



Faculty of Health  
Research News September 2023



# Faculty of Health

Research Newsletter September 2023

Transforming  
> Tomorrow



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# Welcome



**Professor Marianne Wallis**  
Associate Dean (Research)  
Faculty of Health,  
Southern Cross University

Welcome to the third SCU FoH Research News for 2023!

This continues to be another year of growth in the research activity and outputs for our researchers. I did a little calculation this week and discovered that along with implementing a huge suite of new courses within the SCU 6x6 Model of Learning and Teaching

our staff (almost all of whom teach as well as research) have been very busy with research grant applications. Since January 2023, 64 external grant applications have commenced, with over 40 having SCU as the administering organisation. Of these 14 did not proceed to submission and 9 are awaiting submission. So far, 41 applications have been submitted and of these 11

were not successful, eight were successful and we await the outcome of the rest. And we still have three months of the year to go!!!

In this issue of the Research news there are some great stories of the research grant and publication successes achieved by our researchers. It seems clear that we are beginning to see the benefits of a more

Welcome

targeted approach to our research activities – well done to all involved.





# 1

Centre updates



# National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine

The National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, led by Professor Jon Wardle, is a world-class Centre for education, research and innovation in health. The Centre was founded in 2020 at Southern Cross University Lismore, established through a generous donation from the Blackmore Foundation. The Centre offers innovative courses, pioneering research programs and professional engagement, and is committed to elevating industry standards, finding solutions to Australia's growing healthcare needs, and educating future leaders in this field.

## Centre updates

### Centre Update

The National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine remains actively engaged in its pursuit of knowledge, diligently conducting ongoing research projects, crafting grant and project applications to secure vital funding, and consistently sharing its cutting-edge research findings with the broader academic and professional community by actively participating in prestigious national and international conferences. This multifaceted commitment to the advancement of knowledge underscores the Centre's unwavering dedication to pushing the boundaries of its respective field, tirelessly working to expand the horizons of understanding, and fostering meaningful collaborations and discussions within the scholarly and professional landscape.

The Centre and its academics are also making significant progress on some of their clinical trials, including industry-funded trials coming to an end in 2023. Further trials on various products, including medicinal cannabis, are currently in planning and negotiation, adding to the Centre's growing trial portfolio and reputation. Work continues on the plan to develop the Northern Rivers region as Australia's Natural Products Hub, funded by a grant from the Department of Regional NSW.

The Centre is also in the process of preparing for the 2024 Research Futures Scholarship Program, and applications will open in October 2023. Undergraduate students will be given the opportunity to gain first-hand research experience and develop valuable field and/or laboratory skills during a six-week research project across a range of disciplines. Based on the last years' outcomes the Centre is confident to attract another amazing cohort of SCU undergraduate students.



# Centre for Children and Young People

The Centre for Children and Young People is led by Professor Anne Graham and has a focus on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people (0-25 years) in the key contexts in which they live their lives – family, school and community.

## Centre updates

### **Listen UP: Learning from victims/survivors**

As part of their inaugural round of Category 1 Research Grants, the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse awarded \$242,328 to Associate Professor Lynne McPherson and a stellar team of scholars from the Centre for Children and Young People and Gnibi College, including Professor Anne Graham, A/Professor Kathomi Gatwiri, Kelly Hand and Darlene Rotumah. They are joined by Dr Corina Modderman, from La Trobe University and Ms Jaime Chubb, CEO of The Centre Against Violence. The project aims to advance the understanding of the processes of disclosure of child sexual abuse, in order to improve the service systems capacity to listen, hear and respond appropriately to children and young people.

Historically, research has not given children, young people and adults, with lived experience of child sexual abuse, a voice to improve responses to disclosure. This raises serious and urgent questions about how children, young people and adult survivors are listened to, heard and responded to. This project will collaborate with victims and survivors to learn about how they disclosed, what practices helped or hindered their capacity to disclose and, critically, what support they need at that time and beyond. The research team will work alongside people who have been impacted by child sexual abuse and professionals to identify what works to improve responses by community and professionals. A four phased mixed method design includes an analysis of the literature, in depth interviews with victims and survivors their families and professionals and a national survey. Dissemination of findings will take place throughout the project to contribute to improved practice.



Listen UP's participatory approach engages victims, survivors, supporters and professional practitioners to mobilise lived experience knowledge to co-produce communication tools, education campaigns and professional development to improve responses to children, young people and adults who have experienced child sexual abuse. As a result, the project will empower children, young people and adults to raise concerns, disclose and seek help when and where they need.

For more information visit [scu.edu.au/centre-for-children-and-young-people/our-research/sife/](https://scu.edu.au/centre-for-children-and-young-people/our-research/sife/)



# 2

**Publications**



# Publications

Faculty of Health staff have reported 81 peer reviewed research journal articles and 10 book chapters, in June, July and August 2023. In addition, because of newly appointed staff some 11 journal articles have been added to the SCU research repository for articles published from 2017 to 2021.

## Publications

An exciting development is that we are seeing interdisciplinary and cross Theme/Centre collaboration by members of the FoH Health and Wellbeing Research Group. For example, SCU FoH colleagues, Dr Eric Brymer of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing Theme and A/Prof Matthew Leach from the National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine have collaborated with very senior colleagues from UTS, UNSW and Uni of Wollongong to develop key principles for the emerging area nature prescription programs.

Foley, H., Leach, M., Feng, X., Astell-Burt, T., & Brymer, E. (2023). Towards Key Principles for the Design and Implementation of Nature Prescription Programs. *Sustainability*, 15(12), 9530.

Articles like these are likely to be highly cited for many years to come and establish SCU researchers as leaders in the field.

We are also seeing a lot more cross institution research in specific disciplines and not all of it has to be costly to have impact. In preparing for the next pandemic it will be important to learn the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this article SCU researchers teamed up with researchers from Queensland and South Australian Universities to look at vaccine uptake by student nurses:

Chen, Y., Prichard, R., Mason, M., Tower, M., Zimmerman, P. A., Sparke, V., ... & Lin, F. F. (2023). Barriers and facilitators to COVID-19 vaccine uptake among Australian health professional students during the pandemic: a nationwide study. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 1-15.



By the way, SCU FoH Associate Dean Research was the research supervisor for four of the nine authors of this article. They are all now senior academics. But this article shows how important it is to build networks around common research foci, to enable rapid development of research ideas. In the middle of the pandemic this team had to form, design the study, get all the approvals and undertake the study before the pandemic was over and we all forgot the ways it impacted our lives!!!



# 3

**Grant and Award Success  
Engagement and Impact**



# Grant and Award Success

## Successful external funding

In total, in the last three months, another \$1,402,122 of external funding has been fully signed off by the DVCR for FoH researchers. Here is a selection of the successful external competitive grants that were awarded from June to September 2023. Congratulations to all the researchers involved:

### Grant success

**Swann C** 2023. Movember – Master Services Agreement. Movember Foundation. \$309,057

**Gall A, Wardle J** 2023. Australian First Nations traditional medicines role in improving utilisation of palliative care. Australian Association of Gerontology. \$25,000.

**Leach M, Schloss J** 2023. Scholarship: Eosinophilic Oesophagitis in Australian adults. ausEE Inc. \$9,000.

**Leach M** 2023. Industry co-funded scholarship PPCS Scholarship Grant Agreement. Primary and Community Care Services Limited (PCCS). \$48,500.

**Graham A** 2023. Schedule 6 to Mackillop Master Agreement. MacKillop Family Services Limited. \$120,000.

**Aggar C** 2023. Industry co-funded scholarship PPCS Scholarship Grant Agreement. Primary and Community Care Services Limited (PCCS). \$48,528.

**Schloss J** 2023. Variation to IRMA 8978 - Clinical Trial Research Agreement with Seipel Group Pty Ltd. Seipel Group. \$9,420.

**Schloss J** 2023. Urox clinical trial. Jacka Foundation for Natural Therapies Limited. \$100,000.

**Cashin A** 2023. Variation 4: Building the capacity of nurses (related: 9078, 9420). Department of Social Services. \$308,870.

**McPherson L** 2023. Listen UP Learning from victims/survivors. National centre for action on child sexual abuse. \$242,328.

**Schloss J** 2023. Assessing the efficacy of Shogaols in patients with lower risk Myelodysplastic Syndromes. American Medical Holdings Inc. \$181,419.





# PASER partners with Movember

A new partnership worth \$309,057 was recently agreed with Movember – the world’s leading dedicated to changing the face of men’s health. The funding is for a 2 year full time Postdoctoral Research Fellow to work on a program of research that promotes mental health through youth sport.

## Grant success

The partnership, led by A/Prof Christian Swann, builds on previous work on Movember’s Ahead of the Game program which promotes mental health through community sports clubs, and was the official mental fitness program of the 2021 Rugby League World Cup.

Christian said that: “This funding is particularly exciting because it’s a direct partnership between SCU and Movember. The work we’ve done with Movember previously has been led by University of Wollongong, so this is a great opportunity for us to build our own program of research and extend our relationship with Movember directly. It will also be an excellent opportunity for an early career researcher to develop their track record and lead this program of research.”

The Research Fellow will commence in January 2024, and the successful applicant will be a full member of the Physical Activity, Sport, and Exercise Research (PASER) Theme. This partnership brings PASER’s funding for 2023 to almost \$400,000 following our two successful grants awarded by the Australian Institute of Sport in January.





# Engagement and Impact

## Health Services Clinical and Community Theme Inaugural Workshop

### Engagement and Impact

The HSCC Research Theme Workshop was held 22nd to 24th August, 2023. Twenty-three members attended the workshop across the 3 days, fostering an atmosphere of collaboration, innovation and knowledge. Members engaged in vibrant discussions and addressed contemporary research topics across an array of disciplines. The workshop featured insightful presentations, providing invaluable insights and inspiring attendees. Interactive breakout sessions enabled attendees to immerse themselves in meaningful discussions and practical exercises related to their research interests.

Collaboration was a central theme throughout the workshop, with researchers forming interdisciplinary teams to discuss real-world research challenges. The resulting brainstorming sessions not only facilitated knowledge exchange but also laid the groundwork for future collaborative endeavours. In addition to academic enrichment, the workshop provided ample networking opportunities, fostering connections that are likely to lead to future research partnerships and cross disciplinary collaborations. The workshop's success can be attributed to the dedication of the theme members and their commitment to creating a nurturing environment for research excellence.

If you are interested in joining the Health Services Clinical and Community Theme, please contact [healthresearch@scu.edu.au](mailto:healthresearch@scu.edu.au)





# Engagement and Impact

Implementation of  
artificial intelligence  
for the detection of  
cutaneous melanoma

## Engagement and Impact

PhD Student, Ian Miller, published a landmark paper in PeerJ entitled "Implementation of artificial intelligence for the detection of cutaneous melanoma within a primary care setting: prevalence and types of skin cancer in outdoor enthusiasts". This study identified the prevalence of melanoma incorporating artificial intelligence in surfers, swimmers, walkers/runners was significantly higher than that of the general Australian population. This study was funded by Johnson & Johnson.

[DOI 10.7717/peerj.15737](https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.15737)

Ian was also invited to present his findings at the recent Australian Skin and Skin Cancer Research Centre meeting where researchers and policy makers were present.



**Photo:** Research Team picture with famous Australian world champion surfer, Wayne Bartholome.



# 4

**Faculty Researchers  
in the Media**



# Faculty Researchers in the Media

## Faculty Researchers in the Media

### World Health Organisation Traditional Medicine Global Summit

The first WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit was held in India, 17th and 18th August. It was an invite only event with only seven people from Australia invited. Of those seven, three of them were from NCNM – Dr Alana Gall, Prof. Jon Wardle and Dr Peter Bai James. Dr Alana Gall wrote an article for Croakey Health Media about the WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit titled “As traditional medicines come under global spotlight, a call to protect First National people’s knowledges”.

Here is the article: <https://www.croakey.org/as-traditional-medicines-come-under-global-spotlight-a-call-to-protect-first-nations-peoples-knowledges>

### My teen is addicted to vaping. How can I help them quit and manage their withdrawal symptoms?

**Gould G, McFadyen K, Clarke M** Article in the Conversation. 5 September 2023.

<https://theconversation.com/my-teen-is-addicted-to-vaping-how-can-i-help-them-quit-and-manage-their-withdrawal-symptoms-208586>

### Woolworths’ free naturopath consultations raise concerns among peak health bodies

The Guardian article 28 August 2023 citing **Professor Jon Wardle**

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/28/woolworths-free-naturopath-consultations-raises-concerns-among-peak-health-bodies>



# 5

**Research Collaboration  
in the Spotlight**



# Research Collaboration in the Spotlight

Manna Institute

## Research Collaboration in the Spotlight

SCU recently hosted the Manna Institute's 2023 strategy workshop on our Coolangatta campus. Manna Institute is a virtual research institute that brings together leading researchers from seven universities within the Regional Universities Network (RUN) to focus on mental health in regional, rural and remote communities – in partnership with Everymind, Lifeline Direct, and the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research.

The three-day event welcomed the DVCRs from each of the seven RUN universities, Manna's partners, PhD students, Early- and Mid-Career Researchers, First Nations and Lived Experience representatives, and some of its newly appointed senior researchers including Professor Julie Jomeen, Professor Jon Wardle, and Professor John Hurley. Associate Dean for Research, Professor Marianne Wallis, also attended for the whole workshop and provided very valuable input.

SCU academics were invited to a networking session on the morning of day 2, where Honours students, PhD students, and academic staff were able to meet other members of the Manna Institute and explore potential collaborations. Dr Charmaine Bernie attended the networking session: "Lovely to engage with passionate researchers from the Manna Institute, and community partners devoted to mental health in our regional and rural communities. Great to hear of current and future potential projects that are dedicated to this cause."



Photos by Simon Scott



# Research Collaboration in the Spotlight

Manna Institute

## Research Collaboration in the Spotlight

The strategy workshop was also an opportunity for SCU's new Early Career Researcher representative, Dr Dylan Poulus, to meet and engage with Manna Institute's members for the first time. Dylan's research explores how we can use popular online esports to create awareness around mental health and build mental health skills. He said that "Esports are played online and require only a basic internet connection, making them a great way to access people across Australia, including rural and regional populations. I look forward to mentoring HDR students and fellow ECRs, to being mentored by Manna MCRs and senior researchers, and I am excited to collaborate with Manna's mental health experts." SCU's Mid-Career Researcher representative is Dr Eric Brymer who is leading Manna Institute's focus on the impacts of changing environmental conditions on mental health.

Professor Jomeen provided a welcome to SCU on day 1 of the workshop, and Manna provided highly positive feedback about the reception they received. Liz Egan, Manna's Project Manager, said: "Thank you for so generously welcoming us to SCU for the Manna planning days this week. We are extremely grateful - the event logistics worked so seamlessly. We were grateful for Julie's warm welcome speech on Monday night and for the terrific show of SCU staff on Tuesday morning for our informal networking session. It was a wonderful location and that really worked well for everyone. Thank you."

If you have any questions about the Manna Institute, or are interested in being involved, feel free to contact A/Prof Christian Swann who is SCU's Chief Investigator for the project.



Photos by Simon Scott



# 6

**PhD Candidate  
in the Spotlight**



# PhD Candidate in the Spotlight

Shayleigh Walker-Jones

## PhD Candidate in the Spotlight



Shayleigh Walker-Jones

### **COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy during the pandemic: A focus on women in regional NSW**

Born and raised in Sydney, I moved to Coffs Harbour in 2020 to study and get some fresh air. Not long after moving, the COVID-19 pandemic began, and discussions around vaccination arose. As a newcomer to a regional town, I noticed a strong sense of community and unique ways in which vaccination was spoken about. Alongside an opportunity to begin a PhD at SCU in 2021, I started investigating understandings associated with COVID-19 vaccination, specifically concerning pregnancy among women living on the Mid-North Coast and Northern NSW.

Pregnant women and their developing babies are disproportionately at risk of the COVID-19 virus and are strongly recommended to vaccinate. However, a body of literature shows that an increased risk of harm from a virus does not guarantee vaccination uptake. Context-specific values, relationships and experiences underpin vaccination decision-making. Drawing from a social representations theory, I have investigated vaccination decision-making and understandings as dynamic and contextually-embedded.

Under the supervision of Associate Professor Gail Moloney and Professor Marie Hutchinson, I anticipate this research will provide insight into emerging understandings associated with women, pregnancy and COVID-19 vaccination throughout a global pandemic. I hope to contextualise women's understandings and facilitate communication among communities and health organisations.



# PhD Candidate in the Spotlight

Helen Moors

## PhD Candidate in the Spotlight



Helen Moors

### PhD candidate Helen Moors

PhD candidate Helen Moors is currently exploring the effects of a meditation technique known as yoga nidra on subclinical anxiety and neural processes via a randomised controlled feasibility trial, under the supervision of A/Prof Romy Lauche and Dr Mitchell Longstaff.

With the rise of mental health issues, developing empirically supported and accessible interventions is vital. Yoga nidra is a simple meditation technique growing in popularity, though still lacks empirical investigation. Yoga nidra encompasses relaxation and attentional control elements, both shown to positively impact mental health, particularly anxiety.

The feasibility and preliminary effectiveness of a trial assessing yoga nidra is currently being assessed in a pilot feasibility trial, where yoga nidra is being compared to a relaxation practice in healthy adults who experience mild anxiety. Neural correlates of yoga nidra will also be explored via electroencephalography (EEG) compared with relaxation practice over a single session in novice participants, and after eight weeks of practice. Through this feasibility study, Helen aims to inform future clinical research of yoga nidra for mental health. The EEG results will help to further understanding of yoga nidra's neurophysiological effects.

Helen's goal is to identify if yoga nidra practice may act as a beneficial tool to reduce symptoms of subclinical anxiety. It is expected the feasibility study will lay the foundations for larger-scale research investigating alternative and sustainable tools to remedy anxiety and related mental health outcomes.



## Share your research success with us

Do you have a news item to share with the Faculty of Health and the wider community? If so, we would love to hear and promote your research achievements within the Faculty.

Please email your research achievements  
[healthresearch@scu.edu.au](mailto:healthresearch@scu.edu.au)

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