Allied Health Research Strategic Plan
Western Sydney Local Health District 2017 - 2019
Allied Health Research Strategic Plan

Western Sydney Local Health District 2017 - 2019
Welcome from Professor Vicki Flood

As the inaugural Professor of Allied Health at the Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) and Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney, I have enjoyed hearing of existing multi-disciplinary research, with an allied health focus. This strategic plan builds on this existing work, and will help us to focus on building further collaborations, as we strengthen the partnerships between health and education.

As we further develop our research in allied health, I expect we will see increasing numbers of people engaged in the research process, and actively contributing to a culture of research across the health district.

I look forward to seeing outcomes from allied health research based in WSLHD translate into better health for the people of Western Sydney and beyond.
Welcome from Carolyn Fozzard

Allied Health within Western Sydney LHD contribute greatly to the patient journey, experience, and ultimately positive health outcomes. Western Sydney LHD is undergoing an unprecedented amount of change and redevelopment, which allows the opportunity to foster new models of care and ‘rethink’ how allied health conduct their daily work for the better health of Western Sydney.

The WSLHD Allied Health Research Steering Committee over the past 3 years have committed to the efforts of increasing the engagement and capability of allied health researchers. It is my vision that allied health within WSLHD continue to grow and contribute to the evidence base that allied health centre their current and future practices upon. Working closely with our academic partners is a key component to ensure success and sustainability in this regard now and beyond.

The Allied Health Research Strategic Plan 2017-2019 aims to achieve ‘excellence in allied health research for better health in Western Sydney and beyond’, and aligns well with the WSLHD Strategic priorities 2016-2019 and the WSLHD Research Plan 2015-2020. I look forward to contributing and observing the achievements in allied health research over the next coming years.
Our Vision

Excellence in Allied Health Research for better health in Western Sydney and beyond.

Principles

Collaborate: conduct multi-disciplinary research
Communicate: share learnings with others
Convert: translate research into practice

Governance structure to support research:

Existing structures across the Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) support building research capacity and include research as a priority area.

WSLHD priorities: The six key priority areas of the WSLHD explicitly recognises research as a priority, naming one key priority as “Integrated research, education and clinical care”.

The goal of the Research and Education Network within the WSLHD is to “Improve health and health care of our people through innovation generated by research.”

The Allied Health Research directions will play a key role in supporting and contributing to these directions across the WSLHD.

Additionally, the Allied Health Research Professorial Unit is supported by the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), University of Sydney, and provides opportunities for building collaborations and research strengths in key areas aligned to FHS priority areas. These areas include: global health issues; cancer diagnosis and rehabilitation; communication sciences and disorders; disability and mental health; musculoskeletal health; physical activity, lifestyle, ageing and wellbeing; with the cross cutting themes of eHealth and health service delivery, medical imaging and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.
The Allied Health disciplines at the WSLHD are diverse and include 23 different disciplines, predominantly in: Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Psychology, Radiography, Social Work, and Speech Pathology.

Prior research from the literature which has described the process of building allied health research capacity in Australia has identified important themes which are required to create an environment and culture of research (Golenko et al, 2012). These themes include:

1. Whole of organisation approach, including support from senior management;
2. Structures, processes and systems;
3. Partnerships and collaboration; and
4. Dedicated research units and positions.

(See Appendix 1)

Several challenges for supporting allied health research have also been described in the literature. These include:

- lack of time and resources;
- lack of recognition for allied health research;
- lack of career path for research in allied health (Golenko et al 2012; Pager et al 2012).
These themes and challenges were considered in the development of this strategic plan, with the focus on the following areas: people support, research funding, building collaborations and dissemination of research, to ultimately build a culture of research which will impact on practice and better health outcomes for the people of Western Sydney and beyond (Figure 1).

- **Skill development; Research students; Network of mentoring research.**
  - People Support
  - Page 10

- **Research funding**
  - Well designed research projects, supported with funding
  - Page 11

- **Culture of research, impacting on practice and better health outcomes**
  - Share with the public and peers; publications; translation of research to practice.
  - Dissemination of research
  - Page 12

- **Support multi-disciplinary research.**
  - Build collaborations
  - Page 13

Figure 1: Areas of focus for building research capacity
People Support

Skill development; research students; network of mentoring programs.

Marie March and Dragana Cepnja
Clinical Physiotherapists

Marie March and Dragana Cepnja are two clinical physiotherapists with WSLHD, and have 30 years of clinical experience between them.
Both enrolled in Higher Degree Research programs.
Dragana is currently investigating the management of pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain.
Marie is investigating the resilience of people who undergo knee replacement surgery.
Research Funding

Well designed project; support with funding

Elizabeth Parker
Senior Dietitian

Elizabeth Parker is a Senior Dietitian at Westmead Hospital, enrolled in a PhD program at FHS, University of Sydney. Elizabeth is investigating nutritional rehabilitation among people with anorexia nervosa. She is a recipient of a grant from the NSW Health Translational Research Grants Scheme, working in collaboration with the eating disorder teams at Westmead Hospital and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.
Dissemination of Research

Share with the public and peers; publications; translation of research to practice

Dr Traci-Anne Goyen
Occupational Therapist

Dr Traci-Anne is an occupational therapist who has worked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for many years.

Traci-Anne has conducted extensive research work among infants born prematurely. Her PhD focused on “Motor dysfunction in ‘apparently normal’ high-risk children.”

This research informs education and counselling for parents of infants in NICU to provide realistic expectations for their high-risk infants.

Published results have supported translation of research more broadly in this field. Following early detection of problems, infants are enrolled into targeted early intervention studies, at a critical stage of brain development.
Build Collaborations

Support multi-disciplinary research

Kim Hobbs
Senior Social Worker

Kim Hobbs holds a Research Masters degree and is a Social Worker at Westmead Hospital in the clinical area of gynaecological cancer.
As a practitioner-researcher she has been involved in collaborative research projects, focusing on the area of psycho-oncology; including the effectiveness of cancer support groups and the needs of caregivers of people with cancer.
Her research has resulted in multiple collaborations in the field, and Kim is frequently asked to present at national and international conferences about cancer research.
Kim is also a recipient of Crown Princess Mary Travelling Fellowship to Denmark to further build collaborations for allied health research.
Table 1: Planned research activities 2017 – 2019, designed to support a culture of research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Area</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activity / Strategy</th>
<th>Target measures</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. People support</td>
<td>1.1 Build capacity for clinician involvement in research.</td>
<td>1.11 Establish and maintain database of allied health research activities, including: projects, publications, presentations, conference abstracts, HDR enrolment and completion.</td>
<td>• Active database, with quarterly updates maintained.</td>
<td>Baseline database July 2017</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.2 Increase research degrees by allied health clinicians (e.g. Masters of Research, PhD).</td>
<td>1.21 Develop and conduct workshop on introduction to research degrees – Project and publishing.</td>
<td>• Annual introductory research degree workshop completed.</td>
<td>June – September 2017</td>
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<td>1.22 Develop and conduct research degree candidate support/troubleshooting meetings.</td>
<td>• Quarterly research degree candidate support meetings at WSLHD.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>1.23 See activities for Objective 2.1. (Research funding).</td>
<td>• Percentage increase of 5-10 % of allied health staff enrolled in Higher Degree Research (tbc dependent on final baseline figure).</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>1.3 Increase dedicated research positions within AH in WSLHD.</td>
<td>1.31 Build AH Professorial Unit through employment of a research support staff.</td>
<td>• Research officer and Administrative Assistant for Allied Health Research Unit.</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.32 Establish greater number of clinical research positions within AH departments within WSLHD.</td>
<td>• Increase number of research positions throughout WSLHD.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>1.4 Increase student involvement in research activity</td>
<td>1.41 Increase participation of honours student involvement in research (e.g. honours projects)</td>
<td>• Evidence of institutional engagement and institution support regarding honours projects.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>2.1 Increase grant submissions and increase the success rates of these</td>
<td>2.11 Conduct grant writing workshops to provide assistance for clinicians.</td>
<td>• Successful grant funding per annum: commencing ~$150,000 with stipend for 10% increase per annum.</td>
<td>Baseline grant submissions data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>submissions.</td>
<td>2.12 Develop a calendar of research funding grants.</td>
<td>• Increase baseline grant submissions by 10% annually.</td>
<td>established by July 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Research</td>
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<td>• Grant writing workshops: 3-4 per year.</td>
<td>Targets assessed annually</td>
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<td>Funding</td>
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<td>2.2 Increase opportunities for multidisciplinary, inter-disciplinary and</td>
<td>2.21 Target research grant opportunities arising through collaborations with local</td>
<td>• Aim for 50% of grants to include more than one discipline (from either other Allied Health discipline/ Nursing/ Medical), and/or external collaborators.</td>
<td>Targets assessed annually</td>
</tr>
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<td>multi-site collaboration.</td>
<td>health partners (Local Health District, Sydney Health Partners, NHMRC) and external</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>partners (other local health districts, universities).</td>
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Table 1: Planned research activities 2017 – 2019, designed to support a culture of research.

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<td></td>
<td>3.1 Increase the number of publications co-authored by Allied Health clinicians from WSLHD.</td>
<td>3.11 Establish database of AH research activity (see 1.1)</td>
<td>• Increase the number of publications with Allied Health staff by 10% per annum.</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
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<td>3.12 Update the WSLHD Allied Health Research Intranet page.</td>
<td>• Updated webpage of allied health research.</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
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<td>3.13 Establish writing groups as an avenue of support for researchers in publishing their work.</td>
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<td>3. Dissemination of research</td>
<td>3.2 Provide pathways for research to be disseminated both internally and externally, utilising technologies.</td>
<td>3.21 Increase utilisation of technology to support dissemination of AH research.</td>
<td>• Establish baseline ‘hits’ across relevant social media platforms of Allied Health research groupings, and increase by 10% per annum.</td>
<td>Sept 2017</td>
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<td>3.22 Conduct regular presentations and forums about allied health research, widely advertised throughout WSLHD and beyond.</td>
<td>• Conduct minimum of 5 forums on allied health research per year, each with some presence in social media.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>• Increase attendance at AH Research forums and presentations by 10% per annum.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>4.1 Support AH staff in WSLHD to build links with potential research collaborators.</td>
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<td>4.11 Conduct regular (e.g. bi-annually) meetings between FHS and WSLHD researchers,</td>
<td>• Collaborative research meetings across institutions: 2x per year.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>with invited speakers from the two organisations.</td>
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<td>4.12 Co-run research activities with Nursing / Medical staff of WSLHD.</td>
<td>• 3-4 co-run research activities per year.</td>
<td>Allied Health research conference 2019</td>
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<td>4.2 Provide knowledge of when and how Allied Health staff can access and improve</td>
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<td>connections with collaborators and potential research activities.</td>
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<td>4.21 Host and conduct an Allied Health research conference, based at WSLHD.</td>
<td>• Numbers of allied health staff involved in relevant inter-disciplinary research committees.</td>
<td>Monitor annually</td>
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<td>4.22 Nominate AH representatives to relevant inter-disciplinary research committee</td>
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<td>or organisation.</td>
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<td>4.23 Ensure AH attendance at established meetings/forums with research collaborators.</td>
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</table>
References


The University of Sydney. Research at the Faculty of Health Sciences: Working in partnerships for better health outcomes. March 2016.

Appendix 1: Themes which support Allied Health Research Capacity (Golenko et al 2012), and elements provided at Western Sydney Local Health Network, which support these themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhance capacity around themes</th>
<th>Elements of Western Sydney Local Health District which support these themes</th>
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</table>
| 1. Whole of organisation approach, including support from senior managers | Identification of research as a strategic priority in WSLHD plans  
Research and Education Network (REN)  
Chief Executive of WSLHD, Danny O’Connor  
Director REN, Prof Steve Leeder  
Director Allied Health, Carolyn Fozzard  
Allied Health Discipline leads  
Opportunities with the redevelopment |
| 2. Structures, processes and systems | Research Development Committee  
Research Management Committee  
Research Education Planning group  
Human Research Ethics Committee  
Allied Health Research Steering Committee  
Seed funding Opportunities |
| 3. Partnerships and collaboration | Ministry of Health, especially with funding opportunities such as Translation Research Grant Scheme  
Collaborating and partnering with FHS, and other Faculties at USyd  
Collaborations with other universities, particularly with Western Sydney University and University of Notre Dame  
Collaborations with nursing and midwifery and medical research directions  
Collaborations with Westmead Kids Hospital, particularly with the redevelopment, and the Professor of Allied Health (Paediatrics), Professor Josh Burns  
Collaborations with eHealth Professor at FHS, Professor Tim Shaw |
| 4. Dedicated research units and positions | Professor of Allied Health (WSLHD), Prof Vicki Flood  
Research Officer position for Allied Health |
### Appendix 2: Allied Health Research Priorities, WSLHD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Areas for Allied Health Research, WSLHD</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment</strong>, including research into diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and obesity.</td>
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<td><strong>Maternal and child health</strong>, particularly during pregnancy and newborn care; research about domestic violence.</td>
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<td><strong>Ageing</strong>, including research for dementia, falls prevention, aged care.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disability and mental health</strong>, including research in eating disorders, and physical wellbeing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Neurological health</strong>, including therapy for people with stroke; research in neurological diseases, such as motor neurone disease.</td>
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<td><strong>Musculoskeletal health</strong>, including support for people peri and post-operatively; back pain; amputee research.</td>
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<td><strong>Cancer</strong>, including diagnosis and therapy research, and lifestyle factors during treatment and post treatment, prophylactic rehabilitation to minimize treatment morbidity.</td>
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<td><strong>Health literacy</strong>, particularly among culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in WSLHD.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integrated care</strong>, supporting allied health integrated care, including community based interventions, <strong>hospital avoidance</strong>.</td>
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<td><strong>Health services</strong>, research into models of care, <strong>health economics</strong>, and allied health service provision.</td>
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Appendix 3: Dreams for Allied Health Research

**Culture of Research**
- For every allied health professional to utilise evidence based practice to benchmark their practice and innovate into the future, and have the opportunity to contribute to this research within the WSLHD and beyond.
- For the principles of knowledge transfer and translation of research to be well understood and integrated into existing research practices.

**People Support**
- To support the development of research champions with transferrable skills to lead research within each discipline and across disciplines.
- 1x research position for each discipline
- For the importance of research degrees and research skills to be recognised, and a clear clinical research pathway identified.

**Research Funding**
- For an increased number of grant submissions and an increased rate of grant application success.
- For a successful TRIP Fellowship application.
- To become a Centre of Research Excellence for Allied Health Research.

**Dissemination of Research**
- To build the idea of "research that makes an impact on practice" from the initiation of any project.
- To use technology to effectively communicate and disseminate research, including using multimedia such as videos and interactive websites.

**Build Collaborations**
- To support multi-disciplinary and multi-location research with other professionals, facilities and academics.
- To explore how collaborations with other organisations can lead to future funding opportunities.
- For strong collaboration to be the norm within teams, departments, organisations and wider networks.
- To be more proactive in identifying important contacts in the community.
Allied Health Research Steering Committee members, February 2017

Carolyn Fozzard, Director of Allied Health, WSLHD

Prof Vicki Flood, Professor of Allied Health, WSLHD and University of Sydney

Helene Abouyanni, Director of Research and Education Network, WSLHD

Dr Madhan Balasubramanian, Research Officer, University of Sydney and WSLHD

Alison Battin, Head of Department of Speech Pathology, Westmead Hospital

Danielle Stone, Senior Speech Pathologist, Westmead Hospital

Dr Hans Bogaardt, Speech Pathologist and Clinical Epidemiologist, University of Sydney, FHS

Jamie Brugman, Senior Occupational Therapist, Westmead Hospital

Kimberley Gray, Senior Occupational Therapist, Westmead Hospital (Past member)

Dragana Ceprnja, Health Professional Educator, Physiotherapy Department, Westmead Hospital.

Mary-Ann Dowsett, Senior Speech Pathologist, The Hills Community Health Centre
Sheryl Foster, Senior MRI Research Medical Radiation Scientist/ Research Coordinator, Westmead Hospital

Nicola Haig, Social Work Team Worker, Auburn Hospital

Kim Hobbs, Clinical Specialist Social Worker, Westmead Hospital

Marie March, Physiotherapist, Blacktown Mt Druitt Hospital

Rula Milad, Senior Clinical Dietitian, Westmead Hospital

Gloria Olivieri, Chief Radiographer, Westmead Hospital

A/Prof. Smita Shah, Director of Primary Health Care Education and Research Unit, WSLHD and University of Sydney

Mark Smith, Research Development Manager, WSLHD

Ian Starkey, Physiotherapist Unit Head, Auburn Hospital

Isabella Suriwong, Administrative assistant, Allied Health Research Professorial Unit (Past member)

Puja Thapa, Administrative assistant, Allied Health Research Professorial Unit
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Mount Druitt Hospital

Auburn Hospital
Allied Health Research Strategic Plan
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