

## **2019 Honours projects**



This list of projects relates to academics work in the faculty. This list is not exhaustive, so if you wish to discuss any other potential projects, please feel free to contact the Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) Co-ordinator.

Honours coordinator: Assoc Prof Christopher Gordon email: [christopher.gordon@sydney.edu.au](mailto:christopher.gordon@sydney.edu.au)

## **2019 Honours projects**



**Supervisor:** Professor Niels Buus

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**Project title:** Empirical studies of peer-supported mental health services

**Research question:** What is reported in the research literature about peer-supported clinical mental health services?

**Aims and background:** Peer-supported mental health care is endorsed widely in mental health policies, but the actual uptake of these practices has proven to be very slow. Peers' roles in the services are controversial because they challenge traditional notions of "professionalism" and "occupation". In order to qualify the debates in this area and support the ongoing implementation, we propose to systematically search for empirical studies of peer-supported clinical mental health care.

**Project summary:** The project is a traditional literature systematic search and critical evaluation of research findings. The actual findings of the search will determine the specific method for interpreting the findings: It would most probably be a type of interpretative synthesis, e.g. an integrative review, a narrative review, or a scoping review.

**Proposed method of data collection:** Systematic literature search and critical interpretive thematic analysis.

**Ethics approved:** Yes / No / In progress /  Not applicable

**Type of study:** Quantitative /  Qualitative / Mixed

**University profile:** Niels Buus is Professor of Mental Health Nursing at Sydney Nursing School based at St. Vincent's Hospital/St. Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney where he is the leader of The Centre for Family-Based Mental Health Care. He has a broad research profile within mental health and health services research, which includes suicide prevention, treatment adherence to antidepressants, clinical supervision of mental health nurses, continuity of care and recovery-oriented health care delivery models. He is a specialist utilizing ethnographic research methods in healthcare research, which can produce nuanced insights into healthcare practices and personal perspectives on health, illness and treatment. Such approaches are particularly powerful in studies of user-participation in mental health research. As a Scandinavian registered nurse, he is professionally socialized into a strong humanistic tradition emphasizing care, compassion, openness and equality in healthcare. In line with this, Prof Buus leads research teams in an examination of the effects of the resource-oriented healthcare delivery model "Open dialogue" and how it could be implemented in Australian healthcare settings. In the Danish context, he was heavily engaged in developing post-registration educational programs for mental health nurses.

Embarking on the honours' project will include working in close collaboration with peer-academics and peer-consultants, and with academic staff associated with Sydney Nursing School and the Centre for Family-Based Mental Health Care, St. Vincent's Hospitals Sydney.

## **2019 Honours projects**



**Supervisor:** Elizabeth Denney-Wilson

**Supervisor email:** elizabeth.denney-wilson@sydney.edu.au

**Project title:** Student nurse's views on preventing and managing obesity in children

**Research question:** What are student nurse's knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about obesity in children?

**Aims and background:** Obesity is a complex public health problem associated with genetic, individual, environmental and socioeconomic factors. One in four primary school aged children are above a healthy weight, so most nurses will encounter children and families who are above a healthy weight during their placements. People who are overweight or obese experience stigma from all facets of society including health care practitioners, but little is known about when those attitudes develop. This study will provide evidence as to the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of nurses during their education and may inform interventions to reduce stigma towards people who are overweight.

**Project summary:** Student nurses will be invited to participate in an online survey to collect their views about the prevalence, causes and consequences of obesity in children. A sub sample will be invited to participate in interviews to further explore their knowledge and attitudes toward obesity in children.

**Proposed method of data collection:** Survey and semi structured interviews.

**Ethics approved:** No

**Type of study:** Mixed

**University profile:**

Elizabeth Denney-Wilson is conjoint Professor of Nursing in the Sydney Local Health District and Sydney Nursing School. She has academic qualifications in nursing, public health and epidemiology. Since completing her PhD in 2005, her research has focused on obesity prevention and management with a focus on the role of nurses and the primary health care setting.

<http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/staff/profiles/elizabeth.denney-wilson.php>

## 2019 Honours projects

**Supervisor:** Christopher Gordon

**Supervisor email:** christopher.gordon@sydney.edu.au

**Project title:** The impact of shift work on energy and macronutrient intake in nurses

**Research question:** What are hospital nurses energy and macronutrient requirements across different shift patterns.

**Aims and background:** There is a lack of evidence about food preferences in shift workers in their work settings. This may be directly linked to the metabolic dysfunction in shift workers. Nurses are a commonly studied group of shift working professionals and are ideally suited as they are exposed to night work and rapidly rotating shift patterns routinely. This is an important aspect often overlooked in shift work studies. Nurses work a variety of different shift patterns often rotate through these patterns rapidly which change macronutrient preferences and daily energy intake. These altered eating patterns may be influential in the development of metabolic dysfunction in shift workers.

**Project summary:** This study will be conducted in two parts. First, a cross-sectional field-based study will be conducted. Four groups of nurses with different shift schedules will be recruited:

- control day shift only;
- *case one*, night shift only workers;
- *case two (a)* rotating day and afternoon shift, and;
- *case two (b)* rotating night shift.

Nurses will complete a 14-day food and sleep diary. These data will be analysed to determine if differences exist between the shift patterns.

The second part of the study will consist of interviews of nurses to determine food preference across different shifts. This will be a qualitative arm to the study.

**Proposed method of data collection:** Observational, recruited nurses will complete the food and sleep diaries during their shift schedule.

**Ethics approved:** Approved.

**Type of study:** Mixed

**University profile:** <http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/staff/profiles/christopher.gordon.php>

## **2019 Honours projects**



**Supervisor:** Dr Jo River

**Supervisor email:** jo.river@sydney.edu.au

**Project title:** Exploring the gendered nature of women's suicidal behaviour

**Research question:** What is the relationship between gender and women's suicidal behaviour?

**Aims and background:** This study aims to explore gender-relations in the lives of Australian women who have engaged in nonfatal suicide. With a focus on the relationship between femininity and the practice of suicide, the study examines the connection between women's suicide trajectories and their emotional lives, work practices, and help seeking.

There is a striking gender difference in suicide rates worldwide. Although men accounted for 1816 (77%) of the total 2,361 recorded suicide deaths (ABS, 2012), according to 2004-2005 hospital data, women are more likely to engage in suicidal behaviour and survive, accounting for 14,866 (62%) of the 23,883 recorded cases of non-fatal suicides in 2004 (Bradley, & Harrison, 2008). In contradictory public discussions, women are presented sometimes as emotionally manipulative and inept at suicide, and sometimes as emotionally intelligent and adept at help-seeking. To move beyond such simplistic accounts a more substantive theory of women's suicide is required. A gender-relations approach to examining the lives of women and men has emerged in recent research, and has proved a more promising strategy for examining issues such as suicidal behaviour in women.

**Project summary:** Life-history interviews would be undertaken initially with two women who have engaged in suicidal behaviour and presented as case studies. A life history case study would be drawn up for each woman, which examines the gender relations across each woman's life course, as well as their work history, emotional life, and help seeking behaviour.

**Proposed method of data collection:** One-to-one qualitative life-history interviews which would be analysed using a gender-relations framework.

**Ethics approved:** No, but this could be done with the student prior to commencement of the project.

**Type of study:** Qualitative

**University profile:** <http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/staff/profiles/jo.river.php>

## **2019 Honours projects**



**Supervisor:** Assoc Professor Tim Wand

**Supervisor email:** timothy.wand@sydney.edu.au

**Project title:** Exploring the future focus of mental health nursing

**Research question:**

What do mental health nurses and other key stakeholders (consumers, carers, and multidisciplinary team members) consider should be the future focus of mental health nursing practice?

**Aims and background:**

Increasingly, in mental health services there is a greater focus on recovery, trauma informed care, therapeutic engagement and also the recognition that restrictive practices have a lasting and detrimental impact on the wellbeing of mental health consumers. This shift in focus indicates the need for a transformation in mental health nursing practice. This is further supported by the report Review of Seclusion, Restraint and Observation of Consumers with a Mental Illness in NSW Health Facilities conducted in 2017. This report outlined nineteen recommendations, amongst which, increased consumer engagement, co-design of services and opportunities for staff training were proposed.

This study will focus on determining the current and perceived future focus of mental health nursing practice within the public health system from a clinician, multidisciplinary team member, consumer and carer perspective in order to build and strengthen recovery orientated practice approaches within care delivery.

**Project summary:**

The study will explore (via focus groups) mental health nurses perceptions of their role and scope and their understanding of current models of care, policies and guidelines and workplace culture that drives their practice. In addition individual interviews will be conducted with multidisciplinary team members for their understanding of the mental health nurses role within the multidisciplinary team. Consumer and carer views on the delivery of therapeutic care with a focus on enablers and barriers to this in relation to the role of the mental health nurse will also be sought. This project will explicate current themes and opportunities for mental health nurses, across inpatient and community mental health settings as well as providing some key insights for the future development of mental health nursing practice from a mental health nurse, consumer and carer viewpoint.

**Proposed method of data collection:** Focus groups, individual interviews, surveys.

## **2019 Honours projects**



**Ethics approved:** Yes / No / In progress / Not applicable

**Type of study:** Quantitative / Qualitative / Mixed

**University profile:**

Tim Wand is Associate Professor at the Sydney Nursing School and a nurse practitioner in mental health liaison in the Emergency Department at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Tim has extensive experience in education and training at a clinical, undergraduate and postgraduate level and is involved in clinical research mainly around the developing specialty of mental health liaison nursing and the role of the nurse practitioner. He has published numerous of papers in his specialty area and also on the topics of risk assessment, aggression and violence, mental health legislation and solution-focused therapy and mental health promotion.

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## **2019 Honours projects**



**Supervisor:** Dr Toby Raeburn

**Supervisor email:** toby.raeburn@sydney.edu.au

**Project title:** 'A homeless persons best friend? Exploring the costs and benefits of pet ownership in the lives of people who are homeless'.

### **Aims and background:**

Summary: The proposed study aims to provide new insight into the costs and benefits of pet ownership in the lives of people who are homeless in Sydney, Australia. Both psychological and pysical benefits have been associated with pet ownership in a range of studies from around the world (Chowdhury, Nelson, Jennings, Wing, & Reid, 2017; McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, & Martin, 2011; O'haire, 2010). In a small study based in the United Kingdom which interviewed 7 people who were homeless and who owned pets, researchers found that participants perceived that their pets limited their mobility and access to services. The study also suggested a risk of pet ownership was that it rendered some owners psychologically vulnerable to the loss of their pet, which had the potential to be highly traumatic and lead to negative coping mechanisms (such as drug use). Conversely, perceived benefits associated with pet ownership among homeless participants included companionship and sense of responsibility it provided along with increased resilience and an overall reduction in substance abuse. (Howe & Easterbrook, 2018). Despite a substantial number of people who are homeless in Sydney owning pets, to date there has been no published study exploring the costs and benefits of pet ownership in the lives of people who are homeless in Sydney. This study is important because it has the potential to inform and build capacity in existing homelessness services which are always seeking ways to enhance the quality of service and care they can offer people who are homeless.

**Ethics approved:** No

**Type of study:** Qualitative

**University profile:** <http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/staff/profiles/toby.raeburn.php>

## **2019 Honours projects**

**Supervisor:** Dr Ronald Castelino

**Supervisor email:** [Ronald.Castelino@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Ronald.Castelino@sydney.edu.au)

**Project title:** Psychosocial Factors Affecting End-Stage Kidney Disease Patients

### **Aims and background:**

End-stage kidney disease (ESKD) contributes significant health burden to the Australian population with over 12000 patients receiving dialysis treatment in the end of 2016 2009 [1] and the numbers are rising. The progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD) to ESKD is usually accompanied by multiple physical and psychological stressors because of illness [2]. The lifetime course of ESKD patient's treatment may include multiple renal transplants, vascular access problems, life threatening infections, severe bone disease, family dysfunction, changes in financial status, depression, issues of death and dying [3]. Studies have reported that treatment in the form of dialysis imposes considerable stress, including potential changes in family relations, social interactions occupational demands and have associated psychosocial factors with poor quality of life (QoL) and increased hospitalisations [2,4]. The identification of these issues through a skilled psychosocial assessment and modifying some of the psychosocial factors provides further avenues for successful interventions and improved clinical outcomes [2].

Renal social workers play a central role in the care of ESKD patients serving as an important bridge by communicating the patient's psychosocial needs to their healthcare professionals and helping patients and families to cope with this chronic and debilitating disease. The services provided by social workers include patient and family education, supportive counselling, crisis intervention, provision of information and community referrals, interdisciplinary care planning and collaboration, and patient advocacy [5]. Social work interventions are an important component of overall multidisciplinary care, especially identification and treatment of mental health issues that are often associated with ESKD [4]. International studies have documented the positive effect that social work interventions such as counselling and education have on patients' psychological well-being and on their psychological adjustment [6]. However, there is paucity of data pertaining to the psychosocial factors affecting patients with ESKD in Australia, its influence on ESKD outcomes and the significance of social work involvement in the care of ESKD patients. We therefore intend to conduct a retrospective audit of the patients with ESKD who were referred to the two-area renal social workers since 2005 within the WRS.

The ***main objectives*** of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the psychosocial factors affecting ESKD patients referred to the two-area renal social workers within WRS and its influence on ESKD outcomes.
2. To compare the psychosocial factors affecting patients from the start of dialysis (since 2005) to the time when they are referred to renal supportive care
3. To explore the impact of renal social work in the care of ESKD patients

**Project summary:** up to 100 word descriptor

## **2019 Honours projects**



This retrospective audit aims to review the psychosocial factors affecting patients with end-stage kidney disease (ESKD) referred to the area renal social workers within the Western Renal Service (WRS). Patients with ESKD are exposed to multiple comorbidities and psychological stressors because of their condition. Treatment in the form of dialysis imposes considerable stress, including potential changes in family relations, social interactions, and occupational demands. Previous studies have also associated psychosocial factors with poor quality of life (QoL) and increased hospitalisations. Modifying psychosocial factors provides further avenues for successful interventions and improved clinical outcomes. We intend to conduct a retrospective audit of the patients with ESKD who were referred to the renal social workers since 2005 within the WRS across Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health Districts.

### **Proposed method of data collection:**

Retrospective. Patients who were referred to the renal social worker before the start of dialysis have their data stored at Blacktown Regional Dialysis Centre (RDC) whilst patients referred to the social worker for advanced care planning have their data housed at Nepean RDC.

**Ethics approved:** In progress

**Type of study:** Quantitative

### **University profile:**

Ronald Castelino is a Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology & Clinical Pharmacy at Sydney Nursing School and an Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the School of Medicine, University of Tasmania. He is a renal pharmacist (Blacktown Hospital) with a track record in translational research relevant to renal medicine. He also has a range of other interests which share a common focus on improving medication safety. He is an experienced academic and research degree supervisor having worked previously at the School of Medicine, University of Tasmania (2011-2016). He is currently involved in the coordination and delivery of Introduction to Pharmacology (Bachelor of Nursing) and Understanding Health and Managing Disease (Master of Nursing). He is also involved in teaching into postgraduate nursing units; The Body, its Function and Pharmacology (Master of Nursing); Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacology for Advanced Practice (Nurse Practitioner)

### **Research interests**

Dr Castelino's work aligns with the theme: chronic disease and ageing, and health care practice. His main research interests are in the area of chronic disease state management especially kidney disease and health services research such as medication reviews. His current projects include screening for chronic kidney disease in the community and quality use of medicines in patients with kidney disease. He is skilled in establishing internal and external working collaborations and has a range of other interests which share a common focus on improving medication safety.

<http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/staff/profiles/ronald.castelino.php>

## **2019 Honours projects**

**Supervisor:** Dr Vasiliki Betihavas

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**Project title:** Identifying patient Re-presentations to an Emergency Department (The RED Study).

**Research question:** What are the factors that contribute to patient representation to an emergency department?

**Aims:** Identify why patients represent to the Emergency Department; the time between representation; direct cost related to representation; patient outcomes and referral services available to patients.

**Background:** Patient representations to emergency departments are costly and potentially preventable. Diverse factors for representation include disease related; patient related or physician related causes. Of those who represent, the potential for admission is high. This has implications for direct expenditure to the health care service as well as indirect expenditure to the individual and the community. Identifying the reasons why patients represent to an Emergency Department after leaving or discharge are pertinent. From this information, targeting individuals at risk of representation and implementing strategies to manage individuals within the community or prior to them leaving the emergency department warrants prospective investigation

**Project summary:** This is a retrospective study being conducted over 12 months. Patients who have represented to an emergency department in South Western Sydney will have their patient health service record reviewed. Quantitative data will be gathered to identify why patients left the emergency department; why patients represented; the time between representation(s); direct cost related to representation(s); if the patient was admitted or discharged; and referral services available to patients. This project has the potential to positively affect the health and well-being of the Australian population by identifying and targeting individuals who represent and implementing strategies to decrease cost and adverse events.

**Proposed method of data collection:** Review of representations using patient health service records will be gathered. Identification of initial diagnosis; criteria upon leaving (discharged / did not wait); length of time between presentation(s); Identification of diagnosis at second presentation; if the patient was subsequently admitted/discharged; available referral services; analysed using SPSS to measure confidence intervals

**Ethics approved:** Will be required

**Type of study:** Quantitative

**University profile:** <http://sydney.edu.au/nursing/staff/profiles/vasiliki.betihavas.php>