



TrueBlue approach to treating the chronically ill

The Greater Green Triangle University Department of Rural Health is undertaking a trial program that could revolutionise the way patients with chronic disease and depression are treated.

The TrueBlue project has developed and evaluated a system of primary care for patients with coronary heart disease and/or type 2 diabetes and co-morbid depression. Fourteen general practices are participating in the study, which uses a randomised design to compare the clinical outcomes between usual care and nurse-led collaborative care.

'Depression is an important risk factor, but it is not necessarily as visible as others. However, it should be monitored just as much as other risk factors', said Greater Green Triangle University Department Senior Research Fellow Dr Mark Morgan.

Speaking at a conference in Warrnambool recently, Dr Morgan emphasised that new systems in general practice are unavoidable in the face of increases in diabetes and heart disease.

While still in its data collection phase, anecdotal comments from participating nurses suggest that TrueBlue has been

well received by patients and nurses alike. Preliminary feedback indicated the trial helped patients feel less rushed, more self-empowered and better identified issues for discussion. The study has also demonstrated a better adherence to best-practice guidelines for the management and monitoring of chronic heart disease and type 2 diabetes, including monitoring of depression.

The Greater Green Triangle University Department of Rural Health is a collaboration between Deakin University's Health Services Implementation Research group and Flinders University.

The TrueBlue project is due to be completed in early 2011 and has been funded by beyondblue, the National Depression Initiative.

For more information about the TrueBlue project, please visit www.greaterhealth.org/research/health-services-research/37.

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Deakin researchers honoured with NHMRC Excellence Awards

The National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia's peak body for health and medical research, presented its Excellence Awards on Wednesday 15 December in Canberra. The awards recognise the scientific merit, innovation and the research success of 10 of Australia's leading health and medical researchers.

Two of the 10 award recipients are Deakin University staff, both from the Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences. The Faculty offers its congratulations to Dr Tania de Koning-Ward and Dr Tony Velkov of the School of Medicine, both of whom received NHMRC Achievement Awards for Career Development.

Professor Warwick Anderson, CEO of NHMRC said, 'The NHMRC established these Excellence Awards to recognise and reward achievement in the highly competitive health and medical research field.'

'These award winners are outstanding researchers. As the highest ranking applicants in their funding schemes, these 10 researchers have been assessed by their peers as meeting the highest national and international standards for their research. They have been identified as the top 10 of the nearly 5000 researchers that applied for NHMRC funding in 2010. They are the top 10 researchers in the 24% of applicants that were successful in receiving NHMRC funding.'

Congratulations to Dr de Koning-Ward and Dr Velkov on this outstanding achievement.

NHMRC Achievement Awards for Career Development

CDA2 - Biomedical Dr Tania de Koning-Ward, Deakin University, Victoria

Dr Tania de Koning-Ward established her own research group in 2007, within the School of Medicine at Deakin University as

the School was preparing to accept its first intake of medical students. Her research is centred on the molecular basis of malaria pathogenesis, particularly how this deadly pathogen is able to remodel its host red blood cell to enhance its survival and cause disease.

CDA1 - Industry Dr Tony Velkov, Deakin University, Victoria

Dr Tony Velkov trained in medical microbiology and bioinformatics during his PhD.

His investigations into the way in which orally absorbed drugs are taken up across the small intestine have implications for the design of new drugs. This has the potential to maximise oral absorption by enhancing interactions with proteins through targeted structural modifications. This has now been accepted as a new trans-cytosolic drug transport mechanism in the pharmaceutical sciences community.

Grant success for the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes

Professor Jane Speight, Chair in Behavioural and Social Research – Diabetes, and Director of the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes, recently won \$200 000 funding from the Department of Health and Ageing through the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) strategic

development grant (SDG) to conduct a national survey of people with diabetes, with the aim of investigating their psychological health and unmet needs. The survey will be a cross-sectional study of adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes, examining issues such as the self-care activities; impact of diabetes on

emotional wellbeing and quality of life; diabetes-related distress and depression; empowerment, health literacy and factors implicated in successful adjustment (including health beliefs and positive mental health factors such as resilience and optimism).

Other mums a major influence on breastfeeding

It is well known that breastfeeding has health benefits for infants and their mothers, as well as other positive social and economic consequences. Despite Australian and World Health Organization recommendations to breastfeed infants to at least six months, less than half of Australian infants are receiving any breast milk at this age. There is also a wide and increasing gap in breastfeeding rates between the most and least socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

Social support from healthcare professionals, peer counsellors, and partners has been demonstrated to be positively associated with the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. Whether the behaviour of other breastfeeding mothers influences breastfeeding continuation has not previously been studied.

The influence of peers may be particularly important in disadvantaged areas, where there may be fewer positive role models and a culture of bottle-feeding prevails. In Victoria, around two thirds of all first-time mothers attend first-time parent groups. These groups form when babies are roughly six weeks of age and provide informal peer support during the first months of parenthood.

As part of Deakin's Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research's (C-PAN) Melbourne InFANT Program, a randomised

trial to test the effect of a group-based healthy eating and activity intervention, 500 mothers attending 62 newly formed first-time parent groups were interviewed.

The study was designed to investigate whether in the setting of first-time parent groups, exposure to peers who were breastfeeding infants of a similar age influenced the likelihood of continuing to breastfeed to six months and beyond.

Of the mothers who took part in the study, almost half were no longer breastfeeding at six months. Of the mothers who ceased breastfeeding before the recommended six months, half did so between six weeks and six months, which is when they may be influenced by peers attending first-time parent groups.

First-time parent groups were divided into those where more than 25% had stopped breastfeeding when the group was formed (six weeks), and those where less than 25% had ceased by six weeks.

The study found that mothers who were still breastfeeding at six weeks but who were part of a group where a higher proportion had already ceased breastfeeding by six weeks were more than twice as likely to stop breastfeeding themselves before six months. This peer effect was found to be independent of socioeconomic position, maternal education and employment.

The study's results suggest that the positive modelling of behaviour, social support, advice, and encouragement and shared social normative behaviour within first-time parent groups appears to be a strong influence on whether mothers continue to breastfeed or not.

First-time parent groups, and particularly those with a low proportion of mothers who are breastfeeding when they form, may therefore be an important target for breastfeeding promotion strategies.

Publication

Cameron AJ, Hesketh K, Ball K, Crawford D, Campbell KJ. Influence of peers on breastfeeding discontinuation among new parents: The Melbourne InFANT Program. *Pediatrics*. 2010; 126(3): e601-e607.

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Deakin academics honoured with VicHealth awards

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) held its annual awards ceremony on Wednesday 8 December, honouring researchers, councils and journalists for their contributions to promoting health and wellbeing.

VicHealth CEO Todd Harper said the award winners had demonstrated outstanding and creative approaches to health promotion and illness prevention over the past 12 months.

‘These awards recognise outstanding achievements and the original contributions being undertaken by VicHealth’s partners to promote good health around the state’, Mr Harper said.

‘Health is usually thought of as treating illness after people become unwell, so sometimes health promotion projects aren’t as widely acknowledged – but they are vitally important. The people who drive these projects are trailblazers whose work will have a positive impact on the community for years to come.’

This year, a special award, the ‘Special Award for Contribution to Illness Prevention Knowledge’, was presented to researchers from Deakin’s Population Health Strategic Research Centre who led a groundbreaking study into how early intervention can save lives and save money for the health system.

The *Assessing Cost-Effectiveness of Prevention* five-year study, led by Deakin Health Economics’ Professor Rob Carter, and Professor Theo Vos from the University of Queensland, involved input from more than 130 top health experts

who studied the cost effectiveness of a range of illness prevention measures. The study, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, is the most comprehensive evaluation of illness prevention measures ever conducted worldwide. The research team assessed 123 illness prevention measures, such as weight loss programs and junk food tax, to identify those that will prevent the most illness and premature deaths and those that are best value for money. The project yielded dozens of recommendations that strongly support more spending on illness prevention, but also warn that not all prevention measures are wise investments. Among the recommendations are taxation on alcohol, cigarettes and junk food, physical activity programs, cheap and effective blood pressure medication, and screening for diabetes and pre-diabetes.

Mr Harper said, ‘This extraordinary body of work was launched at VicHealth in mid 2010 and has no doubt influenced policy and decisions at the highest level about where health dollars are best invested. It is projects like these that really set the bar high for future health promotion activities.’

Also honoured with a special award was Associate Professor Bernie Marshall, Acting Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences. Along with Jane Flentje (Coordinator of Teacher Education at Shine SA), Associate Professor Marshall received the ‘Award for Participation and Skill Development’ for the development of short course Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW). Participation in the PVAW short course contributes to

building and maintaining a sustainable approach to primary prevention across the social policy, health, community, education, workplace, local government, arts and sports sectors. The short course provides the opportunity to strengthen and develop new partnerships between organisations and across sectors to support the planning and implementation of activity to prevent violence against women. With the support of a wide-ranging field of experts and service providers, Associate Professor Marshall and Ms Flentje built an effective and accessible course curriculum that will underpin workforce development in Victoria in the area of primary prevention for years to come.

Understanding pretend play in three year olds

The School of Health and Social Development's Professor Karen Stagnitti was joined earlier this year by visiting academic Dr Luzia Pfeifer to collaborate on a research project considering the play styles of three-year-old children. Dr Pfeifer, a lecturer in occupational therapy at the University of Sao Paulo, will continue the research project when she returns home to Brazil. The research will provide information on the normal range of pretend play ability in three year olds, information that can then be used by occupational therapists to assess whether a three-year-old child is developing within the normal range.

'For me it is very important I am working here to improve my knowledge about this subject, to open my mind to see other possibilities to apply the play assessment', Dr Pfeifer says.

A total of 200 children will participate in the project, attending a play assessment where they will be offered a range of toys to play with. A detailed analysis of their play ability will then be conducted, including how they organise their play and how they use the play materials.

'The play we are really interested in is pretend play, which is a cognitive skill', Professor Stagnitti says. 'You are looking at children's ability to logically sequence their thoughts and be able to include their friends in play. They have to develop a lot of skills to be able to play imaginatively with friends.'

Play is considered to be the primary occupation for children and is a crucial element of children's development in areas such as cognition, socialisation, communication and problem solving. Play

skills also help to develop pre-academic skills in preparation for school. For three-year-old children who are pre-preschool, having competent play skills prepares them for the transition to preschool.

The purpose of this project is to gather more information on three-year-old children's play. By understanding how children play at a certain age therapists will be able to recognise when a child is not playing within the standard parameters. The research is based on the premise that the earlier an issue is identified the more effective treatment can be. Developing a child's understanding of a context and what is expected of them can be of great benefit for children who potentially would have a lot of trouble participating in school.

Mechanical Ventilation: A Breath of Fresh Air

Overwhelmingly positive feedback was received for a recent inaugural multidisciplinary critical care seminar *Mechanical Ventilation: A Breath of Fresh Air* facilitated by Dr John Lambert, Director of Critical Care, Orange Health Service, Stream Leader of Intensive Care Services, Greater Western Area Health Service, NSW; Deakin University's Associate Professor Judy Currey, Course Coordinator, Critical Care Nursing; and Ms Elizabeth Skinner, Senior ICU Physiotherapist, Monash Medical Centre.

A Breath of Fresh Air was attended by health professionals caring for ventilated patients, including critical care, anaesthetic and emergency clinicians, medical and postgraduate nursing students, and respiratory technicians.

The seminar was designed to build and challenge attendees' clinical knowledge and skills in respiratory management by reconceptualising the terminology surrounding the need for and application of mechanical ventilation. The speakers guided attendees through the assessment of respiratory failure and analysis of respiratory support by increasing understanding of ventilatory mechanics, advanced ventilatory mode applications, and current evidence for practice.

Dr Lambert's presentations focused on novel conceptualisations of mechanical ventilation principles that allow contemporary ventilation modes and practices to be uniformly understood. Associate Professor Currey presented

current evidence for weaning from mechanical ventilation, and Ms Skinner shared the value of mobilising critically ill patients for accelerating recovery.

Clinicians who attended the seminar reported they gained new, simple ways of understanding ventilation, and educators gained novel and varied ways of explaining complex concepts.

Advanced applications of the 3T and Five Triads frameworks, along with patient management strategies of sedation and pain management will feature in the next ventilation seminar to be held in mid 2011 at Deakin University.

Deakin Family Options research program

The co-occurrence of anxiety, depression and substance abuse in youth represents a significant health problem, impacting on family, social and educational functioning. Around one in five adolescents suffer depressive symptoms sufficient to result in impairments to their intellectual and social development. Typically, adolescent depression and anxiety co-occur with high rates of alcohol and drug use.

A Deakin University research team including Associate Professor Andrew Lewis, Professor John Toumbourou, Associate Professor Lina Ricciardelli, Dr Tess Knight, Dr Melanie Bertino and a number of research degree students from the School of Psychology are collaborating with community agencies and beyondblue to enable a community-based clinical trial. The 'Deakin Family Options' trial compares psychological therapies for youth with depression, anxiety and/or drug and alcohol misuse. Specifically, the study is evaluating the impact of two 8–10 week programs,

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) vs BEST Plus (a family therapy intervention).

Participants in the study will be offered a family-based intervention (BEST Plus), a one-on-one intervention (CBT), or a combination of the two. Families with a young person aged 12–25 who is suffering from depression, anxiety, or drug or alcohol problems are invited to participate in the study.

So far, approximately 32 participants have completed therapies, eight families are completing the BEST Plus program, and three young people are engaged in the CBT program. Approximately 50 families in total have been assessed for eligibility to date.

The project is funded until the end of 2011, with a recent extension to funds enabling the recruitment of additional Master of Psychology students in 2011. Currently there are five second-year and two first-year Master of Psychology (Clinical) students and one PhD student

working on the study. The students have been trained in the interventions and will assist with the delivery of assessments and interventions and in the project's evaluation in 2010–11.

A primary focus of the project moving forward is to finalise the data collection, disseminate and publish the findings. The team have presented preliminary findings at the International Conference of Applied Psychology earlier this year, submitted a paper for publication in *Family Matters* journal, and have recently had an abstract accepted at the International Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ISSPD) Congress in 2011. Additionally, the five completing masters students on the team are currently working towards publishing their theses with the assistance of their supervisors. One of these students, Gabrielle Connell, was recently awarded a School of Psychology Writing Scholarship for 2010 to publish her work on the links between parental and youth mental health diagnoses.

Obesity Epidemiology. From Aetiology to Public Health

Director of Deakin's Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (C-PAN), Alfred Deakin Professor David Crawford and C-PAN colleague Associate Professor Kylie Ball together with Professor Robert Jeffrey from the University of Minnesota, USA, and Professor Johannes Brug Director of the EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research and Professor of Epidemiology, VU University Medical Center, The Netherlands, are the proud editors of a new book *Obesity*

Epidemiology. From Aetiology to Public Health. The book is an update of the 2005 version and provides an overview of the causes, prevalence and trends, and the health, social and economic consequences of obesity. The latest evidence regarding prevention strategies and the potential of public health initiatives is also covered.

