

keynotes

KEY CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH IN SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER WINTER 2009



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Director's Report - Professor Anne Kavanagh

It is with pride that I reflect on the Key Centre's achievements in 2008. Not only have we been successful in attaining competitive grant funding and achieving high quality research outputs but we also played a small role in advocating for changes on important women's health issues related to access to reproductive technologies and abortion law reform. My particular thanks to Dr Louise Keogh and Dr Maggie Kirkman for driving this work (see stories on pages two and four). I believe that as an academic research and teaching facility we have an important role to play in informing key debates and policies regarding women's health. Further I hope that we can work with, and support, our key stakeholders in government and non-government organisations and advocacy groups in bringing about change to improve the health and wellbeing of women. I encourage you to see us as a potential resource for your own work in this field.

One of our key collaborators has been the Royal Women's Hospital and in 2008 the two organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU signifies our ongoing commitment to working more closely together to achieve improvements in women's health through sharing knowledge, and identifying key advocacy, policy and research priorities. We currently have eight active research projects which involve staff from the RWH and the KCWHS and we expect this to grow.

We have been busy on the international scene as well. I was invited to speak at the 7th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Centre of Research and Promotion of Women's Health in the School of Public Health at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. My papers were titled "Gender, social and economic inequalities and women's Health" and "Mammographic screening – issues and controversies". I was delighted to participate in the symposium and to learn of the work of staff and students at the Centre. A/Professor Jane Fisher, Deputy Director and Coordinator of International Programs at the Centre, has played a significant role in developing research capacity and contributing to policy development in our region. See her report on the next page.

Staff have been successful at gaining significant new research funding which is detailed on page eleven.

Some achievements of note include Dr Jane Hocking's considerable success. She was awarded a prestigious NHMRC Career Development Award; an NHMRC project

grant on mathematical modelling of sexually transmitted infections; and a large tender to develop and evaluate a Chlamydia screening program in general practice. A/ Professor Jane Fisher was also awarded a competitive ARC grant titled "Maternal mental health and anaemia as determinants of infant health and development in resource constrained settings".

I, along with Dr Shelley Mallett and Professor Doreen Rosenthal were also successful with an ARC grant that has been awarded for three years titled "Healthier and Sustainable Futures for Disadvantaged Young People"

A National Breast Cancer Foundation Collaborative Breast Cancer Research Grant that I am a Chief Investigator on was also successful. The project will be coordinated by A/Professor Ian Campbell at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and is funded for five years.

A number of staff have also been recognised for their achievements: Dr Louise Keogh received the Knowledge Transfer Award for the Melbourne School of Population Health for her work on the Abortion Conference and for leading the Centre's advocacy on abortion issues; Dr Jane Hocking was awarded the Early Career Award for Excellence in Research Achievement for the Melbourne School of Population Health and received an Aileen Plant Certificate of Commendation for her contribution to Population Health. A/Professor Jane Fisher's research paper was awarded the 'best paper' prize as the best research presentation about psychosocial aspects of infertility and assisted reproduction at the Fertility Society Conference, and, Dr Saw Saw received the award for Excellence in Knowledge Transfer in Doctoral Research, Melbourne School of Population Health.

This year promises to be an exciting year. In November this year we will celebrate our 21st anniversary. We see this event as marking our achievements as well as signalling new directions. In a lead up to these celebrations I am presenting in the Dean's public lecture series on "Health Inequity: What Does Gender Have to Do With It?", on Tuesday 13th October at 6.00pm in the Sunderland Lecture Theatre, Ground floor, Medical Building, University of Melbourne. I'd be delighted to see you there. Invite your friends, family and acquaintances!

Thanks to all of you for your ongoing support for the Centre. Please keep in touch.



International activities in women's health research

By A/Professor Jane Fisher

The WHO Collaborating Center for Women's Health was active in research, international knowledge exchange and teaching in 2008.

Postgraduate students completing both coursework and research higher degrees are undertaking research projects which are making original contributions to their countries of origin and to Australia. We appreciate in particular the growing links with Pakistan, facilitated by AusAID scholarships provided as part of Australia's international aid to Pakistan. Ahsan Ahmad is investigating why pregnant women living in poor rural areas are not attending antenatal care, including when it is being offered in accessible local basic health units. Faaria Ahsan is interested in recognition of obstetric fistula in women living in rural Pakistan. Mobina Kashif and Kashif Murtaza, who are both doctors from Pakistan, completed Master's degrees in Women's Health in 2008 and in 2009 began their PhDs.

Jane Fisher, with colleagues Associate Professor Bev Biggs (School of Medicine) and Dr Tran Tuan (Research and Training Centre for Community Development, Hanoi), were awarded two University of Melbourne grants to build further evidence about the prevalence of mental health problems in pregnant women and mothers of newborns in a rural province in the North of Viet Nam. With Professor Terry Dwyer (Director Murdoch Children's Research Institute) and Dr Nguyen thi Nhu Ngoc (Centre for Research and Consultancy in Reproductive Health, Ho Chi Minh

City) and Mr Ged Casey (School of Medicine), they were awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant 2009 – 2011 to investigate the links between mental health and anaemia during pregnancy, and infant health and development in a prospective study in rural Viet Nam.

Jane Fisher, with research assistance from Alaina Vaisey and Helena Sandahl, was invited by the World Health Organization, Geneva, Department of Child and Adolescent Health to write a review of the evidence about mental health problems in adolescents in low and lower middle income countries. This is to provide the evidence on which Job Aids (desk reference materials) assist primary health care practitioners to provide adolescent friendly health services, including recognition of mental health problems. The first draft was reviewed by an international expert group including Professor Lakshmi Vijayakumar (SNEHA Centre, Chennai, India), Professor Myron Belfer (Harvard University), Associate Professor Olayinka Omigbodun (University of Ibadan), Dr Takashi Izutsu (UNFPA), Dr Atsuro Tsutsumi, Dr Meena Cabral de Mello (WHO CAH) and representatives of the WHO Departments of Mental Health and Substance Dependence and Child and Adolescent Health and Development at a meeting in Geneva in July 2008. The group met again to review the final draft at a meeting at WHO South East Asian Regional Office in New Delhi in December. The Review will be published in 2009.

In December 2008, the Centre was invited to join a consultation to form a WHO Network for HIV and Health in the Western Pacific Region. The meeting was held at the Western Pacific Regional Office in Manila. The WHO Network for HIV and Health will provide technical advice to countries in the region in their applications for international funding and in developing and evaluating initiatives to reduce HIV. The Centre will contribute technical advice about women's health, including in initiatives to reduce mother to child transmission of HIV, sexually transmitted infections and to protect the health of commercial sex workers.

Abortion Law Reform

Abortion removed from the Crimes Act, Oct 2008 – by Dr Louise Keogh

As former premier Joan Kirner observed when the Abortion Law Reform Bill 2008 was passed in The Victorian Parliament, 'This has been 35 years of hard work.' Key Centre staff were proud to share a small part in that hard work by supporting the Victorian Government in this long-overdue law reform.

In response to a request for advice from one Member of Parliament, a group of staff sent a letter to all Members of Parliament advising them to vote for the Bill. We had many replies from MPs indicating appreciation of the letter. Given our interest in the reform of the laws relating to Abortion, both Dr Maggie Kirkman and I made ourselves available for media comment.

I wrote two opinion pieces, and took part in several interviews both for the print media and for radio. This was another opportunity to present the Melbourne Declaration (arising from our conference, 'Abortion in Victoria, Where are we now? Where do we want to go?')* (www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au) to a wider audience, and to address some of the misconceptions about abortion. It was interesting to note the relatively poor understanding of the legal status of abortion in the community, with many believing that it was already legal. Similarly it was important to address the concern that the legal change would somehow open the 'floodgates' to abortion, and

lead to an increase in the number of abortions occurring in Victoria. There is no evidence to support this idea.

It was very gratifying to be part of positive social change. Although we have more work to do to ensure equitable access to high quality abortion services in Victoria, this was an important first step in recognising the right of women to control their fertility.

*** Dr Louise Keogh was awarded the Melbourne School of Population Health Knowledge Transfer Award for coordinating the Abortion Conference in November 2007***

Two students reflect on their experiences of studying the Japanese Language Master of Women's Health – by Dr Heather Rowe

Two subjects towards the Master of Women's Health (MWH) were taught at Tokyo Women's Medical University in August 2008. The Japanese language course is offered through Melbourne Consulting and Custom Programs at the University of Melbourne, which makes available in Australia and overseas the intellectual and professional resources of the University in a range of disciplines, including Women's Health. The two subjects, Determinants of Women's Health and Research Methodology were taught by Dr Heather Rowe. She had the opportunity to chat over lunch one day with two students who were enrolled in both subjects.

Tomoko Honda has a background in Social Work in Japan, but has been working in International Development in countries in South East Asia and Africa for several years and is now a consultant for international development agencies. She has a Master of Development Studies and is currently enrolled in a PhD in the UK. Atsuko Yumoto is a Midwife and Public Health Nurse who is a long standing member of the Family Centred Care Study group in her workplace in Japan. She also has international experience having worked in Africa with JICA - Japan International Cooperation Agency. Despite their different backgrounds, both heard about the Master of Women's Health through professional contacts in Japan and have found the course extremely beneficial.

Atsuko commented that doing the MWH had encouraged her to think about other aspects of clinical care, for example understanding the specific needs of cancer patients. Both students have gained enormous new knowledge and skills and have found the course to be very practical. Atsuko intends to apply the skills gained in Research Methodology to conduct research in her clinical setting, which will further her academic career. Tomoko believes that attention to psychosocial factors is missing in international health, which has a biomedical focus.

Her new knowledge and skills will be invaluable assets for her career development, for example in addressing the adverse effects of violence.

Atsuko had the opportunity to visit Melbourne as part of the MWH, and the site visits to local health agencies were a highlight for her. Tomoko enjoys the opportunity to visit Tokyo from her home abroad for the coursework components of the course. Undertaking coursework with students from different backgrounds and experience has encouraged them both to consider a range of perspectives and broaden their understanding of health in society. They agree that the opportunity for professional and personal networking is another key outcome for them of doing the course.



Determinants of Women's Health Tokyo August 2008

Chlamydia and Your Health: Exploring the impact of chlamydia on the sexual, reproductive and mental health of Victorian men and women – by Dr Danielle Newton

Chlamydia is a significant public health problem which if left untreated, may have considerable sexual and reproductive health complications, particularly for women. Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is an infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes and other reproductive organs that can be a common complication of chlamydial infection. PID can lead to serious consequences including infertility, ectopic pregnancy and chronic pelvic pain. The Victorian Department of Human Services has provided the Key Centre with funding to explore the impact of chlamydia on the sexual, reproductive, and mental health of Victorians and its impact on the Victorian health care system. The "Chlamydia & Your Health" project is being led by the Key Centre's Dr Jane Hocking, Associate Professor Jane Fisher, and Dr Louise Keogh in conjunction with investigators from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Royal Women's Hospital, Family Planning Victoria, and the Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital.

As part of this project, a review of the Australian literature on chlamydia infection and its control has been conducted. Health promotion programs and campaigns designed to promote chlamydia awareness and prevent infection will also be reviewed for their effectiveness, and in-depth interviews will be conducted with individuals involved in the sexual health promotion area.

Data from Victorian hospitals, General Practice, Medicare, and the Victorian Department of Human Services will be collected and analysed in order to gain a greater understanding of the burden of chlamydia on the Victorian community. Finally, in-depth interviews with individuals who have been diagnosed with chlamydia or PID will be conducted in order to develop a greater understanding of the emotional and social impact of these diagnoses.

The project is currently at the half-way stage and Dr Jane Hocking and project Research Fellow, Dr Danielle Newton have now undertaken a preliminary review of the literature. The analyses of the healthcare data and interviews with individuals who have been diagnosed with chlamydia or PID are expected to commence shortly.

Associate Professor Jane Fisher wins award for best paper at the Fertility Society Conference

The Fertility Society of Australia's 2008 Conference was held in Brisbane on October 19th – 22nd 2008. A/Prof Jane Fisher presented a paper entitled "Pregnancy Health Behaviours after Assisted Conception: Preliminary Findings from the Parental Age and Transition to Parenthood Australia Study". The paper was awarded the prize as the best research presentation about psychosocial aspects of infertility and assisted reproduction. Jane and the co-investigators of the PATPA study - Karin Hammarberg, Catherine McMahon, Frances Gibson and Douglas Saunders - are very grateful to Schering-Plough and the Fertility Society of Australia for their recognition of excellence in psychosocial research in infertility. Jane is Chair of Psychosocial and Epidemiological Research in Reproduction at Melbourne IVF.

Assisted Reproductive Treatment Bill 2008 – by Dr Maggie Kirkman

Key Centre staff recently contributed to the debate about legislative reform concerning assisted reproductive treatment and surrogacy in Victoria. Academic staff signed a letter sent to all Victorian MPs urging them to support the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Bill 2008. In early October, Dr Maggie Kirkman spoke at a Parliamentary Forum about the Bill, at the invitation of MPs Tony Lupton and Fiona Richardson, at Parliament House, Melbourne. She also spoke at the public forum "What is the future of IVF and surrogacy in Victoria?" at the Northcote Town Hall, organised by Fiona Richardson.

In their letter to parliamentarians, academic staff said that current discriminatory laws adversely affect women's health and well-being, with repercussions for their children. Academics pointed out that the Bill acknowledged the many diverse types of families that already exist in Victoria and responded to children's need to have their families recognised in law.

Although they were disappointed that the Bill mandates criminal checks on all people undergoing assisted reproductive treatment, academics stated in the letter that the value of the injustices redressed by this Bill is greater than the cost of the imposition of criminal checks on people whose only crime is to be infertile.

Key Centre Leads At Annual Melbourne School Of Population Health Awards

Two Centre staff members and one student were recognised for their outstanding achievements by Professor Terry Nolan, Head of the Melbourne School for Population Health.

Dr Jane Hocking was awarded the Research Career Development Award, Dr Louise Keogh the Knowledge Transfer Award for her work on the Abortion Conference and in leading the centre's advocacy in abortion law reform (2007) and Dr Saw Saw the Award for excellence in knowledge transfer in Doctoral Research.

The Assisted Reproductive Treatment Bill 2008 was passed by both Houses of Parliament on 4 December last year.

The Bill is derived from the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission's Report on Assisted Reproductive Technology and Adoption. These recommendations were based on extensive community consultation and rigorous reviews of evidence. One of the important findings of the VLRC was that good parenting is unrelated to marital status and sexual orientation.

Among the reforms to be included in Victoria's new laws are:

- Making Victoria's laws compatible with Federal discrimination laws by providing that women can gain access to assisted reproductive treatment regardless of their marital status or sexual orientation.
- Ensuring stronger legal protection for children by giving legal recognition to the commissioning parents in a surrogacy arrangement and to the female partner of a child's mother.
- Removing the anomaly in arrangements for surrogate motherhood that required surrogate mothers to be infertile.

The Government has said that it intends to proclaim the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act by 1 July 2009.

Key Centre for Women's Health in Society Researcher Awarded Prestigious Fellowship

Dr Carolyn Nickson undertook a short-term Postdoctoral Fellowship at the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in France (March – May 2009), where she worked with the Epidemiology Methods and Support Group on simulation models of the natural history of breast cancer and the effects of breast cancer screening. The Harold Mitchell Foundation generously contributed to the IARC Fellowship and also a collaborative visit to the University of Bristol.

Understanding Women's Experiences of Unplanned Pregnancy and Abortion

CONSULTATION MEETING, 5 December 2008

As three years of ARC-funded research on women's experiences of abortion draw to a close, the Key Centre was host to a consultation meeting to finalise the report and recommendations arising from the project.

The Key Centre, in collaboration with the Pregnancy Advisory Service of the Royal Women's Hospital and VicHealth, undertook the project with two components: an audit of electronic data collected by the Pregnancy Advisory Service for all their service users over one year, and in-depth interviews with subsets of these women. The report of the project includes recommendations arising from the project about developing a data-gathering instrument, future research, and policy development.

Participants in the meeting were enthusiastic about the report and commented that it overturns stereotypes of women who have abortions. It is evident from the project's results that all kinds of women find themselves unexpectedly pregnant or in circumstances where they are not ready to mother a first or subsequent child.

The women reveal the complex matters they consider when contemplating abortion; many were relieved that staff of the Pregnancy Advisory Service were able to offer information on their options, including abortion and continuing the pregnancy, as well as assessment, support, counselling, advocacy, and referral. Unfortunately, the Pregnancy Advisory Service does not have the resources to assist all women who attempt to contact them.

The project was funded by grants from the Australian Research Council (ARC Linkage Grant LP0667968) and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) to Professor Doreen Rosenthal, Dr Heather Rowe, and Dr Shelley Mallett of the Key Centre for Women's Health in Society at The University of Melbourne, and Annarella Hardiman of the Royal Women's Hospital. The Report was prepared and written by Dr Maggie Kirkman, Project Director.

The research team is especially grateful to the women who participated in the research and the staff of the Pregnancy Advisory Service. The team also acknowledges the reference group members: Dr Susie Allanson, Ms Dee Basinski, Dr Chris Bayly, Dr Robyn Gregory, Ms Meg Gulbin, and Prof Jenny Morgan.

Coinciding with finalisation of the Report was the appearance in the Medical Journal of Australia of the first of the peer reviewed publication arising from the research. The lead author Dr Heather Rowe was interviewed on national radio and for several reports about the article in the print media. This paper reports on the audit of records of the Pregnancy Advisory Service, which provided evidence for some of the recommendations in the Report. First, that inequalities of access to services must be addressed so that young, socioeconomically disadvantaged women living in rural areas no longer face a delay in obtaining pregnancy advice, and second, systematic data collection of the kind reported from the audit is urgently needed in order to plan service delivery and contribute to initiatives for prevention of unwanted and unplanned pregnancy. This work is a timely contribution to the evidence about unplanned pregnancy and abortion in the context of the 2008 Victorian abortion law reform.



The photograph shows those who attended the consultation day. L to R: Dr Robyn Gregory, CEO, Women's Health West, Victoria; Dr Christine Healy, GP, private abortion provider, past president of the Abortion Providers' Federation of Australasia; Dr Heather Rowe, Key Centre for Women's Health in Society (Chief Investigator); Dr Chris Bayly, Associate Director Women's Services, Royal Women's Hospital; Dr Maggie Kirkman, Key Centre for Women's Health in Society (Research Director); Prof Doreen Rosenthal, Key Centre for Women's Health in Society (Principal Investigator); Ms Brigid Coombe, Director, Pregnancy Advisory Centre, Central North Adelaide Health Service; Ms Annarella Hardiman, Manager, Pregnancy Advisory Service, Royal Women's Hospital (Partner Investigator); Ms Lynne Jordan, CEO, Family Planning Victoria; and Ms Dee Basinski, Senior Project Officer, VicHealth. Missing from the picture is Dr Susie Allanson, Clinical Psychologist, Private Fertility Control Clinic.

→ PROFILE

Dr Louise Keogh Health Sociologist



Dr Louise Keogh is a health sociologist, but began her academic life in the Chemistry Department at the University of Western Australia. After graduating and working as a research chemist with a mining company, Louise retrained in social research by completing a Masters degree in the Sociology department at Monash University. She then pursued social research in health at the Centre for the Study of STDs at La Trobe University and completed her PhD on emergency contraception in the School of Public Health at La Trobe in 2003. Louise's research projects include the perception of risk for breast cancer, the use of chemoprevention for women at high risk of breast cancer and the use of screening and genetic technology in the prevention of breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

This year Louise took up a continuing position as Lecturer (Women's Health) at the Key Centre. She also holds a (part time) National Health and Medical Research Council Post Doctoral Training Fellowship. Her collaborators include Professor John Hopper and Associate Professor Mark Jenkins at the MEGA Centre in the University's School of Population Health and Associate Professor Kelly Phillips at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

What are you working on at the moment?

In my breast cancer research, I am currently analysing qualitative data I have collected over the course of my post-doc. I interviewed women at high familial risk of breast cancer about their perceptions of their own risk, and how they make decisions about preventing breast cancer. Women don't always respond to health risks in the way we would expect. I hope from this analysis to be able to shed light on the way women at risk of breast cancer think about their risk of cancer and how they make decisions about things like mammography, breast self-examination and genetic testing.

In my colorectal cancer research we have just published a paper that shows the uptake of genetic testing for colorectal cancer among participants in a research study dropped dramatically once participants were informed of the impact of genetic testing on eligibility for future life insurance policies. These results are of concern, because genetic testing for colorectal cancer has the potential to save lives. We are currently following up this research with qualitative interviews with the individuals who declined genetic testing to determine the role that insurance concerns played in their decision-making.

What excites you about the work?

This research is all about the translation of scientific knowledge into everyday practice, and how this does or doesn't occur. Unless new scientific knowledge is translated to the populations that can benefit, it will have very little effect. Through this research I hope to have an impact on people's access to and use of health technologies.

And what frustrates you...

How long everything takes...

Who has inspired you?

Our international students who come to Australia and perform at Masters level in a language that is not their own inspire me, and make me think twice about the barriers that I have faced in my life.

Tell us a bit about your career path. What attracted you to research?

I have not always followed the most lucrative pathway in my career, choosing instead the options that seemed intellectually interesting and challenging. I left the mining industry to do a masters, and have had the opportunity to do interesting research ever since. So no regrets. It is a luxury to spend my time finding the answers to important questions.

If you could change one thing in your life?

I would like to have a positive impact on the society in which we live. There are many things that I think we need to change, and I wish I knew a way to instigate big social changes. Like increasing the value that society places on caring work, whether for children, the sick or the elderly. Or reinvigorating the idea of feminism to tackle the remaining gender inequalities.

If you weren't working at the Key Centre what would you be doing?

Something that involves writing and research

International Breastfeeding Journal - Dr Lisa Amir

As the Editor-in-Chief of the International Breastfeeding Journal (IBJ), I am pleased to provide an update. Three years ago in March 2006, several KCWHS staff members joined me as Professor Roger Short launched the journal at the Royal Women's Hospital. Since then, we have published 77 papers, with authors from 28 countries – thereby establishing IBJ as a truly international journal. All papers are open access, so the full content can be read by anyone with internet access. Readers can register to receive an email alert when a new paper is published.

In May 2009, ten of the initial members of the Editorial Board rotated off the Board, and fourteen new members, from nine countries, were welcomed to the Board. The complete list can be seen on the website: www.internationalbreastfeedingjournal.com Dr Heather Rowe is one of the initial members who remain on the Editorial Board.

Nine papers were published in August 2008 as a thematic series titled "Breastfeeding and feminism: Reproductive health, rights and justice," edited by Miriam Labbok and colleagues. Well-known authors in the series included Bernice Hausman, Barbara Katz Rothman and Jackie Wolf.

Donna Geddes, from the University of Western Australia, has recently published two papers on ultrasound imaging of the lactating breast. Online publishing allows high quality images – the papers include 30 figures and 7 videos in total. The publisher featured the first paper on the BioMed Central website. The paper has been designated "highly accessed" and was viewed 1890 times in the month of May 2009.

Australian Health Inequalities Retreat (AHIP) – Shaping a Policy Relevant Research Agenda in Work, Housing and Health. – Professor Anne Kavanagh and Dr Rebecca Bentley

The Australian Health Inequities Program, funded by the National Medical Research Council, is committed to strengthening our understanding of the ways in which health inequities are created and sustained in Australia, and in developing more effective ways of reducing these inequities. Professor Anne Kavanagh is a Lead Investigator on AHIP and Dr Rebecca Bentley is a Team Investigator. Anne and Rebecca assisted in the convening of AHIP Retreat and Policy Day held in March 2009. Each year we have international visitors who participate in the AHIP retreat and policy day. This year we were fortunate to have Professor Hilary Graham Director, Public Health Research Consortium, Department of Health Sciences, University of York (UK), A/Professor Tony Lamontagne from the Melbourne School of Population Health, and Professor Michael Quinlan from the Australian School of Business, The University of New South Wales as our visitors. One of the themes that came out of our retreat was the notion of 'precariousness' related to housing, work, economic security, social participation and many other social determinants of health. We thought that this idea, proposed by our visitor, Professor Hilary Graham encapsulated our research interests on the many

different social determinants of health and it highlighted how precariousness is often linked across their domains.

Our policy forum focused on 'Shaping a Policy – Relevant Research Agenda in Work, Housing and Health' and the format for the day was developed in collaboration with our stakeholders in the Department of Human Services Victoria. Instead of standard research papers we had presentations from both researchers and policy-makers as well as discussants for each of the papers. This format generated great discussion and new research/policy partnerships. Each of our visitors gave presentations as well as Professor Phillipa Howden-Chapman, the Director of the Housing and Health Research Programme, Otago University, New Zealand.

The funding for this program of work runs until early 2010 and we will be holding a two day research symposium on health inequities in April 2010. Sir Michael Marmot, Chair of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, is one of our international visitors. Stay tuned for more details!

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→ STUDENT SUCCESS

THE FOLLOWING DEGREES HAVE BEEN AWARDED:

PhD

Pauline Rutendo GWATIRISA Are you being served? Food, HIV and the suffering poor: the politics of food aid in Zimbabwe. Thesis passed 25 Nov 2008

Carolyn Anne NICKSON Modelling the impact of targeted changes to screening intervals in the Australian Breast Screening Program. Thesis passed 1 May 2008

Mr Lukar THORNTON was awarded his PhD titled 'Environmental and Individual Choices of Healthy Behaviours' in March 2009

Sartiah YUSRAN Developing sexuality and reproductive health education for secondary schools in Makassar: A need assessment. Thesis passed 11 April 2008.

Master of Public Health - Women's Health stream

Huma AZIZ – 'Sexual Reproductive Health in Pakistan'

Yao XU – 'Gender equity and contraception use in mainland China: An ecological analysis'

Claudia MEYER – 'The power to choose: a systematic review of the factors associated with an under-utilisation of respite care among older spousal carers'

Master of Public Health with Research Report in Women's Health

Yohanes K WINDI The intersection of traditional house (ume kbubu) with the health beliefs and practices among Dawan people in Fatu Makono Village, West Timor"

Master of Women's Health with research project

Mobina KASHIF – The impact of pre conceptional and early pregnancy counselling on the patients of recurrent abortions

Kashif MURTAZA – The association of teenager and pre-pregnancy smoking on the breast cancer risk.

Master of Women's Health - coursework only:

Halima **ROMEDAN**

Elly **TAYLOR**

Fareen **WALJI**

→ STUDENT PROFILE

Amanda Cooklin PhD Candidate



Amanda (Mandy) Cooklin is a current PhD candidate at the KCWHS. Amanda began at the Key Centre in 2000, undertaking a Master of Women's Health after moving to Melbourne from Adelaide. Amanda completed her Masters of Women's Health in 2001, and worked as a research assistant at the KCWHS and Monash IVF on a number of projects related to women's mental health during pregnancy and following childbirth. Amanda began her PhD in 2003, combining her candidature with research assisting, and tutoring. Her project is investigating the mental health outcomes of women's employment conditions and arrangements during pregnancy and following childbirth. She has been enrolled alternately as a full-time and a part-time candidate, and has taken two periods of maternity leave during her candidature. Amanda is jointly supervised by A/Professor Jane Fisher and Dr Heather Rowe at the KCWHS.

Amanda holds a Public Health Postgraduate Scholarship from the National Health and Research Council, and has also received scholarship support from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne, and VicHealth.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am in the final months of my candidature so I am immersed in writing (and re-writing!) my thesis. My PhD study followed a cohort of women who were expecting their first baby, and who were employed during pregnancy. Myself, Jane Fisher and Heather Rowe were keen to understand whether employment conditions, entitlements including maternity leave, and decisions and arrangements about employment following birth had a measurable effect on women's health and well-being. The research fits in well with the KCWHS social determinants of health paradigm. Increasingly, it is being understood that structural and social factors contribute to mental health outcomes, including during childbearing.

What excites you about the work?

It has been very exciting to see the results of the study come together after several years of persistent work. When we began thinking about the study, there was little information about women's access to maternity leave available in Australia. Of course, that has changed dramatically in the last few years, and it has been great to be part of a diverse movement of researchers, politicians, academics, feminist organizations, industry groups and employee unions all advocating for policy change in this area – successfully too! I've really enjoyed communicating my results to a variety of audiences, including via the media. It's been great to come out of this process with a message, one that resonates with people's experiences.

And what frustrates you...

Not having enough uninterrupted time to dedicate to thesis writing!

Who has inspired you?

Fellow students have been a great source of support, and it's great to see others get over the line for thesis submission – it reminds me that it is possible. Other researchers investigating 'women and work' also continually alert me to different ways in which to ask the right questions to supply evidence that will support change.

Tell us a bit about your career path. What attracted you to research?

Once I began to work in this area of women's mental health and well-being, I realized that it would allow me to combine a variety of interests and to continue to pose, and hopefully address, some of the unknowns. For me, the sustained intellectual stimulation has kept me going, along with the flexibility inherent in conducting a research project. I feel very fortunate to have been able to tackle at large in my PhD the skills that I gained through research assisting.

If you could change one thing in your life?

My focus now is ensuring that we continue as a community and society to make visible the ways in which workplaces discriminate, disadvantage and marginalise women. My focus at the moment is on women resuming employment after a period of maternity leave, but I think that 'women and work' will be a sustained focus of mine into the future.

If you weren't working at the Key Centre what would you be doing?

I would like to think that I would have come to work in research one way or another, via a PhD or through some other pathway.

→ GRANT SUCCESS

Campbell I, Hopper J, Stagoll O, Kavanagh AM, Mitchell G, Mann B, Fox S, French P. Integration of BreastScreen with an epidemiological, molecular and translational research program. NBCF and Cancer Australia. 2008 – 2012, \$4,999,405.

A/Professor Jane Fisher. Maternal mood disorder and anaemia in rural Vietnam. Melbourne Research Grant Scheme, 2008; \$25,367

A/Professor Jane Fisher, Biggs BA, Prof D Rosenthal, Dwyer T, Tran T, Ngoc N, Casey G. Maternal mental health and anaemia as determinants of infant health and development in resource-constrained settings. Australian Research Council. 2009-2011. 2009 - \$220,000.

A/Professor Jane Fisher, Tran T. The impact of mental health problems on infant health and development in Vietnam. University of Melbourne International Joint Research Projects, 2008; \$15,000

Dr Jane S Hocking, Regan D, Wilson D, Philp D, Smith AMA. Using mathematical models to assess the impact of interventions to reduce sexually transmitted infections in Australia. NHMRC Project Grant. 2009-2011 \$539,775.

Dr Jane S Hocking, Bradshaw C, Tabrizi S, Fairley CK, Pirota M, Donovan B. A longitudinal study of bacterial vaginosis and Mycoplasma genitalium in young Australian women. NHMRC \$115,000 2008-2010.

Dr Jane S Hocking, Fairley CK, Williams H, Keogh L, Fisher J, Chen M, Tseuh A, Temple-Smith M, Bayley C, How does Chlamydia infection impact on the sexual, reproductive and mental health of Victorians and the Victorian health care system, Department of Human Services Victoria, 2009-2010; \$186,000

Dr Jane S Hocking, Fairley CK, Gunn J, Kaldor J, Donovan B, Low N, Law M, Temple-Smith M, Regan D, Wilson D, Carter R, Imrie J, Tabrizi S, Chen M, Pitts M, et al. Design, Modelling and Evaluation of the Chlamydia Pilot in General Practice. Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. This is a collaborative project with University of New South Wales, University of Bern, Deakin University, Latrobe University, Royal Women's Hospital, Burnet Institute and the Victorian Cytology Service.

Hollows A, Bentley R, Mallett S, Baker E, Gronda H, Keys D, Kolar V. Mitigating Negative Health Outcomes of Vulnerable & Precarious Housing \$100,000 2009-2010.

Prof Anne M Kavanagh, Mallett S, Rosenthal D. Healthier and sustainable futures for disadvantaged young people. ARC Linkage Project. \$295,000. 2008-2010.

Professor Anne M Kavanagh, La Montagne A, Bentley R, McVernon J. H1N1-Related Victorian School Closures: Quarantine Compliance and Impact of Parents' Precarious Employment. NHMRC Grant \$276,974 2009-2010.

→ HAROLD MITCHELL FOUNDATION AWARDS

Dr Louise Keogh travelled to Chicago (mid 2008) for the American Society of Clinical Oncologists (ASCO) and presented a paper titled 'Australian physicians and chemoprevention for women at high familial risk for breast cancer'. She also visited the Centre for Excellence in Women's Health in Chicago.

Dr Jane Hocking travelled to Switzerland (late 2008) and the UK to investigate chlamydia epidemiology and control. She also met with policy makers to learn about the design and management of the National Chlamydia Screening Program in the United Kingdom.

Sudirman Nasir PhD candidate travelled to Indonesia, Thailand and Austria in March 2009.

Dr Carolyn Nickson, Postdoctoral Fellowship, WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer, France (March – May 2009). The Harold Mitchell Foundation generously contributed to the IARC Fellowship and also a collaborative visit to the University of Bristol

→ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr Saw Saw. Award for Excellence in Knowledge Transfer in Doctoral Research., Melbourne School of Population Health, October 2008

PhD Candidate, Sudirman Nasir was awarded the prestigious Melbourne Abroad Travelling Scholarship/Riady Scholarship for 2009

PhD Candidate, Sudirman Nasir attended and presented a paper at the Aids2031 Conference, titled "Mobilising Social Capital in a World with AIDS" (Salzburg, Austria, 30 March - 1 April 2009).

Sudirman also attended and presented a paper in a major session on Drugs, Risk & Environment at the International Conference on Harm Reduction, Bangkok, 18 - 24 April 2009.

→ STAFF MOVEMENTS

New Staff

Philomena Horsley commenced work at the Centre in April 2009. Philomena will be working on various projects with the Key Centre including community liaison work; teaching; developing projects in gender and health inequalities especially disability; and working with Professor Kavanagh to engage policy-makers and other key stakeholders. Philomena brings a wealth of experience to this position including having worked in the women's health in the non-government sector for many years; served on numerous boards and ethics committees; worked as a community liaison officer at the Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health in Society for many years and now as a qualitative researcher in the final stages of her PhD. She is on the Victorian honour role for women.

Lauren Krjacki joined the Key Centre in June 2009. Lauren is a researcher working in the field of area disadvantage and health. She is primarily involved in a project funded by the National Heart Foundation that investigates the environmental predictors of cardiovascular disease led by Professor Anne Kavanagh. Lauren is currently applying multi-level analyses and spatial methods to researching health inequities. She has a masters degree in Public Health from the University of Queensland and prior to joining the Key Centre Lauren worked at the Cancer Council Queensland. She also has experience working internationally on a public health project in Peru, and at the World Health Organization in Geneva.

Kate Mason commenced work at the Centre in April 2009. Kate will manage a three year longitudinal study of the post-school educational and employment pathways of disadvantaged young people and the linkages to health. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and is partnership

between researchers at The University of Melbourne and Melbourne City Mission. The Investigators are Professor Anne Kavanagh, Dr Shelley Mallett, Professor Doreen Rosenthal and Ms Sally James.

Simone Poznanski commenced in January 2009, has a background in infectious diseases and molecular biology and discovered an interest in Public Health whilst researching her PhD. Simone completed her PhD 2005. Her PhD involved developing a plant based vaccine which could prevent human tapeworm infections in developing countries. Her interest in this area continued and she completed a Masters in Public Health in 2008 whilst working in a public health laboratory. Her main research interest is the prevention of infectious diseases. She is currently employed as a Research Fellow on a Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing funded project led by Dr Jane Hocking. This project involves the design and evaluation of a chlamydia testing pilot program (ACCEPt) to determine whether screening is acceptable, feasible and cost-effective.

Dr Danielle Newton commenced in June 2008 working on the new and expanding Chlamydia project within the Key Centre. Her field of studies include a PhD in Psychology, and she came to the Key Centre after research work for the Department of General Practice and for the Sexual Health Unit, also within the Melbourne School of Population Health. Her work to date has included work on depression and on areas of health training, as well as relationships and sexuality.

Alaina Vaisey Has been recruited to work on the PEPP Project (Psycho-Educational Program for Parents), project that aims to promote confidence and reduce distress by providing couples with crucial knowledge and an opportunity to learn essential skills in a half day seminar offered at a critical time. The two-component program is conducted by maternal and child health nurses for first time parents and their newborns, who attend in groups of up to five families four to eight weeks after discharge from maternity hospital.

→ STAFF DEPARTURES

Dr Karen Hammarberg resigned in November 2008 to move to the United States with her family. Her involvement at the Key Centre started with her PhD studies, moving into research into infertility/IVF issues as a staff member. She was a valuable participant across a range of Centre activities, which will be retained into 2009 as she takes up an honorary position.



Dr Deborah Keys resigned at the end of December to take up a position at Melbourne City Mission. She had been at the Key Centre since early 2003, originally working on the the longitudinal study of youth homelessness, but also took part in teaching including in the Japanese Masters Program, and other research roles.

Felice Rocca – Felice Rocca departed from the Key Centre for Women's Health in April 2009. He was Centre's Manager since 2003. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

Jennifer Sievers started with the Key Centre in 2001 as the Postgraduate administrator, dealing with student and teaching support. With a degree in Information Management she proved herself capable of taking on other tasks and by the time she left in June 2008 to take up a position in the School's Academic Program Office, her responsibilities had broadened to supporting a wide range of administrative functions for the Centre.

Lukar Thornton resigned in March 2008 to accept a position at Deakin University as a Post Doctoral Research Fellow. Lukar managed a National Heart Foundation funded project looking at Environmental predictors of biomarkers of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

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keynotes newsletter

PUBLISHED BY: Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, Melbourne School of Population Health, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, The University of Melbourne

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