

#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

CONTENTS

Farewell to Jan Nicholson

Humanising Birth Symposium + Launch of Interdisciplinary Research Network

Australian College of Midwives, Be the Change, 25th National Conference

SPHERE: NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care – Annual General Meeting

Maggie Flood Award

Professor Ingrid Mogren, Umea University, Sweden

My PhD Experience: Noushin Arefadib

European Conference on Domestic Violence, Reykjavík, Iceland

JLC's End of Year Celebration

Farewell to Jan Nicholson

By Amanda Cooklin

It is with warm wishes and sadness that we farewell our Centre Director, Professor Jan Nicholson. Jan is retiring at the end of 2023, after an outstanding 37-year research career, including the past 6 years as Centre Director.

Jan joined JLC in 2014 as the Inaugural Roberta Holmes Professorial Chair. The Roberta Holmes Transition to Contemporary Program was initiated in 2014 following a philanthropic donation from activist, philanthropist and esteemed alumna, Roberta Holmes. The program informs public understanding of the need to



Professor Jan Nicholson

prepare people for parenthood and support them to achieve better outcomes for their children and themselves. Jan has led this high-quality research program since its inception, and developed and mentored a team of successful parenting researchers and students. By the end of the Roberta Holmes funding in 2018, the program had engaged with over 5,500 parents, produced 110 research publications, and attracted over \$6M in additional funding

In addition to mentoring the parenting team, Jan was appointed as Centre Director in 2017. In this role, she has been an inspirational and much-loved presence at the helm. Under Jan's leadership, the Centre grew to a peak of 37 HDR students, 28 staff and 16 Honorary or Adjunct staff. Jan's calm, support and warmth ensured she was always approachable and part of the daily life of the Centre. Her care and concern for each member of JLC has been evident, as Jan always knows what each and every team member is up to. This was particularly so during the long lockdowns of the pandemic. Jan's Zoom 'corridor chats' were a regular feature, and a testament to her willingness to put support and care for staff at the centre of directorship.

As an outstanding research leader, Jan has achieved over 250 refereed journal publications and very significant research income. She has worked to establish a national group of early career and senior researchers who to work to explore contemporary issues in parenting and child development. Jan has fostered a culture of support, good humour and collaboration, and this has underpinned the Centre's achievements and highlights regularly shared in this newsletter. Jan's ability to conceptualise research ideas, execute projects in innovative ways with a range of partners, and bring together researchers at all levels to build the capacity of the 'JLC collective' has been much appreciated within JLC and across La Trobe more broadly. Under Jan's leadership, JLC's local, national and international networks have thrived, and our reputation has grown.



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

NEWS IN BRIEF

Staff news

We say farewell to Professor Jan Nicholson, JLC Centre Director (p. 1/2)

We congratulate:

- Leesa Hooker on her promotion to Professor
- Michelle Newton on her appointment as the incoming President of the Australian College of Midwives
- Bijaya Pokharel on her appointment as Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Student news

Bijaya Pokharel passed her PhD titled "Developing and evaluating a sustainable and culturally competent family violence response in general practice". Supervisory team: **Prof Angela Taft, Prof Leesa Hooker and Dr Jane Yelland**

Carol Reid passed her PhD titled "Rural workforce perspectives on traumainformed primary health care: Service approaches inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents". Supervisory team: Prof Cath Chamberlain, Dr Shannon Bennetts and Prof Lisa Amir

Fiona McLardie-Hore passed her PhD titled "RUBY: Ringing Up about Breastfeeding Early: A randomised controlled trial". Supervisory team: Prof Della Forster, Prof Helen McLachlan and A/Prof Touran Shafiei Jan's very glamorous shoes will be big to fill for any successor. Her immediate plans are for dog walks, bush treks and mountain hikes, and we look forward to admiring more spectacular photos from her travels. Jan's presence will be missed, but it is lovely to see her moving on with excitement!



Humanising Birth Symposium + Launch of Interdisciplinary Research Network

On Friday 10th November, Dr Laura Whitburn travelled to The University of Newcastle to contribute to a new research network, 'Humanising Birth'.

'Humanising birth' principles, developed by social science and midwifery scholars, aim to promote relationship-based care tailored to the needs of the individual woman/birthing person, while also addressing structural barriers to quality maternity care.

The day brought together multidisciplinary researchers and clinicians from across Australia, and included a keynote presentation by Professor Soo Downe, University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom and Professor Lesley Page CBE, Previous President of the Royal College of Midwives and expert on Human Rights in Childbirth (virtual). The network was formally established and the group has started forming priority areas and plans for growth.

If you have an interest in pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period, from any discipline, and would like to work together to embed humanising birth principles in health services and improve maternity experiences, systems, processes, tools, or culture, please contact Laura (L.Whitburn@latrobe.edu.au).



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Student news (cont'd)

New Higher Degree students:

Jessica Appleyard (Professional Doctorate) "Siblings in PICU: An exploration of sibling inclusion and support when a child is critically ill". Supervisory team: Dr Ashleigh Butler, Prof Bev Copnell and Prof Cheryle Moss

Helen Findley (Doctor of Philosophy) "The great work-family disruption of COVID-19: re-imagining the work-family interface". Supervisory team: A/Prof Amanda Cooklin, Dr Stacey Hokke and Prof Jodi Oakman

Graduations in December

Ranmali Rodrigo 'Storage and transport of expressed breast milk for infants in two neonatal intensive care units; exploratory studies in Australia and Sri Lanka" Supervisory team: Prof Lisa Amir and Prof Della Forster

Noushin Arefadib "Examining the postnatal depression and anxiety screening and management practices of maternal and child health nurses in Victoria, Australia: A multiphase study". Supervisory team: A/Prof Touran Shafiei, A/Prof Amanda Cooklin, Prof Jan Nicholson



Australian College of Midwives, Be the Change - 25th National Conference

By Deborah Pidd

Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE, the inaugural Chief Midwife of the International Confederation of Midwives, launched the conference, reminding us of midwives' significant impact on the health and wellbeing of mothers, babies, and families. Midwives provide essential care for mothers and newborns, including the prevention of maternal deaths, stillbirths and neonatal deaths, as well as improving other health outcomes such as breastfeeding and postpartum depression.

JLC staff and HDR students had a significant presence at the ACM conference, both in research presentations and enthusiasm. It was a momentous conference with a roadmap on how midwives will be supported and encouraged to be the change needed to lead the maternity care workforce to provide consistent woman-centred care.

We all found the work being done by the Molly Wardaguga Research Centre profoundly inspiring: https://www.cdu.edu.au/mwrc. Please follow the link for this beautiful video: 'What does Birthing on Country mean to you?' https://vimeo.com/776478875.

As always, the diversity of topics required coordination to ensure we supported each other while engaging with valuable research. The chance to present our work as early career researchers, meet our heroes and get a broader understanding of research in our field of interest was exciting and inspiring.

For experienced researchers, presenting their work drew big audiences and engaging in the wonderful and generous reciprocity of their collegial wisdom was lovely to be part of. This includes our own Della Forster, Chris East, Michelle Newton, and Laura Whitburn.

We cheered, laughed, cried, and knitted bonnets for premature babies. We also had a wonderful evening of dancing and celebration at the Gala Dinner.



Michelle Newton, Sharon Mumford, Laura Whitburn, Deb Pidd, Stef Zugna, Rebecca Hyde, Robyn Matthews and Della Forster



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Grants

Congratulations on the following grants awarded to JLC staff:

Centres for Research Excellence (CRE)

SPHERE 2.0- The Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care

Prof Danielle Mazza (Monash University), Prof Kirsten Black (University of Sydney), Prof Deborah Bateson (University of Sydney), Prof Wendy Norman (University of British Columbia), Prof Gita Mishra (University of Queensland), Prof Jane Fisher (Monash University), A/Prof Luke Grzeskowiak (Flinders University), **A/Prof Kristina Edvardsson (La Trobe University),** A/Prof Laura Tarzia (University of Melbourne), Prof Sharon Cameron (University of Edinburgh)

Optimising human milk nutrition to improve the long-term health of preterm infants

Prof Alice Rumbold (University of Adelaide) and team; **Prof Lisa Amir** is an Associate Investigator (AI)

SPHERE: NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care – Annual General Meeting

By Desireé LaGrappe

A/Prof Kristina Edvardsson, Lead of JLC's Sexual and Reproductive Health Research Program, together with her team, presented to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of SPHERE: the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Centre of Research Excellence (CRE) in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care. La Trobe University is a partner on this prestigious grant led by Prof Danielle Mazza from Monash University, the administering organisation.

The AGM was held in Melbourne with an audience of over 150 people, half in attendance in-person and half online. The event celebrated five years of the NHMRC CRE's achievements from 2019-2023 and the announcement of funding for an additional 5 years!

JLC staff and students were invited to present their work to key stakeholders across the nation. Emeritus Professor Angela Taft, a Chief Investigator of the current SPHERE grant and an Associate Investigator of its next iteration, chaired the session 'Analysing data to understand the state of women's sexual and reproductive health in Australia.' During this plenary session, A/Prof Edvardsson, a Chief Investigator of 'SPHERE 2.0,' presented results of data analysed from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health: "The prevalence and variations in unintended pregnancy by socio-demographic and health-related factors in a population-based cohort of young Australian women."



Angela Taft, Desireé LaGrappe, Kristina Edvardsson, Noushin Arefadib, Erica Millar and Sharinne Crawford



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Grants (cont'd)

NHMRC Partnership grant \$1,126,309

Pasteurised donor human milk supplementation for term babies

A/Prof Jennifer Koplin (University of Queensland), Vanessa Clifford (Murdoch Children's Research Institute), **Prof Lisa Amir (La Trobe University)**, Prof Jane Fisher (Monash University), Prof Kim Dalziel (University of Melbourne), Dr Sarah Price (University of Melbourne), Dr Anna Tottman (Royal Women's Hospital), Prof Alice Rumbold (South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute), Prof Kirsten Perrett (Murdoch Children's Research Institute), Dr Laura Klein (Australian Red Cross Lifeblood)

ABC Grant, La Trobe Theme Investment Scheme 2023-2024 \$23,148.09

Victimisation and perpetration of alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence

Dr Jess Ison, Prof Leesa Hooker (La Trobe Rural Health School/Judith Lumley Centre), **A/Prof Ingrid Wilson**, A/Prof Anne-Maree Laslett, Dr Elena Wilson, Dr Jacqui Theobald, A/Prof Kirsty Forsdike, Dr Benjamin Riordan, Dr Gabe Caluzzi

Internal Synergy Think Tank grant \$9,963

Strengthening synergies for academic and research impact between La Trobe University and Vietnam institutions

Prof Kristina Edvardsson, Desireé LaGrappe (Judith Lumley Centre) Desireé LaGrappe, a PhD student of SPHERE, presented progress from her PhD: "How do the perspectives of women with lived experience of reproductive coercion and abuse and clinical, advocacy and policy experts align with SPHERE's Consensus Statement."

The event was a great opportunity to connect with former students and staff, Dr Noushin Arefadib and Dr Sharinne Crawford, both are Research Fellows within the core SPHERE research team at Monash. The JLC team also connected with La Trobe academics from other departments working on related projects, such as Dr Erica Millar from the Department of Social Inquiry who researches abortion stigma. Prof Leesa Hooker, Lead of JLC's Preventing and Reducing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Child, Family and Community Health Research Programs, is also an affiliate of SPHERE.

To find out more about SPHERE's impact to improve equitable access to sexual and reproductive health care, the latest achievement report can be accessed <u>here</u>.

Maggie Flood Award

Congratulations to Robyn Matthews who received the Maggie Flood Award, \$1,000. Thanks to Maggie's generous support, Robyn is off to the PSANZ (Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand) conference in Christchurch, New Zealand, in April 2024.



Robyn Matthews receiving the 2023 Maggie FloodAward presented by A/Prof Touran Shafiei



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Awards

Royal Women's Hospital Research Week - Best Postgraduate presentation

Antenatal expressing not associated with earlier onset of lactogenesis in women with diabetes in pregnancy.

Anita Moorhead was awarded equal first Best Postgraduate presentation, winning \$250, at the Royal Women's Hospital's research week in November. Anita prepared a poster on results of a substudy from the DAME trial and gave a three-minute presentation.

La Trobe University Accessibility and Inclusion Academic Award

Congratulations to **Jess Ison**, receiving this award in recognition of her awareness of student mental health in her teaching and creating an inclusive learning space. These awards are student nominated.

Shaping Australia Awards - Finalist

"Transforming midwifery care for First Nations women "

Congratulations to **Helen McLachlan** and **team** on being a finalist in the **Problem Solver category.** This nomination recognises their research work, which has changed or has the potential to change the lives of Australians for the better. *shapingaustraliaawards.com.au*

Professor Ingrid Mogren, Umea University, Sweden

By Kristina Edvardsson

Professor Ingrid Mogren, Sweden, visited JLC for one week in November 2023. Professor Mogren, who is a specialist obstetrician with an extensive research program which spans low-, middle and high-income countries, has been a collaborator with JLC since 2011. Mogren undertook a six-month sabbatical at the centre in 2017 to work on the CROss Country Ultrasound Study (CROCUS) with collaborators Professor Rhonda Small (former Centre Director) and A/Prof Kristina Edvardsson. The sabbatical led to further collaborative opportunities, and Ingrid now also supports PhD students in the centre, including Fiona Faulks and her work on social determinants and disparities in perinatal health for Victorian women.

The November research visit provided great opportunities for old and new colleagues to connect, work, and socialise on and off campus. A morning tea was also held at the centre to welcome Prof Mogren back after years of restricted travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Christine East, Kristina Edvardsson, Ingrid Mogren, Desireé LaGrappe at JLC morning tea



Maggie Flood, Ingrid Mogren, Rhonda Small at Maggie's home



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Conferences

Outdoor Activity Forum Series: Strategies to Counter Risk Aversion in Using Active Spaces, National Herbarium of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, 20 October 2023

Shannon Bennetts and Sharinne Crawford presented "Parental fear and children's independent mobility" and preliminary findings from the 'Risky Kids' study, hosted by the Victorian State Government and Outdoors Victoria

Lactation Consultants of Australia and New Zealand (LCANZ), Melbourne, 20 -21 October 2023

Anita Moorhead "Antenatal expressing not associated with earlier onset of lactogenesis in women with diabetes in pregnancy" (Plenary) Presented on behalf of **Della Forster**, Susan Donath, Jess De Bortoli and **Lisa Amir**

Lisa Amir "How do Australian general practitioners manage mastitis? A mixed methods study using Medicine Insight database and interviews" (Concurrent) Presented on behalf of Luke Grzeskowiak, Sharinne Crawford and Meabh Cullinane

10th International Conference for EBHC Teachers and Developers/ Society for EBHC in Taormina, Italy 25 -28 October 2023

Christine East "Methods to improve digital literacy of health professionals to rapidly translate evidence into clinical practice". Presented on behalf of Brian Oldenberg, Nicholas Taylor, Natasha Brusco and Meg Morris.

My PhD Journey

By Noushin Arefadib

In 2019 I had been working at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute for four years and the desire to embark on a new project that would challenge me was growing stronger by the day. One day, I picked up the phone and called the Judith Lumley Centre to ask about existing PhD opportunities. I didn't realise it at the time, but the most wonderful woman, who would later become one of my supervisors, answered my call. I recognised a familiar accent. I inquired, "Are you Persian?" Yes, she said. Oh my god, me too! I knew there was no turning back then. It was a sign from the universe to me. This was the perfect time to begin a PhD, and JLC was the perfect setting. After spending some time



determining the focus of my project, I began working on my PhD, titled *'Examining the postnatal depression and anxiety screening and management practices of Victorian maternal and child health (MCH) nurses,'* under the supervision of my dream team: A/Prof Touran Shafiei, A/Prof Amanda Cooklin, and Prof Jan Nicholson.

Navigating my first year as a PhD candidate while still working part-time proved difficult, and there were definitely some tears shed. With so many brilliant minds around me, my imposter syndrome seemed to be on high alert. But, even when I felt out of my depth, my supervisors supported, encouraged, and believed in me enough to see me through, even when I didn't always believe in myself. With their support, my confidence grew, and I made it to Confirmation with great feedback on my progress from my peers and review panel.

A month before my confirmation, I found out I was pregnant – with twins! Both happiness and panic set in at the same time—how would I manage now? What would my supervisors think? At Confirmation, I informed my panel and supervisors of the news, and their reactions made me feel relieved and supported. I couldn't believe how wonderful everyone thought this news was. I was encouraged to take my time, focus on my health, and ask for help whenever I needed it. Knowing I had the support of my superiors felt fantastic and like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

Ariya and Lola were born on 14 Dec 2019. A few months later, we went into the first of many lockdowns. Being at home with two newborns and no family or community for support was rough, to say the least. While working on a PhD that focused on postnatal depression and anxiety screening and management by MCH nurses, I began experiencing my research topic first hand. I had developed



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Conferences (cont'd)

WONCA Conference, Sydney 26 -29 October 2023

Lisa Amir presented the results of the mastitis project funded by the Therapeutic Guidelines Limited / RACGP Foundation:

Amir LH, Crawford S, Cullinane M, Grzeskowiak L. "How do Australian general practitioners manage mastitis? A mixed methods study using Medicine Insight database and interviews" (Concurrent)

Amir LH, Crawford S, Cullinane M. "Mastitis in a breastfeeding woman: a portrait of a consultation in general practice" (Poster)



Lisa Amir and her poster with conference participant Dr Wongani Kumwenda



Lisa Amir presenting at Sydney International Convention Centre

significant postpartum anxiety. I'd stay up all night researching everything I thought was wrong with my newborns and crying in fear that I'd done something 'wrong' during my pregnancy to jeopardise their health. I believe it was because of my research topic that I knew what was going on with me and where to look for help. However, my experience with my own MCH nurse was disappointing. 'How are you feeling up here?' She said to me, pointing to her head. I was stunned. I faked a smile and replied, 'I'm okay'. I wasn't. Being a parent of multiple babies, having no social/family supports, and a history of depression and anxiety were all risk factors for postpartum depression and anxiety, but it was never identified by the professionals who were ideally positioned to help me. It was at this point that my PhD research became even more important to me in terms of its real-life implications. After taking some time off, I went back to my PhD. Pump, eat, nap, go to therapy, extract data for my scoping review, and repeat.

Between the time I started in 2019 and the time I submitted my thesis in February 2023, I underwent a complete metamorphosis. I remember sitting at my coffee table and sobbing tears of joy, relief, pride, and accomplishment as I pressed the 'submit' button. Despite everything that had happened, I had made it to the finish line. For me, the PhD journey was a life-changing experience. Yes, it had an impact on my career and provided me with research skills that I did not previously have, but equally, it had a significant impact on me as a person. I was more resilient, less proud, actually appreciative of the considered feedback I received, and my imposter syndrome was no longer in overdrive. If I could do this while raising twins, working, and managing all else that life threw at me, I could do anything. In addition to all that, my PhD journey have me the opportunity to meet some of the most amazing and inspiring women I'd ever met in my life, and being surrounded by that level of female awesomeness is just good for the soul. I go forward with life-long friendships formed and so much gratitude for my supervisors who, nearly a year after submitting my thesis, continue to be my trusted mentors and confidants.



Spring flowers, Vice-Chancellor's Garden, La Trobe University, Bundoora Campus



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

In the media

Robyn Matthews, ABC Radio, Ballarat at Breakfast ABC News, Interviewed on midwifery workforce issues, 6 August 2023

Lisa Amir was interviewed by Kellie Scott 'Your child is watching': Three experts on how parent phone use impacts our kids. ABC Everyday, 11 August 2023

https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/howmy-phone-addiction-could-beinfluencing-my-toddler/102678976

Laura Whitburn was interviewed by Wendy Tuohy about labour pain, titled "Pain a labour of love or just plain scary". Article appeared in *The Age, Brisbane Times* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 2023

Jess Ison was interviewed on ABC television News "Travellers warned of dangers of needle spiking", 30 November 2023

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-11-30/travellers-warned-of-dangers-ofneedle-spiking/103170764



Jess Ison being interviewed on ABC television news

European Conference on Domestic Violence - 11-13 September 2023, Reykjavík, Iceland

In September, several JLC staff travelled to Iceland to share their work at the European Conference on Domestic Violence. Presentations included

- Leesa Hooker, supported by Jess Ison and Kirsty Forsdike: Primary prevention of sexual violence and harassment against women and girls: Combining evidence and practice knowledge.
- Jess Ison supported by Leesa Hooker, Elena Wilson, Ingrid Wilson and Kirsty Forsdike: Alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence: A mixed methods study.
- Kirsty Forsdike supported by Leesa Hooker: Rises in domestic violence during major sports events – the need for a multi-sectoral response.
- Catina Adams supported by Leesa Hooker: Transforming child and family health systems to improve the identification and care of women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Before the conference, Jess and Leesa, along with Elena Wilson from the La Trobe Rural Health School, visited the University of Bristol to meet with students and colleagues in gender-based violence research.



Ingrid Wilson, Kirsty Forsdike, Elena Wilson, Jess Ison



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Lunchtime Seminars

- Professor Jan Nicholson, Dr Shannon Bennetts, Dr Clair Bennett, Ms Jasmine Love, La Trobe University, EHLS at School Symposium: Findings from the 5year follow-up of the 'smalltalk' early childhood parenting program, August
- Professor Kylie Hesketh Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University, From RCT to state-wide scale up: Experience of the INFANT program, September
- Dr Genevieve Le Bas, Deakin University Meta-analysis on the associations between paternal perinatal depression, anxiety, and stress, and child and adolescent development, October
- Professor Tina Miller, School of Law and Social Sciences, *Brooks University (Oxford)*, Contemporary Transitions and Generational Change, November
- Dr Malin Edqvist, Karolinska University Hospital, Sweden Promoting shared decision-making, respectful and safe care during labour and birth in Sweden, November
- Associate Professor Hassan Vally, School of Health and Social Development, *Deakin University*, My experience as a science communicator in a public health emergency: lessons and insights, December

European Conference on Domestic Violence - Reykjavík, Iceland (cont'd)



Elizabeth McLindon, Renee Fiolet, Leesa Hooker, Jess Ison, Kirsty Forsdike, Elena Wilson

Ingrid Wilson, Elena Wilson, Kirsty Forsdike, Leesa Hooker



Elena Wilson, Jess Ison and Leesa Hooker, Bristol University, UK

10



#59 December 2023

for women, children and family health research

Lunchtime Seminars (cont'd)

We hold lunchtime seminars on the first Wednesday of every month from February to December, from 12.30 - 1.30pm.

These seminars showcase the work of our colleagues as well as national and international academics and researchers. They are free. Members of the wider community are welcome to attend.

Please refer to our website at <u>www.latrobe.edu.au/jlc/news-</u> <u>events/seminars-and-clubs</u>

Judith Lumley Centre

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End of Year Celebration

