

The National Indigenous Research(er) Capacity Building Network Newsletter



Dear readers, we hope you had a wonderful Easter Break. Welcome to our first IRNet Quarterly Newsletter for 2021. Each quarter, we aim to share updates from Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) Centres and their partner organisations about work related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research translation.

Firstly, we're excited to announce that this year's IRNet National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Research Showcase will be held in Sydney, proudly hosted by

the University of Sydney and Sydney Health Partners (more details below).

Inside this edition, you'll be able to read more about the University of Newcastle's MAMA-EMPOWER Project; the University of Melbourne's FlashGM Study; and the Strengthening Aboriginal Capacity in Health Research Translation & Development in South Australia (StACTD) Project—a collaboration between Health Translation SA and the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).



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National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Showcase

Plans are currently underway for the second annual IRNet National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Showcase, following on from the success of the first annual Showcase which was held in Adelaide in 2020.

This exciting event will be held on the 27th-28th of July at the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney.

It will bring together Indigenous health and medical researchers and community leaders from around Australia, both in-person and online. The full program will be available

soon, with keynote speakers including Ms Pat Anderson, the Chairperson of the Lowitja Institute.

Abstract submissions for the Showcase are now open. Wherever you are in your career, we encourage you to submit your research-

"Join us, share your research, and be inspired by the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and medical research across Australia"



Find out more here: <https://ahra.org.au/our-work/national-indigenous-researcher-capacity-building-network-irnet/>

Or get in touch: IRNet@sahmri.com

Proudly hosted and supported by:



Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers throughout their Pregnancy

The MAMA-EMPOWER team are creating a mobile phone app to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers throughout their pregnancy. The aim of the app is to not only be culturally appropriate, but also to provide evidenced-based, tailored health information for the individual, and support women to make healthy choices.

Our team of Aboriginal Researchers, non-Indigenous Researchers, and experts in their fields are collaborating to bring together the latest evidence-based information. We are focusing on three out of the 7 top modifiable risk factors contributing to the Indigenous health gap: smoking, alcohol, and fruit and vegetable intake.

Tackling these risk factors can all have a positive impact on the birth weight of babies. The app also addresses the importance of social and emotional wellbeing throughout pregnancy.

While the app aims to have the best information available for mothers, we want it delivered in a meaningful way that is engaging, promotes healthy practices and health seeking behaviours. In addition to this, the incorporation of behavioural change techniques within the app, such as goal-setting and reminders, will also help in achieving these aims.

We have recently secured funding, provided by the

Investing in Women funding program of the New South Wales Government. This funding will help in incorporating features that have been requested from previous trialling of the app, such as the personalised delivery of information.

Depending on the speed of development, we hope to launch the final app around June this year.

If you or your community would like more information, please contact Rachel Hatfield: rachel.hatfield@newcastle.edu.au

By Rachel Hatfield (University of Newcastle), Dr Nicole Ryan (Hunter Medical Research Institute; University of Newcastle), and A/Prof Gillian Gould (University of Newcastle; NHMRC & CINSW Translating Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellow)



Member for Coffs Harbour Gurmeh Singh with Associate Professor Gillian Gould (second from the right) and team members. Photo contributed by David Tune from Coffs Coast News Of The Area.

Proudly funded by the NSW Communities and Justice, & Hunter Cancer Research Alliance



FlashGM Study has its first face-to-face meeting

Monitoring blood glucose (sugar) levels through finger pricks is painful and doesn't provide enough information – especially for people with diabetes using injectable medication. Flash Glucose Monitors (FlashGM) are new easy-to-use devices worn on the arm that provide real-time blood glucose levels to guide diabetes treatment.

The FlashGM Study aims to assess whether these new devices can help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain better understanding and ability to manage their blood glucose to avoid complications like kidney failure, heart attacks and blindness.

"We hope that our research will improve diabetes care and health-service delivery for Indigenous and other high-risk Australians."

The FlashGM Study currently brings together the following organisations:

- Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative (VIC)
- Apunimpima - Cape York Health Council (QLD)
- Wuchopperen Health Service (QLD)
- Goulburn Valley Health (VIC)
- Maari Ma Health (NSW)
- Austin Health (VIC)
- St. Vincent's Health (VIC)

While it's been tough to establish a national Indigenous multi-centre trial during a COVID year, the FlashGM Study has bounced into 2021 with face-to-face meetings, giving staff across a number of sites a chance to meet in person for the first time.

Early February saw the leadership team come together for an evening meal in Ivanhoe, and a full day planning meeting at the Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg.

Tracey Hearn, our Indigenous Research Assistant, and Donna Rumbiolo, our Clinical Trials Coordinator made the trip down from Rumbalara Aboriginal Corporation on Yorta Yorta country near Shepparton. Sharon Atkinson-Briggs, inaugural Post-doctoral Indigenous Fellow from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne also took a quick break from putting the finishing touches on her PhD to join the team.

To find out more about the study, visit the website: <https://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/flashgmstudy/>

Or contact Trial Manager, Mariam Hachem: mariam.hachem@unimelb.edu.au

By Daniel Duke (Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH), the University of Melbourne, Royal Melbourne Hospital)



L-R: A/Prof Elif Ekinci, Mariam Hachem, Daniel Duke, A/Prof Luke Burchill (Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Wurrung), Tracey Hearn (Yorta Yorta), Donna Rumbiolo & Sharon Atkinson-Briggs (Yorta Yorta)

Strengthening Aboriginal Capacity in Health Research Translation & Development in South Australia (StACTD)



The StACTD Project was established to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in South Australia to build their skills and confidence in health research translation through several initiatives, including the Research Translation Training Program which launched at the end of 2020.

The first cohort for our Training Program consists of 26 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including students; health workers; and researchers, who are keen to upskill themselves in health research translation.

So far, they've been getting together for regular catch-ups both face-to-face and virtually. This gives participants the opportunity to meet, come together, and learn in a culturally safe space.

We spoke with Courtney Hammond, one of our StACTD Participants, about her experience with the Program so far. Courtney is an Eastern Arrernte/Tanganekald woman with ties to country in Central Australia and the lower South East of South Australia. She told us that she was really excited to be involved when she first heard about StACTD. "I've already gained a greater understanding of health research translation and further developed my skills as a researcher.

The StACTD Team have created a supportive environment with both the project team and participants, allowing us to work together and support each other in developing our skills."

Some of our participants have been busy completing group workshops with Research Impact Academy on the fundamentals of research impact. They are also able to access tailored support such as mentoring, and can apply for funding which enables them to complete training opportunities relevant to them.

Other StACTD initiatives coming soon include the provision of cultural awareness and safety training for non-Indigenous employers and managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the health workforce, to help contribute to safer, more supportive working environments and improve the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the workforce.

Overall, we anticipate that StACTD will lead to enhanced capacity across Health Translation SA (HTSA) partners to better understand and meet the needs of peoples and communities, contributing to improved health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For more information on the StACTD Project, contact Eliza Schioldann:
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By Eliza Schioldann (Wardliparingga Capacity Development) on behalf of Health Translation SA.

This project is supported by the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) as part of the Rapid Applied Research Translation program.



Maridulu **Budyari Gumal**



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