The SLHD Mental Health Service hosted their first annual research symposium on Friday 5th August at the Medical Education Centre, Concord Hospital. The symposium was an opportunity for clinicians and academics of all disciplines to come together and share ideas and local research findings. The symposium was hosted by the Mental Health Research and Clinical Translation Forum. Fourteen short research presentations celebrated the work of mental health doctors, psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists, academics and students with both qualitative and quantitative findings featured. Topics included service evaluation, new approaches to treatment and new initiatives in the fields of eating disorders. Research across the lifespan was evident with sessions on child and adolescent mental health, children of parents with a mental illness and older age psychiatry. Presentations covered both inpatient and community treatment and mental

health workforce issues. A panel discussion followed with researchers and experts in the field of ethics, governance, data management, statistics and methodology. It was particularly rewarding to see a strong nursing presence among presenters and collaborators.

The symposium was a great success with 110 registrants sharing the research achievements. Attendees valued the ‘bite size’ nature of the presentations which focussed on relevance for clinical practice; the opportunities to engage with research support staff and other researchers; the collegial support in the room; the multidisciplinary nature of the day; and the sense that there were many opportunities and supports for clinicians to engage in research within their roles. The Mental Health Service will be hosting the symposium as an annual event open to all staff, academics, consumers and the community as a mechanism of showcasing local works and promoting translation of research findings into clinical practice.

Organiser, Sophie Isobel (Clinical Nurse Consultant for Mental Health Research), said “It was really wonderful to see the level of interest from clinicians of all levels and disciplines in engaging with research. The audience and presenters were all really supportive of each other and interested in the work being done. The whole day created a real sense that there is innovation and energy across the service and plenty of opportunities to collaborate to achieve research outputs.”

The abstracts from the day are available at http://intranet.sswahs.nsw.gov.au/SLHD/Mhealth/events.html
Methods hotspot!

Our new methods hotspot section will clarify issues around commonly used research methods.

Observational studies

There are many ways to explore the impact of an intervention on research participants and you may be most familiar with the randomised controlled trial (RCT). While RCTs are the most robust way to test a new drug or therapy against, for example, usual care or placebo, there are times when we may want to see what happens with an intervention without trying to control who does or doesn’t receive it, and many questions simply aren’t suitable for an RCT approach. For example, we may wish to look at the impact of a risk factor, such as smoking, on a group over time (and we obviously wouldn’t want to offer smoking as an intervention!) This is where observational studies are useful and we will discuss the two most common approaches – the cohort study and the case-control study.

Cohort studies are most commonly used to observe a health outcome or disease within a population. For example, taking a group known to be free of a particular disease and studying them over time to determine who develops the disease and what variables might be associated with development of that disease. Cohort studies can be cross sectional or longitudinal. For example, the ‘45 and up’ study recruited around 260 000 nsw residents over the age of 45 to try and understand predictors of healthy aging. The initial data collection provides cross-sectional data, taken at a single time point, to see what potential disease risk factors might be associated with existing disease states. If further data collection takes place among this cohort, it will be a longitudinal cohort study, exploring the impact of risk factors at different points over time.

Case-control studies allow us to examine retrospectively, the outcomes for participants who either do, or do not, have a particular condition: for example, recruiting a sample of children with a history of severe asthma (the cases), and recruiting a similar or greater number of healthy, matched children (controls). Matching might be done on the basis of age, socioeconomic background, clinical procedures etc and analysis would seek to find risk factor exposure among the asthma cases that was less prevalent among the healthy controls.

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Celebrating our Research Achievements:
SLHD Nursing & Midwifery Symposium 2016

CALLING FOR ABSTRACTS!

Join nurses and midwives of the sydney local health district as we celebrate our research and practice achievements at the inaugural 2016 nursing & midwifery symposium. We invite you to submit an abstract for presentation at the full-day symposium to be held on the 23rd november, 2016 in the medical education centre, concord repatriation general hospital.

Support is available to develop your abstract through Janice Gullick or Greg Fairbrother (janice.gullick@sydney.edu.au / greg.fairbrother@sswahs.nsw.gov.au).

There are a number of research prizes to be awarded at the Symposium. These include:

- Outstanding Achievement in Nursing & Midwifery Research
- Excellence in Nursing & Midwifery Translational Research
- Excellence in Nursing & Midwifery Research, Team Award
- Best Research Presentation
- Best Novice Presenter
- Best Poster Presentation

Award applications and criteria will be advertised in the coming months. Further details about symposium participation are available on the attached application form. The call for abstracts closes on the 31st August. Registration is available for both half or full day. Registration details will be circulated soon.
Researcher in Profile: Sue Monaro

Sue Monaro is a PhD candidate at the Sydney Nursing School, University of Sydney and CNC for Vascular Services at Concord Hospital. Sue began her research journey during her Masters degree at the University of Sydney where she completed her treatise on a community-based screening program for abdominal aortic aneurysm among older men. Sue was an active member of the CNC Research Community of Practice at Concord Hospital publishing two papers with important findings on the experience of initiating haemodialysis with clinician colleague Dr Glenn Stewart (Renal CNC, CRGH) and Dr Janice Gullick.

With a wealth of experience working with chronic critical limb ischaemia, Sue's doctoral research focuses on decision-making processes for patients and family members contemplating major amputation. Sue has recently submitted two manuscripts for publication on this topic – a case series that illuminates the multiple surgical procedures and clinical frailty of patients undergoing major amputation, and the second, an integrative review on health-related quality of life for people with advanced peripheral vascular disease. This latter work won best paper at this month’s annual scientific meeting of the Australia & New Zealand Society for Vascular Surgery (ANZSVS).

With a keen interest in best practice wound management, Sue also collaborated with orthopaedic CNC Megan White and Sydney Nursing School academic A/Prof Sandra West to publish a community of practice model of nurse-led wound prevention and management. Sue is now collaborating with Natalie Ko from Concord Hospital, Jana Pinkova from RPAH and Nicole Stromsmoe from Balmain Hospital in a mixed-methods study exploring the experience for people living with a complex wound and evaluating the district’s diverse models of complex wound care as part of the SCHOlar project where she acts as both researcher and mentor. This cross-institutional project was also presented at the recent ANZSVS vascular surgery conference, showcasing our district’s capacity for collegiality and collaboration.

New project in profile: Evaluation of Baby Buddy Australia mobile app

PhD candidate and Midwifery educator Loretta Musgrave (CEWD & University of Sydney) is customising an interactive app to tailor evidence-based education to empower and inform new and expecting mothers to improve outcomes for vulnerable mothers and babies. Aimed at improving the disproportionately poor perinatal outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, young mothers and mothers with drug and alcohol problems, the Baby Buddy app hopes to improve mothers’ knowledge, beliefs, and self-efficacy and to increase their self-regulation skills to reduce existing perinatal health disparities.

With financial seed funding from the SLHD “Pitch” program, Loretta hopes to complete a systematic review of the literature on positive health behaviour applications. Following this, a mixed methods approach will be used to collect data that will inform the customisation of the UK version of the Baby Buddy application to the Australian context. An evaluation will then be conducted into the effectiveness of the app as a tool for behaviour change in pregnancy. Finally, the research will assess how the app impacts on engagement of clinicians with pregnant women to enhance shared decision-making.

Keep your research achievements visible!

Send your stories, reports and research activity to N&M Research News.

Contact Janice Gullick (janice.gullick@sydney.edu.au).
More Nursing and Midwifery Publications (2015)


Isobel S. (2015) “Because that's the way it’s always been done”: Reviewing the nurse initiated rules in a mental health unit as a step towards Trauma Informed Care. Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 36 (4), 272-278.


Patterson, P., McDonald, F., Ciarrochi, J., White, K., (2015) A study protocol for Truce: a pragmatic controlled trial of a seven-week acceptance and commitment therapy program for young people who have a parent with cancer. BMC Psychology, 3(1); 31


