
School of Health & Human Sciences
Southern Cross University
Welcome to the inaugural annual research report of the School of Health and Human Sciences. This report provides a snapshot of the research staff and activity within the School since the start of 2012. The School has undergone almost continual change over the past five years, with mergers, acquisitions and expansion into a wide range of professional disciplines and research areas. As such, this report provides an important stocktake of the School's research activity as we attempt to consolidate and grow our research performance.

As you will see, the School comprises a highly diverse group of staff, research methods, collaborators and research outputs. However, this diversity does not detract from our research quality. We were privileged to contribute to SCU achieving a ranking of 4 out of a possible 5 in the Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA) 2012 field of nursing. Since January 2012, staff and students produced 235 publications and attracted in excess of $1 million in research income. Despite our regional base, we have a growing number of national and international collaborations with researchers and institutions across Australia and in Asia, North America and Europe, as well as regionally.

Our activities align well with our research mission, “that researchers within the School of Health and Human Sciences aim to undertake high quality and innovative research that contributes to the understanding and improvement of the health and wellbeing of the community”. In addition to creating new knowledge that will underpin our endeavours we aim to embed practice in the WHO primary health care policy “Now more than ever” (WHO 2008) and ensure that practice, policy, and education are evidence-based. We recognise that participation and interdisciplinary collaboration with practitioners, policy makers and consumers is intrinsic to improved outcomes for health, education, practice and service.

Although the School undertakes a wide range of activities across the full spectrum of health science, as well as pure and behavioural science, there are research areas in which we have particular strengths and research programs of noteworthy interest. To enable the School to build an international reputation for research excellence, we propose to narrow the focus of our research activities to present our expertise to selected markets. Specifically, we believe that the focus on interdisciplinary health care is an appropriate foundation on which to base our activities as this builds on strengths within the following areas:

- Plurality of disciplines, methodological expertise and specific topical interest within the School.
- Theoretical research as well as applied research with a strong emphasis on the application of research into practice.
- Research activities aimed at prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, and accommodation of a full range of long-term conditions, as well as understanding the physiological basis underpinning the treatment and management of disease.
- A solid research foundation in health workforce development and redesign, with a particular focus on community-based practitioners and the non-medical workforce.
- Close links with local and regional health service organisations and a strong focus on the delivery of health care.

As our School continues to grow, consolidate and mature, we will continue to deliver high quality outputs that reflect these themes. In this report we celebrate the contribution of a number of our high profile researchers, our grant successes, publications and profiles of some of our current and past higher degrees research training students. No doubt, 2014 will see more changes to our staffing and research activity, however now is our opportunity to bring these together into coherent themes.

Prof Susan Nancarrow, PhD
Director Research
School of Health & Human Sciences
Southern Cross University
What are your career highlights and greatest career achievements?

There are two related areas that I think of in response to this question: one is being invited to run the Australian arm of an international study on Medical Decisions at the End of Life, in collaboration with researchers in six European countries; the other is playing a major role, through my research, in changing the law in Queensland to allow people to write legally-binding Advance Directives and appoint substitute decision-makers to ensure their wishes are respected if they lose capacity. There was almost nothing happening on Advance Care Planning (ACP) in Australia when I started that work; now all states/territories have some form of ACP and it is recommended in Productivity Commission reports, health and hospital reports and other government documents. In addition, the Australian Government recently provided funding to enable ACP documents to be uploaded to the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record.

My “passion” to work on these two issues came from my work in developing the Queensland “60 & Better” project; I did the pilot study 22 years ago, then a state-wide information tour, with Queensland Health adopting the project as their “flagship” ageing program. There are now over twenty “60 & Better” projects in Queensland; they are all incorporated and have a biennial conference.

How did you get to where you are now?

I left school at 15, returned at 35 to do an Associate Diploma in Arts at Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education (now SCU) majoring in drama; my results from that allowed me to do an Honours Degree in Social Work, then a Master of Public Health, then a PhD (all at UQ) after which I was offered the position of Foundation Professor of Aged Services at SCU.

I have a strong commitment to human rights and social justice, which motivated me to work to improve the lives of older people, especially the end stage of their lives. ACP is part of that but there is still much to do in the area of adequate pain relief in terminal illness, including educating doctors, nurses and the wider community that giving adequate pain relief, even if it risks hastening death, is not euthanasia.

What advice would you give to a new researcher starting out?

Learn as much as you can from every Chief Investigator/experienced researcher you work with: one taught me to write at a higher level and more succinctly; another taught me the joy of statistics; a third, the value of combining qualitative and quantitative methods; still another the vital importance of rigorous analysis. There were many other people who contributed to expanding my knowledge and skills, including some I listened to at conferences or seminars – don’t be afraid to go and speak to conference presenters who are working in your area of interest. Most will be helpful – those who are not, you don’t want to emulate anyway!

Ideally, work in an area that you are passionate about (that lights a “fire in the belly”) but it will be easier to get funding if you choose an area that is also nationally or regionally relevant; you may have to “serve your apprenticeship” on research that is not an absolute match of your interests while you build a track record.

Be proud of your achievements but don’t overestimate where you are on the “learning ladder”; e.g. if you do a literature review under guidance of a CI, and/or draft a paper from the results of a study, that does not entitle you to be 1st author. The paper will almost certainly be based on a study/project that has been some
years in germination of the idea, conceptualisation, study design and all of the other components that go to doing good research, with the intellectual input of the CI(s) required to even get the grant to do the study. On the other hand, if you do “put the paper together” you deserve to be listed as an author, and if that is not looking likely then you need to raise the issue with your CI – respectfully – stating what you understand the requirement for authorship to be and that you believe you meet that. In extreme cases it may be necessary to discuss such an issue with senior staff in the Division of Research.

What’s next? What are your future ambitions?

I will be leaving SCU in a few months so I have started my own consultancy company; I will continue to advocate (agitate!) for better end-of-life care, including adequate pain relief and prevention of aggressive over-treatment with invasive technology of older people for whom such treatment is clearly futile, has the potential to increase suffering and in most cases does not prolong life but merely prolongs the dying process. Alongside this, and related to it, I will do one-on-one Advance Care Planning with older people and their families, continue to offer training of staff in residential, acute and community care, and also offer patient advocacy. I will undertake research and evaluation projects in my areas of interest as they become available.

Anything else you would like to add?

I feel privileged to be able to do the work I have done, and to collaborate with some extremely fine people who have enhanced my life both personally and professionally. While university-based research is becoming ever more challenging, it is still worth the effort required.

Professor Garry Egger

Professor, Lifestyle Medicine and Applied Health Promotion

What are your career highlights and greatest career achievements?

Probably my greatest career highlight was receiving the Australian medal for services to medical education and health promotion. I was awarded this last year in recognition of 40 years in health promotion, and in particular, the last 15 years in the education of general practitioners and allied health professionals.

Hopefully though, my best years are still ahead of me. My final goal (yes, this is really my final goal) is to introduce the model of group medical visits, developed in the United States, to Australia. I think this is really the best model for delivering health care for people with chronic disease, and we’re getting a lot of support from the medical community for it. The fact that we’re getting resistance from Medicare and the Department of Health means that we’re probably onto something.

How did you get to where you are now?

It was really by sheer chance and circumstance. When I first left university, I was primarily interested in behaviour change. Initially I was interested in marketing and became a management consultant for a few years. After a while I became disillusioned with the ethics and sustainability of it. I really wanted to be able to use what I learnt in my behaviour change studies and physiology for social good, but couldn’t work out how to do it. Through a friend, I found a job in health education that used all of my skills. I loved it and have been in this field ever since.

My career has been very variable. I haven't ended up where I expected to be. I really expected that I would become a clinician (e.g. psych, behavioural sciences), but I'm not unhappy with where I am.

I haven’t been an academic all my life. I have always been part consultant and part academic. I dipped into research and managed to keep publications up so I could stay academically relevant and get back into academia if I wanted to. After my PhD, I always thought I would come back to the university sector to "put
back’ into the system, but I wanted to experience the real world. After 30 years out of the system, I came back to academia, but unfortunately, I came back at the wrong time – with major funding cuts making it very difficult.

What advice would you give to a new researcher starting out?

I would tell a new researcher to follow your passion and stick with it. I always developed new concepts or ideas, then got bored and moved on, leaving someone else to make the money from it. I don’t have any regrets about that, but if I’d stuck with each idea, I might be a little better off financially than I am now. I’ve been lucky though because I could move on to so many new concepts.

The second thing I would say is that it’s important to have a vision of the big picture. Dare to think big. Research scientists are becoming more and more narrow in their perspective. They don’t move back to look at the big picture. For instance, I’ve spent the last 20 years talking about the potential dangers of exponential economic growth and how it affects health, but people don’t listen. For instance, obesity and climate change have the same causes. We overuse resources to save people using their own energy, so we destroy the planet at the same time as we reduce people’s health. The two factors need to be seen together. We are doing a project on Norfolk Island which looks at both items together, but we had a lot of trouble getting funding for it.

What do you want to do when you grow up?

I want to make a decision about what I want to do when I grow up! I sometimes think about just giving up and “dropping out” like I planned to 30 years ago… going kayaking…

Seriously though, I would like to get the group visits model going in Australia. That will definitely be my last hurrah.

Anything else you would like to add?

I was giving a presentation yesterday, and because of my bad knees, I said at the start “I hope you don’t mind me sitting down, I’m 66 and got bad knees”. The next speaker, who was waiting in the front row said, “Wait until you’re 101.” He was a doctor who was a naval surgeon in WWI and was a fantastic speaker with an amazing memory at 101 years of age. It made me feel like a bit of a whinger and the fact that I should just get on with it and keep trying to do things for the human race – not become dejected and think about quitting from time to time.

Dr Tini Gruner

Senior Lecturer, Naturopathy Clinic Coordinator and Course Coordinator B Clinical Sciences

What are your career highlights and greatest career achievements?

Probably my greatest highlight is still to come – at the end of November when my first PhD student will have graduated. Other highlights have been getting my senior lectureship at SCU and being awarded an adjunct professorship in New Zealand.

Tell us about your career journey

I was always interested in health and how the human body functions, even as a teenager. But the medical model never suited me. Studying medicine and cutting up people wasn’t my thing. So instead, I studied chemistry to try to understand what everything around me is made of. Chemistry didn’t give me the answers either, but I don’t give up easily and finished with a Masters degree. I went travelling and decided only to stop...
once I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to work with my hands and my head for the good of people. I had already started dabbling in herbs and massage, and had studied some nutrition. When I came to Auckland on my travels, I met some naturopaths and the penny dropped. I met them in December and started a naturopathy course in February. It was a move I've never regretted. I've done lots of other short courses, whatever was available to me at the time. I did various other jobs, like teacher training, to support myself. Then I saw a job in Christchurch teaching naturopathy. When the college went into receivership, I took over a prestigious private practice from one of New Zealand’s leading naturopaths. Then I saw a brochure to study a Master of medical science. It looked very interesting, but when I saw the Dean, he said “you’ve got a Masters already, why don’t you do a PhD?” So I did. My research topic was vitamin B12 and nutritional chemistry.

When I finished my PhD, private practice didn’t seem quite right and I looked for something else. I looked ‘across the ditch’ (from NZ) and was offered a job at the Australian College of Natural Medicines (now Endeavour College of Natural Health) as Head of Faculty Naturopathy. I developed that course further as the national training packages came into force.

About 14 months later, there was a lecturer position available at the School of Natural and Complementary Medicine at SCU. Paul Orrock asked if I wanted to apply. ‘That was almost 11 years ago and I’ve worked at SCU ever since, amid department and organisational changes in the School, through to my cancer diagnosis last year.’

What advice would you give to your profession?

You can make a success of your clinic – don’t feel that you need to undercharge and don’t under-prescribe. Often people who come to naturopaths for a consultation at the SCU clinic don’t have much money so there is a tendency not to prescribe a lot of herbs or supplements that would be appropriate, but in order for people to get well, it shouldn’t stop you prescribing appropriate treatment.

Make yourself known in the community. Hand out flyers, give talks (to community groups, for instance), run regular newsletters and do what you can to be noticed.

What advice would you give to a new researcher starting out?

Collaborate, don’t do it on your own. Start small, not with a randomised controlled trial. Do smaller projects that show you what you can do. Get your name out there, keep key people on the papers. Start slow and manageable, for instance, with questionnaires, interviews, focus groups.

What are your future ambitions for your profession?

The population is not suffering from a deficiency of Prozac or Frusemide, or any drugs for that matter. Nutrition should be the first line of defence as these support metabolic pathways that tend to be imbalanced in disease, and help tone and manipulate systems. Herbs and plants contain drugs as well, but they are safer when they are present in the whole plant. Only if these measures are not sufficient then pharmaceutical and other medical intervention should be considered. Pharmaceutical medicine shouldn’t be the first line of defence.

Anything else you would like to add?

My vision for my profession is that I would like to see naturopathy on the same footing with orthodox medicine. Our training is solid, we have a lot to offer and our approach would be a lot cheaper for the health system. There needs to be a real shift in attitudes.
From 2012–2013, the School’s researchers were awarded research grants to the value of $1.2 million.

Funder: DFAT Grants – Australia-Thai Institute Grant
Project: Enhancing language and cross-cultural research skills in postgraduate students through a training and exchange program
Investigators: Heather Winskel. A collaborative project with Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
Total Grant: $16,500

This collaborative project aims to enhance the language and cross-cultural research skills of postgraduate students through a training and exchange program. A series of training workshops will be conducted at Chulalongkorn University and a collaborative peer mentoring exchange scheme will be established between linguistic and psychology postgraduate students with SCU, so students can share and exchange complementary skills and expertise. An Australia-Thai Applied Language and Cross-cultural website will be launched to exchange ideas and promote joint research projects arising from this endeavour.

Funder: DFAT Grants – Australia-China Council Grant
Project: Second language learning and cultural exchange in early childhood education using digital technologies
Investigators: Heather Winskel. A collaborative project with East China Normal University, Shanghai, China
Total Grant: $25,458

Early childhood years form an important stage for learning and educational development. Young children are particularly receptive to learning a second language. The project facilitates effective second language teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese and English in preschool classrooms through the use of interactive digital technologies. Developments in digital technologies enable us to share resources and ideas, pedagogical best practices in second language teaching/learning, and build linkages between teachers and language classrooms, so real-time language exchanges and interactions between native speakers in both countries can be established. Interactions with native speakers of the second language are made possible even in rural or regional areas.

Funder: Office for Learning and Teaching
Project: Building institutional capacity to enhance access, participation and progression in work integrated learning (WIL)
Investigators: Keri Moore, Deborah Peach (QUT), Matthew Campbell (Griffith)
Total Grant: $211,000

This project will translate inclusive education principles into the WIL context in order to improve student access, participation and progression. The project intends to use a strategic approach across four levels: principles, policies, guidelines, and procedures to support students from diverse backgrounds in the disciplines of built environment, business and health.
Funder: Health Education Training Institute (HETI)
Project: Better Prepared, Better Placement
Investigators: Sandra Grace, Keri Moore, Annette Morgan, Lissa Ingram, Julie Streckfuss, Gopi McLeod
Total Grant: $92,107

To prepare students and supervisors for clinical placements, this project developed and evaluated an online cross-disciplinary resource comprising a suite of innovative online tools; self-assessments, guides, clinical scenarios, and negotiated learning plans. The resource was trialled in two host organisations across five disciplines (nursing, midwifery, exercise science, osteopathy and occupational therapy). Evaluation of the project found the resource clarified expectations for students and supervisors and helped students set realistic learning goals. Further funding was awarded to continue developing the Better Prepared, Better Placement resource. Additions included interprofessional learning tools, further professional development resources for supervisors, and strategies to promote resource sustainability.

Funder: Department of Health & Ageing
Project: Primary health care for nurses: Developing strategies for the prevention of chronic illness in nurses
Investigators: Kay Ross, Jennifer Barr
Total Grant: $50,502

There are around 270,000 nurses working in Australia but little is known about their health and how it can impact patient care. Preliminary analysis of the data from over 6000 nurses shows that nurses are susceptible to developing lifestyle related disease and these results will be used to address nurses’ health and wellbeing.

Funder: Judith Mason & Harold Stannett Williams Memorial Foundation
Project: Comparing intermittent and graded exercise
Investigators: Suzanne Broadbent, Rosanne Coutts
Total Grant: $80,795

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is characterised by persistent chronic and recurring fatigue lasting for more than six months. The fatigue does not result from physical activity and is not improved by rest. Rehabilitation is usually slow with symptoms described as fluctuating. Most patients relate that they never return to their pre-morbid level of health. This project is investigating the ability of two types of physical activity (graded and intermittent exercise) to improve patient fitness and immune function and also reduce the symptoms of fatigue. The results of this registered clinical trial will provide information about the role of physical activity in best-practice for CFS management.

Funder: Nurses and Midwives Board of Australia (NMBA)
Project: Nurses and Midwives Board of Australia (NMBA) commissioned project to revise the Australian Nurse Practitioner Standards
Investigators: Andrew Cashin, in collaboration with Tom Buckley, Donna Waters, John Kelly (USYD), Sandra Dunn (CDU), Marie Heartfield (Flinders University), Julianne Bryce (ANF), Darlene Cox (Healthcare Consumers Association), Judith Donoghue (UTS)
Total Grant: $311,000

In 2012 the NMBA commissioned research to revise the Australian Nurse Practitioner Standards. This research included development of iterative drafts of the standards based on public consultation through focus groups (including Nurse Practitioner and consumer groups across Australia), online surveys of internal partners of AHPRA, and work based observation of a stratified sample of Nurse Practitioners based on geographic location and specialty, requiring twenty-two site specific approvals; a mammoth but rewarding task. The new standards were launched by the NMBA at the Australian College of Nurse Practitioner Conference in Tasmania on September 27th 2013 following a plenary address by Andrew Cashin (CI).
Funders: Meridien Healthcare; NSW TechVoucher Scheme; Southern Cross University Collaborative Research Grant (CRGz)

Project: Identifying an algorithm and methodology to reduce rates of “failure to attend” in Lismore GP Superclinic

Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Frances Doran, Cathy Avila, Shahinox Akter, Mike Evans, Teddi Brice

Total Grant: $48,000

This project was a partnership between SCU and the Lismore GP Superclinic (LGSPC) which received funding support from the TechVoucher NSW Trade & Investment Regional Infrastructure & Services which was matched funded by the LGSPC and SCU. The project explored rates of non-attendance at the LGSPC, populations at risk of non-attendance, reasons for non-attendance, and explored strategies to improve attendance.

Funder: Health Education Training Institute (HETI) NSW

Project: Models of Excellence: Clinical training in regional, rural and remote NSW

Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Anna Moran, Lowe Shelagh, Sheila Keane

Total Grant: $100,000

This collaboration between SCU, the University Centre for Rural Health (North Coast) and Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARAH) identified what attracts and motivates students to undertake rural and regional clinical placements, focussing on sustainable clinical placement models. Data collection included a systematic literature review; surveys with 1045 participants, of whom 550 were students from 25 universities, plus clinical placement supervisors or university placement officers; and in-depth interviews with stakeholders. Project outputs were a ‘best practice’ model to guide the development of rural clinical placements and a Regional, Rural and Remote Clinical Placement Framework for Allied Health to guide practice.

Funder: Brokered by the Sax Institute for NSW Health

Project: Rural health in NSW: A rapid review

Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Lesley Barclay (University Centre for Rural Health, North Coast), Vahid Saberi (North Coast Medical Local), Alison Roots, Kegan Barlow, Sandra Grace, Sonia Brownie, Thea van de Mortel, Annie Banbury, Megan Passey (University Centre for Rural Health, North Coast), Jo Longman (University Centre for Rural Health, North Coast), Anna Du Chesne, Ross O-Neil

Total Grant: $20,000

This rapid review was commissioned by the Sax Institute on behalf of the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Rural Health and Ministry of Health staff to help prepare the NSW Rural Health Plan and to assist with key stakeholder consultation on the Plan. The review addresses three main areas: (1) Identification of key issues in rural health in NSW, (2) Innovative or best practice models of care to improve the health of people in rural areas, and (3) Use of health promotion to target risk behaviours for chronic disease prevalent in rural communities.

Funder: Australian Osteopathic Association

Project: Benchmarking assessment in clinical reasoning in osteopathic curricula

Investigators: Keri Moore, Sandra Grace, Paul Orrock, Raymond Blaich, Rosanne Coutts

Total Grant: $20,115

Benchmarking assessment in clinical reasoning in osteopathic curricula, a project funded by the Australian Osteopathic Association, benchmarked clinical assessments in the final two years of osteopathic programs at Southern Cross University, Victoria University, Unitec New Zealand and the British School of Osteopathy UK.
Funder: Health Workforce Australia (HWA)
Project: Queensland health practitioners’ models of care project: Evaluation, learning and upscaling of results for a national audience
Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Alison Roots, Anna Moran, Sandra Grace, Kerry Lyons, Julie Hulcombe, Andrea Hurwood
Total Grant: $75,000

In 2008, Queensland Health (QH) Allied Health Professions’ Office of Queensland Health (AHPOQ) implemented a large scale program of projects to examine new models of care (MoC): ‘The Queensland Health Practitioners’ Models of Care Project’ – arguably the largest allied health reform project in Australia, providing one of the most comprehensive data sets to guide workforce reform. This project explored the most effective way to implement new MoC to enhance the delivery of patient-centred care while optimising impact and sustainability. Project outputs included a Workforce Change Checklist and a new method for analysing widespread organisational change called Inductive Logic Reasoning.

Funder: Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT)
Project: Improving students’ writing in psychological science: an interactive digital workbook approach
Investigators: Stephen Provost, Jacqui Yoxall, in collaboration with Frances Martin, Stuart Marlin (University of Newcastle)
Total Grant: $17,600

The project is based upon established principles of behaviour change, which suggest that in order to understand feedback on improving writing, students must first be able to distinguish good from poor written expression. The digital workbook under development will assist students to make this discrimination by exposure to multiple exemplars of good and poor writing, and giving feedback on their perception of quality. The impact of this experience on students’ academic performance in written and other forms of assessment will be gauged. If proof of concept is provided by these results within psychology, the approach has potential for expansion into other areas of scientific writing.

Funder: Comcare
Project: The Asbestos Narratives: Understanding the impact of asbestos disease on individuals and families and the role of the online community
Investigators: Rick van der Zwan, Grant Cairncross, Stephen Provost, Julie Tucker, Jeremy Buultjens, Desiree Kozlowski
Total Grant: $94,554

This Comcare funded project involves close collaboration between the SCU Regional Initiative for Social Innovation and Research, the Asbestos Disease Foundation of Australia and Slater and Gordon, with the goal of assessing social, psychological and economic implications of asbestos-related disease on people with a diagnosis (particularly women), their families, and their carers. Social support and opportunities for communication among these individuals has been provided through the creation of a safe online social community <dustedcommunity.com>. The value of this virtual community will be assessed, providing a platform for the future development of initiatives to help reduce social, psychological, and economic impacts of asbestos exposure.
**Funder:** DIISR Australian-China Science and Research Fund (ACSRF) Group Mission Component  
**Project:** Welfare for equine athletes  
**Investigators:** Shi Zhou, Allan James Davie  
**Total Grant:** $32,120

This project aimed to develop training methods for optimising performance while improving animal welfare by reducing the risk of injury and overtraining. Two workshops, four seminars and one conference presentation have been delivered in China, with the support from an Australia-China Science and Research Fund Group Mission grant, attracting participants from genetic science, veterinary science, sports science, trainers and managers. New research projects have been initiated, such as studies on hypoxia training, that combined expertise and advanced technology available at the Australian (exercise physiology and hypoxia chamber) and Chinese (mitochondria biology and genomics) partner institutions, to examine the efficacy of this training method.

**Funder:** National Institute of Health Research Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR)  
**Project:** TURNUP: Targeting the use of reminders and notifications for uptake by populations (NIHR 10/2002/49)  
**Investigators:** Susan Nancarrow, Sionnadh McLean (Sheffield Hallam University), Andrew Booth (University of Sheffield), Mark Cobb (Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), Sarah Salway (Sheffield Hallam University)  
**Total Grant:** £ 87,589.00

This study involved a realist synthesis of published evidence about pros and cons of different types of reminder systems for different populations and compiled it into a practice guide. The guide helps healthcare managers understand which reminder systems are likely to be acceptable for patients who attend appointments within their service, which may improve attendance, reduce wastage of resources and improve quality and effectiveness of patient care. This study also produced a model explaining factors that impact upon people attending or not attending appointments. The review included findings on effectiveness and acceptability of incentives, payments and penalties on particular segments of the population.

**Funder:** National Institute of Health Research Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR)  
**Project:** Secondary analysis of community rehabilitation and intermediate care – an information resource  
**Investigators:** Anna Moran, Susan Nancarrow; and from University of Sheffield, Pam Enderby, Steven Ariss, Mike Bradburn, Michael Campbell, Stuart Parker, Anthony Ryan; and from Sheffield Hallam University, Ann McDonnell, Tony Smith  
**Total Grant:** £ 99,418.42

This project draws on previously collected data on staffing and patient outcomes in intermediate care services. The combined dataset were used to identify those patients most and least likely to benefit from using intermediate care services. The outputs of the analysis included tools to help service commissioners make decisions around team configuration and effectiveness; data to help services determine referral criteria; and information allowing services to benchmark their effectiveness against other services.
Research Collaborations

Our School has established research collaborations locally, nationally and internationally with partners in North America, Asia and Europe.

Country/Region: Surabaya, Indonesia
Partners: Ferry Efendi
Project Title: Exploring barriers and facilitators to recruitment and retention in remote areas of Indonesia
Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Ferry Efendi

Ferry is a nurse researcher based in Indonesia. Susan is supporting his work into the recruitment and retention strategies of nurses in rural and remote regions of Indonesia.

Country/Region: Portland, Oregon, U.S.
Partners: Adidas
Project Title: The influence of weightlifting shoes using different loads on barbell back squat technique
Investigators: John Whitting, Rudi Meir, Zac Crowley, Ryan Holding

The purpose of this study is to determine whether biomechanics during a back squat differ when wearing weightlifting shoes versus non-specific sports footwear. In resistance training, lifters use the barbell back squat to help develop lower body strength. Proper execution of this exercise includes maintaining good heel–floor contact, avoiding excessive forward lean of the trunk. Experienced and competitive weightlifters usually wear specialised shoes to maintain stability, allowing them to achieve optimal technique. Recreational lifters tend to wear non-specific sports footwear which may lead to poor back-squat technique, resulting in excessive trunk lean and increased shearing forces on the lumbar spine.
Country/Region: Tianjin, China
Partners: Tianjin University of Sport
Project Title: Effects and molecular mechanisms of acute and intermittent exposure to hypoxia environment and endurance exercise on glucose homeostasis and insulin resistance in obese mice with Type 2 diabetes
Investigators: Yun Wang, Shi Zhou, Allan Davie, Yong Zhang, Li Wen, Xinhao Wang
This project aims to determine the effects of acute and intermittent exposure to a hypoxia environment during both non-exercise and exercise conditions, on glucose homeostasis and insulin resistance, and to examine the mechanisms underlying these effects, for potential new interventions for diabetes.

Country/Region: Hull, England
Partners: Department of Psychology, University of Hull
Project Title: Perceptions of coach behaviour, coach-athlete relationships, appraisal, and coping
Investigators: Rudi Meir, Adam Nicholls
This project explores the relationships between coach behaviour, the coach–athlete relationship, coping, and coping effectiveness among athletes. Research has indicated that perceptions of coach behaviour influences how an athlete copes with stress and performs (Nicolas, Gaudreau, and Franche, 2011). However, this study did not explore coping effectiveness nor take into account perceptions of the coach–athlete relationship, which may also be related to coach behaviour and coping. The present study explores the relationship between these psychological constructs, which are thought to be related to both mental wellbeing and sporting performance. Athletes from both the United Kingdom and Australia have been invited to participate in this project.

Country/Region: Tianjin and Xinjiang province, China
Partners: Tianjin University of Sport, Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography - Chinese Academy of Sciences
Project Title: Collaboration with Tianjin University of Sport and partners to promote animal welfare and performance in the race horse industry
Investigators: Shi Zhou, Allan Davie, Yong Zhang, Li Wen, Bin Liu, Aladaer Qi
This project allowed Australian researchers from SCU and horse racing industry personnel to meet with research partners at Tianjin University of Sport and Chinese Academy of Sciences. The aim of the meetings was to develop new projects for researching training methods for optimising performance while at the same time improving animal welfare by reducing the risk of injury and overtraining. Two workshops, four seminars and one conference presentation have all been delivered in China, with the support from an Australia-China Science and Research Fund Group Mission grant.

Country/Region: Tianjin, China
Partners: Pulford Air and Gas (Australia), Tianjin University of Sport
Project Title: The effects of six weeks training or recovery in a hypoxic chamber, on activity states of HIF-1α, key mRNA markers of adaptation, and physiological responses to an incremental treadmill test in Thoroughbred horses
Investigators: Allan Davie, Shi Zhou, Li Wen, Yong Zhang, Tom Fyfe
The aim of this study was to examine the effects of six weeks of hypoxic training on metabolic efficiency of the horses at different galloping speeds on a treadmill. The project was supported by an SCU-Pulford collaborative research grant. Support was also provided by Darren Weir Racing Stables in Victoria, who provided the horses for the study, Pulford Air and Gas in providing use of hypoxia training facility, and Ballarat Veterinary Centre for providing veterinary services during the project.
Adaptations to exercise are the results of accumulation of specific proteins. This project examined the cumulative effects of two training protocols on expression of several selected mitochondrial genes. The results provided insight into the importance of training design and recovery sessions and exposed a need for more scientific research into training design for optimising adaptations.

Country/Region: Bangkok, Thailand

Partners: Chulalongkorn University
Project Title: Reading and language development in Thai children and adults
Investigators: Heather Winskel, Theeraporn Ratitamkul, Wirote Aroonmanakun

Researchers in Psychology, SCU and Linguistics, Chulalongkorn University are collaborating on research investigating reading and language acquisition in Thai children and adults. This is an ongoing project.

Country/Region: Shanghai, China

Partners: East China Normal University
Project Title: Early childhood language and interaction patterns
Investigators: Heather Winskel, Zhou Jing

SCU and East China Normal University are collaborating on projects related to early childhood development. This year the focus has been on caretaker-child interaction patterns and how culture influences parenting styles and socialisation practices. Workshops were given on caretaker-child interactions in different cultural groups.

Country/Region: Hanoi, Vietnam

Partners: The National University of Vietnam
Project Title: Discipline strategies of Vietnamese and Australian mothers for regulating children’s behaviour
Investigators: Heather Winskel, Lisa Walsh, Thu Tran Ha

The discipline strategies used for regulating children’s behaviour were investigated in Vietnamese and Australian mothers using hypothetical child behaviour vignettes. Mothers rated their likelihood of using a particular discipline technique to the different conventional and moral transgressions made by the child depicted in the vignettes.
Country/Region: Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Partners: The National University of Malaysia

Project Title: Developmental milestones in children from different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia and language acquisition and reading research in Malay and Jawi

Investigators: Heather Winskel, Khazriyati Salehuddin

This project examined the developmental milestone expectations, parenting style, and self construal of Malaysian and Anglo-Australian caregivers. The project has also conducted experiments on reading in Malay and Jawi.

Country/Region: California, United States and United Kingdom

Partners: University of California, Davis

Project Title: Workforce dynamics and interdisciplinary team working of trauma teams

Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Molly Courtenay

This project used the Workforce Dynamics Questionnaire to perform an international comparison of the interdisciplinarity and workforce flexibility of trauma teams.

Country/Region: Sheffield, UK

Partners: University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Project Title: TURN-UP

Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Sionnadh McLean, Andrew Booth, Mark Cobb, Sarah Salway

This study involved a realist synthesis of published evidence about the pros and cons of different types of reminder systems for different populations and compiled it into a practice guide. The guide will help managers understand which reminder systems are likely to be more acceptable and more effective for patients attending appointments within their service. This study also produced a model explaining all factors that impact upon people attending or not attending their appointments. The review included findings on the relative effectiveness and acceptability of incentives, payments and penalties on particular segments of the population.

Country/Region: Sheffield, UK

Partners: University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Trust

Project Title: Secondary Analysis of Community Rehabilitation and Intermediate Care – an Information Resource

Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Anna Moran, Pam Enderby, Steven Ariss, Mike Bradburn, Michael Campbell, Ann McDonnell, Stuart Parker, Anthony Ryan, Tony Smith

This project draws on previously collected data on staffing and patient outcomes in intermediate care services. The combined dataset were used to identify those patients most and least likely to benefit from using intermediate care services. The outputs of the analysis included tools to help service commissioners make decisions around team configuration and effectiveness; data to help services determine referral criteria; and information allowing services to benchmark their effectiveness against other services.
Region/City: Northern Rivers, Perth
Partners: Curtin University
Project Title: To identify how well prepared Australian Nursing and Education graduates are for working in the global economy
Investigators: Keri Moore, Sonia Ferns

A key objective of this project is to determine the learning objectives and graduate outcomes expected of nursing and education students in relation to working outside Australia, and to identify how these skills and competencies are assessed during work integrated learning experiences. In addition, project outcomes will be broadcasted (through publication in targeted journals and conferences) to enable the embedding of the necessary graduate attributes and appropriate assessment practices across the higher education sector.

Region/City: Northern NSW
Partners: Nursing CRN, NSW Local Area Health District (Lismore Base Hospital Mental Health Services), NSW Police Force (Mental Health Intervention Team), NSW Ambulance Service (Mental Health Services), University of Sydney (Sydney Nursing School), and Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.
Project Title: Mental Health Emergency Transport
Investigators: Joanne Bradbury, Andrew Cashin

This research investigates the current model of intervention for people with mental illness in terms of its heavy reliance on police involvement. Under the current legislation in NSW, people have to be at serious risk of harm to themselves or others before the Mental Health Act can be invoked. Despite changes to the Act to allow paramedics and mental health professionals to intervene, police coercion remains the main pathway for people with mental illness to be brought into care, particularly afterhours and in regions where crisis intervention teams are limited. Considerations of earlier, more therapeutic, interventions may minimise police involvement.

Region/City: Northern Rivers, Melbourne
Partners: Victoria University
Project Title: Patient self-reported satisfaction and perception of the techniques and outcomes of osteopathic treatment
Investigators: Keri Moore, Sandra Grace, Jane Mulcahy, Brett Vaughan

This study aims to explore patients’ perception of osteopathic treatment. Patients will complete a demographic survey and a self-report measure (the Patient Perception Measure of Osteopathic Treatment) of their perception of treatment, after their osteopathic treatment.

Region/City: Northern Rivers, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Perth, Sydney
Partners: Queensland University of Technology, Curtin University, Griffith University, Macquarie University
Project Title: Building institutional capacity to enhance access, participation and progression in work integrated learning (WIL)
Investigators: Deborah Peach, Keri Moore, Matthew Campbell

This project will translate inclusive education principles into the WIL context in order to improve student access, participation and progression. The project intends to use a strategic approach across four levels: principles, policies, guidelines, and procedures to support students from diverse backgrounds in the disciplines of built environment, business and health.
Region/City: Melbourne
Partners: Victoria University
Project Title: Concurrent validity of the Osteopathy Clinical Teaching Questionnaire at Victoria University
Investigators: Keri Moore, Brett Vaughan

Previous research indicates that clinical educators have substantial impact on the development of student health professionals therefore assessment of clinical teaching quality is required. A previous study by the Chief Investigator developed the Osteopathy Clinical Teaching Questionnaire (OCTQ) (HRE13-078). The aim of the current project is to compare results of the OCTQ with the Maastricht Clinical Teaching Questionnaire (MCTQ), a well-researched clinical teaching questionnaire. The project will ascertain whether the questionnaires are assessing components of clinical teaching. Students in year 4 and 5 of the osteopathy program at VU will complete both questionnaires and results will be compared.

Region/City: Rural NSW
Partners: Charles Sturt University, Southern and Murrumbidgee Local Health Districts, NSW
Project Title: The Rural Allied Health Supervision and Support Scheme (RAHSSP)
Investigators: Julia Coyle, Dianne Boxall, Anna Moran, Rod Pope, Jennifer Young

This project was commissioned by the former Greater Southern Area Health Service to build capacity, skills and support for supervision for rural and remote allied health professionals. The research uses an action research methodology and a key output has been “Connecting Practice”, a structured, facilitated, action research model which links the values and goals of the practitioner to those of the organisation, to achieve specified goals.

Region/City: Northern Rivers and Melbourne
Partners: Victoria University
Project Title: Readiness for, and perception of, interprofessional learning
Investigators: Keri Moore, Rosanne Coutts, Sandra Grace, Brett Vaughan, Andrew Stewart, Gina Mendoza, Terri Dentry, Michael Mathai, Christopher Macfarlane, Lyle Winton

Interprofessional practice is undertaken by different health professions in different settings in Australia and around the world. This typically involves students from two or more health professions working together with the same patient to improve health outcomes. This project will investigate readiness for, and perception of, interprofessional learning using an anonymous online questionnaire. Students enrolled in health profession programs at SCU will be invited to complete three questionnaires: a demographic survey, readiness for interprofessional learning scale and the interprofessional education scale. Clinical educators at SCU will be invited to complete two questionnaires: a demographic survey, and the interprofessional education scale.
A translational research project involving the stories of six people with a disability and their personal support networks, exercising choice and control about their lives including the use of individualised and/or self-directed funding arrangements. Focus group feedback to date indicates that the video material ‘shows what people with disabilities can do’; ‘Would be great to link in with other families to how they solve various issues’; ‘Helping people with disabilities achieve their dreams’.

Region/City: Lismore, NSW
Partners: Lismore GP Superclinic
Project Title: Understanding reasons for failure to attend in a disadvantaged, regional population
Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Frances Doran, Cathy Avila, Shahinoor Akter, Teddi Brice
Identifying risk factors for failure to attend and developing strategies to reduce rates of non-attendance.

Region/City: Northern NSW
Partners: UCRH, NNSW Local Health District
Project Title: Healthy Kyogle – A student service learning project
Investigators: Ev Innes, Sheila Keane, Vicki Rose
Establishment of a “Healthy Kyogle” student service learning clinic. This project incorporated student-led clinical and health promotion services to provide both an enhancement of health service to the Kyogle community and create new placements through student participation in the clinic. The student-led clinic involved SCU occupational therapy students.

Region/City: Coffs Harbour
Partners: Feros Care
Project Title: Evaluation of the National Broadband Network Enabled “My health clinic at home” intervention
Investigators: Susan Nancarrow, Jennene Buckley, Michael Scurrah and the Feros Care team
Evaluation of the Feros Care implementation of telehealth in Coffs Harbour which is called My Health Clinic at Home.
Region/City: Northern NSW

Partners: Griffith University, Bond University

Project Title: Enabling clinical supervision skills (ECSS) project – for health professions in rural/remote, aged care, primary health and mental health practice

Investigators: Ev Innes, Andrea Bialocerkowski, Liisa Laasko, Nikki Milne

This is an interprofessional, cross-university project focused on the allied health professions of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology and exercise physiology. It developed, piloted and evaluated learning packages for the continuing education of clinical supervisors who are supervising entry-level allied health students (in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology and exercise physiology).

Region/City: Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales

Partners: Deakin University, Bond University, Victoria University

Project Title: TeamUP

Investigators: Kathleen Fahy, Marilyn Chaseling, Gail Wilson, Kristine Martin-McDonald, Kylie O’Brien, Linda Crane

TeamUP activities develop people skills in students, improves their interpersonal relationships and increases their employability in line with AQF graduate attributes. TeamUP is designed for widespread adoption in disciplines of health and education. It combines self-paced lessons and a tested teamwork assessment rubric for students to give feedback on their own, and their teammates', skills. Project members engage with academics during piloting, testing and adopting TeamUP. Research and evaluation of resources and experiences of participants will be ongoing. Dissemination is built in with visits to universities, conducting workshops in a number of states and publishing at conferences and in journals.

Region/City: Australia wide

Partners: The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses

Project Title: A survey of credentialed mental health nurses working in the Mental Health Nursing Incentive Programme: Who are they? How do they work? What have they achieved?

Investigators: Richard Lakeman, John Hurley, Andrew Cashin

The Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program (MHNIP) was established in 2007 and provides a means by which specialist nurses may provide mental health care to people with complex mental health and psychosocial problems in primary care settings. The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses commissioned this survey to explore how nurses work in primary care settings under this programme and what outcomes they have achieved.

Region/City: Northern NSW

Partners: T5 Group of Schools (pilot schools: Banora Point High School & Centaur Primary School) Bond University, Griffith University

Project Title: Tweed Healthy Schools Project – Expanding Clinical Placements

Investigators: Ev Innes, Maggie Scorey, Stephen van Vorst, Nikki Milne, Peter Westwood, Julia Gilbert, Gregory Smith, Darren Scott

A pilot to establish an interdisciplinary student health team model to promote health in schools and also to expand clinical placement opportunities for allied health students.
The Collaborative Research Network (CRN)

Nursing Element

Professor Andrew Cashin

The Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) program is part of a suite of initiatives to reform higher education teaching, learning, research and research training to ensure a university system that is focused on quality, excellence, collaboration, and sustainability. The CRN program includes fifteen CRN projects across twelve universities.

The Nursing CRN project is contributing to growing research capacity within the nursing discipline at SCU’s School of Health and Human Sciences. CRN activity has built on identified strengths in nursing research within the School, including mental health and nursing workforce development (advanced practice).

Working in collaboration with University of Sydney partners in the Sydney Nursing School and the Sydney School of Public Health, we have strategically aimed to build capacity towards achievement of nationally competitive grants and ERA recognised publications in the domain of nursing (ERA code 1110), as well as securing training opportunities related to specific application of policy and health economics frames, through to nursing workforce and related health policy research.

Since 2012, CRN activity has built significant momentum and created real impact with 25 peer reviewed publications completed, $400,000 secured in Category 2–4 grants, and four Category 1 (ARC or NHMRC) applications submitted.

All post-doctoral research fellows are in mentoring programmes or formal studies; the profiles included below on Jo Bradbury and Ann Mulder provide insight into their work and successes through the CRN.

Dr Ann Mulder

Since undertaking a post-doctoral research fellow position in the CRN between the School of Health and Human Sciences and the Sydney Nursing School (University of Sydney), Ann has evaluated stress in the SCU community; principally students but also staff. She has recently completed the SCU Health and Wellbeing Study which has highlighted the significant psychological and financial stress associated with poor sleep and lack of wellbeing exhibited by many of our students. It is anticipated this will become a longitudinal study, providing continuing data on the health and wellbeing of our SCU community.

Ann has also undertaken research on SCU students with a mental health disorder; despite the use of concurrent psychotrophic medication and a lower study load, it was found that students with a mental health disorder experience significant and disturbingly high levels of distress, which increase considerably over the semester. Ann is coordinating changes to the application and enrolment forms for SCU to capture a more comprehensive understanding of disabilities students may be facing in order to increase support. She has found that students with a disability (50% of whom have a mental health disorder) who receive support from Student Health Services halve their attrition rate from 41% to 21% and increase completion rate from 18% to 28%; highlighting the importance of student health services, particularly disability support and counselling. Ann has presented these findings at the Informa Student Health and Welfare Symposium in Sydney, at the VC forum, and the Teaching and Learning Symposium.

Dr Joanne Bradbury

Jo’s research collaboration investigates the current model of emergency intervention for people with mental illness in terms of its heavy reliance on police transport. The research aims to review the current legislation to identify factors that contribute to ongoing police involvement, and to interview people who have had the lived experience of involuntary intervention to deepen our understanding of the implications of the current practice.

Under the current legislation, people have to be at serious risk of harm to themselves or others before the Mental Health Act can be invoked, and by that stage the police are usually obliged to attend due to the high level of risk involved. After considerable collaboration, the legal analysis identified policy changes that could facilitate earlier and more therapeutic interventions that may reduce police transport. The ethical arguments are outlined in a joint paper submitted to the ethics/law section of the MJA. This work was well-received at a presentation to the 5th Australian Rural & Regional Mental Health Symposium in Geelong in October 2013. A second paper from this collaboration is also under development.

Jo has also been working with nursing academics to increase statistical capacity in research. Activities include hosting a regular online stats cafe, conducting data analysis and modelling, and input into the development of publications and grant submissions. To date, she has been involved with seven successful grants (including four competitive grants, one commercial grant and two seeding grants), and has authored nine publications, with several more presently in preparation.
Higher Degrees Research Training

Professor Shi Zhou, Director Higher Degrees Research Training

The School of Health and Human Sciences’ higher degree research training (HDRT) program is currently supporting more than fifty postgraduate students undertaking research at either Masters or Doctorate levels in discipline areas of clinical exercise physiology, clinical science, natural and complementary medicine, midwifery, nursing, cognitive neuroscience, occupational therapy, osteopathy, psychology, public health, sport and exercise science, and other health and human science related areas. With one of SCU’s largest cohorts of HDR candidates and over forty academic staff members qualified to provide supervision in a range of specialised areas, the School has a firm commitment to continuously develop our capacity and enhance quality outcomes in research and HDRT.

The School’s aim to provide high quality research training is underpinned by designated structures to support HDRT programs and candidates. From the educational and skill building viewpoints, regular research seminars and workshops are offered for supervisors and students under the Research Active and Research Engagement (RARE) program, covering a range of topics on research methodologies, and facilitating an exchange of research ideas and findings. From the management side, the School has appointed a Director and two Deputy Directors of HDRT, so there is a staff member responsible for managing HDRT related matters on each of the three major campuses. There is also a HDRT officer located at Lismore campus, who liaises between the University’s Research Training Unit, supervisors and candidates.

In 2013, a HDRT subcommittee of the School’s Research Committee was established to oversee HDRT related matters. The HDRT subcommittee is in the process of setting up effective mechanisms that provide information and guidelines to supervisors and candidates, and facilitate the processes of enquiry, application, admission, confirmation, progression, and completion in HDRT, aiming to ensure quality outcomes. It is also our objective to promote a research culture among staff members and students, and facilitate communications between supervisors and candidates from different campuses and discipline areas.

During the last two years (2012–2013), there have been 11 new enrolments in our HDRT programs, and 16 candidates completed their confirmation of candidature. Nine PhD candidates have completed their thesis and been awarded a degree – you will find details of our graduates and their diverse research topics in this report. Congratulations to them and their supervisors!

Higher degree research training is an important path in one’s academic and/or professional career development, and our HDRT candidates, with the guidance of supervisors, are a major force in producing research outcomes. I am proud of what the School’s postgraduates and supervisors have achieved and wish for you all to be more productive next year. The HDRT management team will do our best to assist you in achieving your goals.

In the following pages we provide some glimpses of the achievements of our recent HDRT graduates and current candidates.
Janet Barling  
Barling, JA 2011, 'From go to woe: family member’s stories of adolescents and young people living with and dying from cancer', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Kierrynn Davis & John Stevens

Zachary Crowley-McHattan  
Supervisors: Shi Zhou & Colleen Cartwright

Kay Distel  
Distel, KD 2013, 'The elusive other: a self study action research project with diverse learners in higher education', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Kierrynn Davis & Rosanne Coutts

Margaret Harris  
Harris, MTC 2013, 'Menopause: the need for a paradigm shift from disease to women's health', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Kierrynn Davis & Jean Griffiths

Joanna Hartnett  
Hartnett, H 2013 'Investigating the role of intestinal microflora in the aetiology, symptom scores and life quality of people with coeliac disease', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Tini Gruner & Stephen Myers

Kathryn Jackson  
Jackson, KP 2012, 'Giving up the ghost. Healers’ perceptions of the perimortal process: a phenomenological study', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Bev Taylor & Iain Graham

Elaine Jefford  
Supervisors: Kathleen Fahy & Robert Weatherby

Coralia MacHatch  
MacHatch, C 2103, 'Orientation invariant sex cells! Possible neural mechanisms for discriminating sex from movement', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Rick Van Der Zwan & Anna Brooks

Peeranan Wisanskoonwong  
Wisanskoonwong, P 2012, 'Midwifery primary health care groups during childbearing', PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.  
Supervisors: Kathleen Fahy, John Hurley & Carolyn Hastie
PhD Graduate Profiles

Dr Jan Barling

What’s your PhD background story?

I am an experienced mental health nurse with almost 40 years in the industry. I’ve had numerous positions in mental health including clinical, management and education roles. In 1998 I was successful in applying for a Lecturer B position at Southern Cross University. The academic staff were supportive and encouraging of my academic career. I managed to complete one research project as a beginning researcher under the guidance of Professor Bev Taylor.

In March 2001, my 16 year old son Anthony was diagnosed with a rare cancer, rhabdomyosarcoma, a soft tissue tumour, in his back. The treatment was aggressive and invasive, and demanded numerous trips to Sydney for chemotherapy and surgery. Anthony was treated in the adult system and as such he and our family had no connection with other family members travelling a similar path – there was minimal support available to us. In October, he was diagnosed with metastasis and the treatment was much more aggressive, with many emergency admissions to hospital as a result of the radiation and chemotherapy side effects. He died in November 2002, five months after a stem cell transplant and six weeks after major surgery in which the distal third of the femur was resected and a reconstructive prosthesis was put in place. After this surgery he never walked, and we realise now he was dying at the time. Once again there was limited support and acknowledgement of the experience of an adolescent or young adult (AYA) with cancer and their family during the dying trajectory.

As a new academic, the expectation is to complete a PhD to progress your academic career. The devastation of Anthony dying resulted in my previous ideas for a PhD having no real meaning or significance. After a lot of reflection I decided to create some meaning out of my experience through a research project on the experience of AYAs who have lived with and died from cancer and their families. There was limited research on this subject at the time of beginning my PhD; family members’ stories would increase the body of knowledge in this area.

Given the sensitive nature of the research topic and my own position as a mother whose son had died of cancer, I needed to find a researcher and School which would understand the nature of this research. At the time of applying for a PhD at SCU, the school of Nursing (now part of the School of Health and Human Sciences) was highly regarded in the area of qualitative research. In addition, Professor Bev Taylor was supervising PhD students who were researching death and dying. I believed that the School and my supervisor would give an empathic understanding to the research topic and the stories of the family members who would be part of the study.

Highlights from your PhD studies?

The methodology for this study was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry uses open-ended questions and allows a person to tell their story in their own time. This provided the opportunity for family members in the study to provide rich descriptions of their experience by telling their story. The methodology also accommodated my own experience, due to a common understanding of the experience between me and the family members.

PhD study enabled me to connect with other family members who had an AYA die of cancer. Whilst these stories were emotional and painful to hear, it gave opportunities for family members to create a story and testimonial to their loved one. An overarching theme from the analysis of the family members’ stories was the isolation in the health system for AYAs and their families. Further to this, the study found that health professionals caring for AYAs have limited knowledge or understanding of the developmental needs of
AYAs and their families, and communication at times was difficult. Limited psychosocial and physical support for AYAs and their families resulted in family members shouldering a huge burden of care, often resulting in emotional and physical exhaustion. There was a sense of powerlessness as family members witnessed the suffering and eventual death of their loved one. Finally, there appeared to be no therapeutic place or space for AYAs or family members, as both the paediatric and adult system of care had limited understanding of this unique group of people.

**What advice would you give to newly enrolled PhD students?**

Be flexible as you progress with the study as you will be confronted with different perspectives and ideas. Be prepared to argue your point of view when challenged. Find a supervisor who has an understanding of your area and is prepared to critique your work to ensure your thesis will be ready for the examiners. Don’t give up when it becomes overwhelming – step back for a while to clarify your thoughts. Keep track and write down any ideas that may be useful. Finally, and most importantly, look after yourself and stay connected to your family and friends.

**What have you been doing since graduating?**

Since graduating I have resigned from the University and now have an adjunct lecturer position with the School of Health and Human Sciences. I have published two articles from my thesis and another is due to be published in February next year. I am currently contemplating writing a book focusing on the themes of my PhD research, with the hope that this would increase an understanding of this unique group of people.

**What’s your PhD background story?**

I graduated with a Bachelor of Nursing Science from Kuakarun College of Nursing, Bangkok, Thailand in 1993 and graduated with a Master of Education (Health Education) from Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand in 2001. Also, I graduated with a Certificate in Midwifery (international short course training for nurses and midwifery educators) from Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Bangkok, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand in 2005.

In 2013, I was awarded a PhD in Midwifery from the School of Health and Human Sciences at Southern Cross University (SCU), Australia. My midwifery expertise is in high risk pregnancy and delivery, and I have worked as a midwife in a high risk pregnancy ward and delivery suite for 20 years. Currently, I am a midwifery lecturer in the Obstetrics and Gynecological department in Kuakarun Faculty of Nursing, Navamindradhiraj University.

Based on my study and work experiences, I recognised that in Thailand, midwifery is practised in a medicalised environment and encompasses working with interventions relying on medical technology rather than valuing midwifery practices that are more holistically oriented, such as continuity of care. I realised that a medicalised approach to issues facing women and babies is a limited perspective, especially for women who are faced with preterm birth. I had a strong desire to find out what could be done to help women who faced preterm birth reach a full term pregnancy. There are multiple factors known to be associated with preterm birth and I understood that the perspective of women-centred care and holistic continuity of care in midwifery is significant for a mother, baby and the midwife.

I found that the School of Health and Human Sciences at SCU has a strong team of midwifery academics, led by Professor Kathleen Fahy; this was a most important influence on my decision to undertake PhD research with SCU’s School of Health and Human Sciences. Another reason for studying at SCU was the University’s great campus locations, especially Gold Coast campus.
Highlights from your PhD studies?

All the women in my PhD study improved their holistic health; with no woman having a baby at less than 35 weeks gestation. The women expressed satisfaction in the relationships with their midwife and their midwifery primary health care groups. The findings of my research provide an effective strategy for enhancing the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged childbearing women and for reducing the risk of preterm birth. My study offers a way to minimise the consequences of multifactorial contributors to preterm labour through the provision of group-based antenatal education by a midwife. Another highlight from my PhD is a model of midwife-facilitated Primary Health Care Groups developed for Thai women who are at risk of preterm birth, with information and an opportunity to become empowered in a major maternity unit in Bangkok.

What advice would you give to a newly enrolled PhD student?

For a newly enrolled PhD student, your achievement depends upon you and your supervisor. I suggest that a PhD student should always think “I am a marathon runner”. Please do it with 3 Hs: your Head, Heart and Hands. You will conquer every step and succeed in your PhD.

What have you been up to doing since graduating?

I gained a huge volume of knowledge and experiences from studying a PhD in Midwifery. Since graduating, I’ve contributed my new expertise to benefit Thai women, Thai midwives and Thai midwifery educators through caring, sharing and teaching. I’ve promoted the importance of the relationship between childbearing women, their babies and midwives to improve self-awareness and self-consciousness of childbearing women. As women’s self-confidence grows, women’s health empowerment will increase, their health behaviours will improve and the risk of preterm labour and birth will be reduced.

Currently, I have plans to contribute my knowledge and experiences about midwife-facilitated Primary Health Care Groups for Thai women, delivered in Thai languages. The next step for my professional life is research on rolling out Midwifery Primary Health Care Groups throughout hospitals in Bangkok. Also, I have plans to be the next Assistant Professor of Midwifery in my faculty by 2014.
The 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) competition challenges higher degree research students to deliver an engaging, dynamic synopsis of their thesis topic and its significance, in three minutes. Students articulate their research in plain English, cultivating skills in academic and research communication. In September 2013, the School hosted a 3MT contest; the winner, Horst Thompson, and runner-up, Nellie Buckley, were selected to represent the School of Health and Human Sciences at the SCU competition. Congratulations and special mention to Nellie Buckley who was also runner-up at the University-wide 3MT and represented SCU at the 2013 Australia and New Zealand 3MT competition at the University of Western Sydney.

Nellie Buckley

**Lifting capacity in pregnant women**

School 3MT runner-up and SCU 3MT runner-up

Lifting forms the basis of many physical activities and is part of daily life, especially for mothers. The guidelines encourage women who become pregnant to continue their physical activities, with the exception of reducing the potential for abdominal trauma. Despite this, healthcare providers often advise pregnant women not to lift heavy things. This research assessed how much healthy pregnant women could lift safely, what loads they defined as heavy and what factors influenced these aspects. A functional lifting assessment designed for those with injuries returning to work was utilised, with the end-point being determined by the participant or the assessor.

Jeffrey Hodgins

**Belonging in a multicultural society: Resident but alien**

Australia is a multicultural nation of migrants. Westernised research suggests that a sense of belonging is foundational to individual, community, and societal wellbeing; and, that it underpins national identity, and contributes to social capital. But what does belonging mean to different groups in a multicultural context? Is belonging universal, or culturally specific? Can belonging be understood independent of culture? Is the construct important to migrant settlement, and participation? Is belonging different between the majority and minority cultural groups? This research aims to explain belonging in a multicultural society by investigating the construct between, and within majority, and minor cultural groups.
**Belinda Smith**

**The eyes are the window to your cognitive functioning: Utilising eye movement tasks as an early diagnostic tool for Alzheimer’s disease**

Early diagnosis in Alzheimer’s disease (AD) is crucial to allow adequate time for interventions to stabilise the degenerative process and to allow people to implement end-of-life strategies. Belinda’s research has identified that errors made on specific eye-movement tasks can quickly and easily differentiate between those with and without a diagnosis of AD. Furthermore, the research has identified a positive correlation between disease progression and error rates. It is hoped that these tasks can be easily augmented with current health check-ups to provide a regular measure of cognitive functioning. If a decline is identified early we are able to refer people for further medical testing.

**Horst Thomson**

**The efficacy of online social network gaming to promote sustainable health behaviour change**

School 3MT winner

Social pressures are powerful determinants of behaviour. Online consumer behaviour is strongly guided by consumer reviews. Social networks and social games are growing rapidly in their audience reach, and the amount of time spent by participants. Can online social games leverage the power of peer pressure? Can online games be created to effectively support health behaviour? Can social health games focus the conversation and allow peers to support one another toward a goal, so everyone can win? See ahealthycompetition.com
Selected Publications

2012


2013*


Brownie, S., & Coutts, R. (2013). Focus group interviews with older Australians to explore their awareness of the national age-adjusted dietary recommendations and their suggestions for assisting them to meet these dietary targets. Australian Journal Of Primary Health.


* Publications listed through to September 2013 only.


Lakeman, R., McAndrew, S., MacGabhann, L., & Warne, T. (2013). 'That was helpful … no one has talked to me about that before': Research participation as a therapeutic activity. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 22(1), 76–84. doi: 10.1111/j.1447–0349.2012.00842.x


Selected Publications


