

Judith Lumley Centre

#53 December 2020

for women, children and family health research

CONTENTS

Reflecting on 2020

In profile: Lisa Amir and the *IBJ*

Exploring the impact of caseload midwifery on preterm birth among vulnerable and disadvantaged women

National sexual and reproductive health advocacy

Amanda Cooklin ARC Future Fellowship success

Developing a culturally responsive trauma-informed public health emergency response framework for First Nations families and communities during COVID-19

How an interest in health literacy led to a Professional Doctorate

Realist evaluation of volunteer doula support for women experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage

Demonstrating La Trobe cultural qualities at the JLC writing retreat

Reflecting on 2020

When I last wrote, Melbourne was just going into its second lockdown. And what a long, hard lockdown it turned out to be, one of the longest and strictest in the world. Thousands were infected with COVID-19 and hundreds lost their lives during this time, so while we grappled with many of the challenges that came with lockdown, we recognised the importance of the collective effort to suppress the virus. I write now from a very different Melbourne. The sun is out, we have had zero cases across the state of Victoria for more than a month, and we are beginning to enjoy our beautiful city again.

The consequences of the pandemic have ravaged the tertiary sector, and La Trobe University has not been immune from this. While I continue to be thankful for the transparent leadership of La Trobe's Vice Chancellor Professor John Dewar, the University is undergoing a difficult but necessary transformation.

This is important context in which I provide an overview of the Judith Lumley Centre's recent activities. We have all worked from home since March and will not return to the office until next year. Despite this, the ethos of our Centre, which has been developed and nurtured over many years, has carried us through this difficult year. We have fostered numerous opportunities to connect with and learn from each other through our virtual program of activities, and we have continued to produce high quality research and demonstrate the impact of our work. Attendance at our regular formal program of activities – lunchtime seminars, methods club, journal club and postgraduate meetings – has been at an all-time high, with an impressive array of topics and speakers. Our informal activities – postgraduate peer group, Shut Up and Write, coffee catch-ups – just to name a few, have been an invaluable support for many.

You will see in this newsletter that we have had extraordinary grant success in the past year, and we published many articles. We share stories about new research and student experiences. We said a sad (and virtual) goodbye to several staff and students this year and welcomed new ones.

We are especially pleased to welcome a new cohort of maternal and child health nurse Professional Doctorate students this year; growing this research area is a key strategic objective.

Across the world we know COVID-19 continues to cause untold harm, having a profound and lasting effect on communities, families and individuals. While we have emerged from our second wave feeling a little bruised but mostly hopeful, we send our thoughts and best wishes to those still struggling, and we grieve with those who have lost loved ones, friends and colleagues.

Jan Nicholson, Director JLC



Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three Minute Thesis Competition

Bijaya Pokharel was one of five finalists selected in the La Trobe SHE College heat and also the winner of the People's Choice award. She competed at the University finals in September. Her topic: *Culturally Competent Domestic Violence Care: A Wheel of Hope*

Staff news

A big shout out to **Catherine Chamberlain** who was working three days per week from March until recently in the DHHS COVID-19 response team (working two jobs for seven months). She brought lots of expertise to the Department and worked incredibly hard.

New Adjunct Professor

We are delighted to welcome **Tanya Farrell** as a new Adjunct Professor.

Tanya is a midwife and a nurse. She is the Senior Maternity Adviser in Safer Care Victoria (SCV) and is the Chair of the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Perinatal Mortality and Morbidity (CCOPMM). At JLC we have had a long history of working closely with Tanya including in her previous role as Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery at the Royal Women's Hospital. We look forward to continuing this great association.

In profile: Lisa Amir and the *IBJ*

Fiona Burgemeister recently caught up with Professor Lisa Amir about her work as Editor-in-Chief of the International Breastfeeding Journal. Find out how she became interested in breastfeeding research, why she started the journal, and the impact of the journal, both for Lisa and for those in the field.

Lisa was always interested in women's health and babies, and prior to having children, she was working as a medical officer in family planning. After having her first child, she became involved in the local group of the Nursing Mothers' Association of Australia (now the Australian Breastfeeding Association), and soon became responsible for their library.

"People would ask me about the books. Of course, I had to read all the books, so I could tell them what was in the books... so that's when I started realising, actually, there's a lot more to breastfeeding than I thought. Once I started reading this breastfeeding research, I thought, 'Oh, I could actually maybe do some research myself.'"

The University of Melbourne had just established the *Key Centre for Women's Health in Society* so Lisa enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Women's Health, which involved learning how to use a computer, write essays and use the library.

"We actually had to go to physical libraries and sometimes beg to get in to get particular articles, because some of them were in hospitals. I had to beg to be allowed into the Women's Hospital because I wasn't working there."

She completed her Graduate Diploma, and went on to complete a Master in Women's Health, where the first seeds of reviewing and editing for journals were sown:

"My supervisors were Lorraine Dennerstein and Suzanne Garland, and they both were on Editorial Boards, and they talked about journal work during our meetings. So, as I was learning to write articles, [we were also] discussing editorial stuff about journals. And I was being invited to review articles. So that just kind of seemed normal."



IBJ Editorial Board members in 2006: Gillian Opie, Helen McLachlan, Lisa Amir, Maureen Minchin and Susan Donath. All still members of the Editorial Board now.

Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

Student news

New PhD student

Meriem Perona recently joined JLC at the halfway point in her candidature. She is working on the topic of *pre-hospital management of acute atypical coronary syndrome by VIC Emergency paramedics*; supervised by Amanda Cooklin, Aziz Rahman, Peter O'Meara and Omara Farouque.

New Professional Doctorate students

Anne O'Neill – researching *Victorian Maternal Child Health nurses and practice development*; supervised by Kristina Edvardsson (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Leesa Hooker

Helen Lees – researching *measurable health outcomes for children 0-6 years in relation to the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Service and how we report on these*; supervised by Leesa Hooker and Kristina Edvardsson (School of Nursing and Midwifery)

Kim Howland – exploring *tele practice in the Victorian Maternal and Child Health services*; supervised by Jan Nicholson and Leesa Hooker

Mercy Henry – looking into a family support system for South East Asian communities, identification of difficulties and stressors of affected women and investigation of the gaps; supervised by Kristina Edvardsson (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Touran Shafiei

Deborah Pidd – researching *factors important to women in selecting and receiving quality care for subsequent pregnancies and births after having experienced psychologically traumatic births*; supervised by Christine East and Michelle Newton

The normalisation of involvement in journal reviewing and editing continued when Lisa started her PhD under the supervision of Judith Lumley, who was a past editor of *Australian Family Physician*, and then co-editor of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

"Some people think that editors, you know, are way off, a person in an ivory tower or something. But I could see it was something that she and Jeanne [Daly] would do on a Friday morning...they'd meet to discuss papers, make decisions."

By the 1990s, and despite fast becoming an expert in lactation, Lisa was initially rejected from the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Human Lactation*, based in the United States:

"The editor at the time wrote back and said she thought Australia was too far away. And besides, they did have international members because they had a couple of people from Canada."

Lisa did eventually join the editorial board, but observed that the journal remained very US-focussed. So, in the early 2000s, when online journals started appearing, Lisa identified the gap for a new online breastfeeding journal, with a broader international focus.

"I thought someone's going to start an online journal about breastfeeding... And I thought 'Oh I could do that'. I was interested in women's rights... it just seemed to me there was a need to recognise that breastfeeding is a deeply cultural activity and we need to hear from researchers around the world... And, the research should be available to everyone."

Lisa attended a course for editors of medical journals, and spoke to Judith Lumley and others about the idea, then approached BioMed Central who agreed to host the journal. Soon the editorial board was established, and in 2005 people were invited to submit papers, prior to its launch at the Royal Women's Hospital in 2006.

There have been more than 1,000 papers submitted since the journal started, and over 500 papers published. In 2020 alone, more than 200 papers have been submitted and 104 papers published.

Lisa says the best thing about being the editor of a journal is the positive feedback she receives: about how much people enjoy reading it; about her efforts to support new researchers to publish; and about the impact on breastfeeding knowledge the journal is having world-wide.

"I was with someone who worked for the World Health Organization, somewhere in Asia, and he said 'we appreciate all those articles you publish about breastfeeding rates, because we like to collect



Lisa Amir and Professor Roger Short at the launch of the IBJ at The Royal Women's Hospital,

Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

Congratulations to the following students who graduated recently

Dr Christine Murray



Her thesis is titled *Observational study of satisfaction with professional consultations in gynaecology: Associations with health literacy*. She was supervised by Susan McDonald and Richard Gray (School of Nursing and Midwifery).

Dr Nawal Abdulghani



Her thesis is titled *Exploring hospital practices immediately after birth in Saudi Arabia: A mixed method study*. She was supervised by Lisa Amir,

Kristina Edvardsson (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Amanda Cooklin.

Dr Kate Dawson

Her thesis is titled *Exploring the introduction, expansion and sustainability of caseload midwifery: A national cross-sectional study*. Her supervisors were Della Forster, Michelle Newton and Helen McLachlan.

detailed information about breastfeeding rates in different places. So that's a source of information for us."

The advantage of an online journal is its accessibility, so its impact goes far beyond the academic world. To date, there have been almost half a million article downloads (476,794 on 26 November 2020) from the journal and 883 Altmetric mentions. The *International Breastfeeding Journal* is one of Springer's most read journals by the general public, and students frequently cite articles published in the journal. Another advantage is its flexibility, for example, the journal has published [special or thematic issues on different topics](#) related to breastfeeding such as feminism, economics, HIV, breastfeeding in public and more recently, COVID-19.

The impact of the journal on Lisa herself has been mostly positive. On the plus side, it has greatly broadened her knowledge: *"it's kind of stretched me to think about other things that I might not."* She gives an example of being asked to write an article about poverty and breastfeeding for the Council of Science Editors' global theme issue in 2007, which is has now been accessed more than 27,000 times and led to being invited to talk about the topic on several occasions. And because she reads so many articles about breastfeeding from around the world, both for her journal and also when looking for new reviewers, her knowledge of the literature is vast. Lisa is currently rated by ExpertScape as the [top expert in Lactation Disorders](#) in the world. However, the work of a journal editor is relentless, and this means less time to work on her own articles:

"My work as an editor doesn't really get counted in metrics. I can say I've published X number of articles as an editor, but people don't [count this]. Your output, it's just how many publications you have."

Lisa would like to acknowledge all the people who contribute to the journal as Associate Editors, Editorial Board members and reviewers, and especially members of the JLC family, including Amanda Cooklin (Associate Editor), Méabh Cullinane and Kelly Coca for their regular and reliable commitment. Academics do this work without payment or acknowledgment and yet it is such an essential part of the publishing process – their efforts are very much appreciated.



Dr Kate Dawson and supervisors Helen McLachlan and Della Forster at graduation



Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

Grants

Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)

Exploring the impact of caseload midwifery on preterm birth among vulnerable and disadvantaged women: a multi-centre randomised controlled trial

Helen McLachlan, Della Forster and the MAGNOLIA team (see article in this Newsletter)

Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowship

The long arm of the job: Improving parents' jobs and child development

Amanda Cooklin (see article in this Newsletter)

Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious Disease Emergencies (APPRISE) Centre of Research Excellence

Developing a culturally responsive trauma-informed public health emergency response framework for First Nations families and communities during COVID-19

Catherine Chamberlain, Cindy Woods, Shannon Bennetts (see article in this Newsletter)

Therapeutic Guidelines Ltd/RACGP Foundation

Understanding antibiotic prescribing for mastitis in breastfeeding women: a mixed method study

Lisa Amir, Luke Grzeskowiak (University of Adelaide), Sharinne Crawford, Méabh Cullinane

This project has two broad aims:

(1) to describe how general practitioners around Australia treat mastitis with antibiotics to see if they are following the antibiotic guidelines for best practice, and (2) to understand how GPs make decisions about prescribing for breastfeeding women, and how they use

Exploring the impact of caseload midwifery on preterm birth among vulnerable and disadvantaged women

Medical Research Future Fund Success for the MAGNOLIA trial

Méabh Cullinane

Professor Helen McLachlan and colleagues at the Judith Lumley Centre recently received \$1.6 million from the Medical Research Future Fund for a multi-centre randomised controlled trial exploring whether continuity of care from one midwife through pregnancy, birth and after-birth (caseload midwifery) reduces preterm birth among vulnerable and disadvantaged women. This is a world first: there have been no randomised trials of caseload midwifery care for socially vulnerable groups.



The trial is called MAGNOLIA (Midwifery Caseload Care – Supporting Childbearing Women: A Randomised Controlled Trial).

This research is important because in Australia approximately 27,000 babies are born preterm each year (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019) and preterm birth is a key indicator of infant health, chance of survival and health later in life (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). Further, poor birth outcomes, including preterm birth, are substantially more common for vulnerable populations in Australia and elsewhere, with a clear gradient in the percentage of fetal and neonatal deaths between the most disadvantaged and least disadvantaged quintiles (Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity, 2019).

This trial will investigate whether continuity of care from one midwife can reduce the preterm birth rate in socially vulnerable women allocated to receive this intervention.

Recruitment for MAGNOLIA will commence in 2021 at three sites: the Royal Women's Hospital, the Northern Hospital and Bendigo Health. Approximately 1,800 socially vulnerable pregnant women across these three sites will be recruited to take part in the trial, which will take three years to complete. Half of these women will be randomly allocated to receive continuity of care from one midwife throughout their pregnancy and birth, while the other half will be allocated to receive all other standard care options available to them at that trial site. A nested sub-study will



Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

guidelines. By the end of the project, we will use this information to plan an intervention to address any barriers and improve the usability and functionality of the Therapeutic Guidelines.

SPHERE CRE

The influence of geographic location on Australian women's reproductive health

Kristina Edvardsson, Angela Taft, Leesa Hooker, Mridula Shankar, Jayne Lucke, Wendy Norman (see article in this Newsletter)

National Health and Medical Research Council Centres of Research Excellence (CRE) grant

Birth on Country

Led by the team at Charles Darwin University's Molly Wardaguga Research Centre at the College of Nursing and Midwifery; Catherine Chamberlain, CRI Birth on Country is a metaphor for the best start in life for First Nations families. The work to redesign the current system to ensure greater First Nations governance and to establish and evaluate Aboriginal Birthing Centres is critical in terms of providing culturally and clinically safe services, reducing risk factors and improving health outcomes. [More information](#)

Canadian Institutes of Health grant

Improving social justice in observational studies

Catherine Chamberlain is part of a large [international team](#) who have been funded for a four-year project to extend the [STROBE](#) (STrengthening Reporting of OBServational studies in Epidemiology) guidelines to ensure equity is sufficiently addressed.

be conducted alongside the trial to explore whether the continuity of midwife care model reduces the physiological stress response in women allocated to that trial arm. Women's experiences of pregnancy and birth will also be explored.

Helen McLachlan will lead this trial, along with investigators from La Trobe University, King's College London, the University of Melbourne, the Royal Women's Hospital and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. Other investigators from the Judith Lumley Centre involved in the trial include Della Forster, Michelle Newton and Touran Shafiei. International researcher Jane Sandall, who is the lead author of a *Cochrane Review* of midwife led care and whose research findings have informed the World Health Organization, the UK Government Commission on Nursing and Midwifery and Australian reviews of maternity services, is also a chief investigator.

Investigator team:

Helen McLachlan, Della Forster, Stefan Kane, Jane Sandall, Touran Shafiei, Rocco Cuzzilla, Alan Shiell, Catram Nguyen, Michelle Newton and Michael Kingsley



National sexual and reproductive health advocacy

Kerryn O'Rourke

The NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care (SPHERE) formed a [national Coalition](#) of sexual and reproductive health experts and organisations in April 2020 to give a strong, collective voice to secure high quality sexual and reproductive health services for women during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The Coalition is advocating for progressive, equitable reforms to preconception care, contraception and abortion services for women in Australia.

The Coalition meets fortnightly to share evidence, seek advice and collaborate on advocacy activity. For example, in November the group invited Dr Patricia Lohr, Medical Director and Responsible Officer at the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, who shared experiences and the overwhelmingly positive outcomes to date (for

Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

Contracts

Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS)

The Australian Sexual Violence and Harassment Primary Prevention project: Combining evidence and practice knowledge

Leesa Hooker in collaboration with the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe Business School and researchers from RMIT

This project involves an evidence review of what works to prevent sexual violence and sexual harassment and national consultation with a diverse range of services and advocacy groups. This data will inform development of a theory of change and future policy on the important issue of preventing sexual violence and sexual harassment before it occurs.

Evaluation of Our Watch

Led by Kirsty Forsdike, La Trobe Business School, in collaboration with evaluation team members from the Centre for Sport and Social Impact, the Centre for Data Analytics and Cognition as well as the Judith Lumley Centre

Our Watch is the leading organisation for primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. The evaluation will use multiple innovative mixed methods in understanding the complex scope of work *Our Watch* has undertaken since its inception in 2013.

women and for providers) of implementing telehealth medical abortion in Britain during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coalition is seeking greater support for medical abortion via telehealth in Australia, not just as temporary model of care during the pandemic, but as a long term and trusted healthcare model that enhances early gestation abortion access.

Coalition members Angela Taft (SPHERE Chief Investigator) and Kerryn O'Rourke (JLC PhD candidate) are contributing to the Coalition's advocacy for nurse led models of care, particularly for long acting reversible contraception and medical abortion. Angela and Kerryn have been invited to collaborate with researchers from the University of Queensland and James Cook University on a national study of abortion care content in tertiary nursing and midwifery curricula, and development of a consensus best practice curriculum. Nursing workforce capacity building in abortion care will be an important element of service reform for the comprehensive promotion of sexual and reproductive health for women in Australia.

In separate SPHERE work, Kristina Edvardsson and new PhD student Desiree La Grappe will commence studies in 2021 to develop an international consensus definition and measure of reproductive coercion. Then, they plan to pilot its efficacy to assess prevalence when included in Maternal and Child Health nurse family violence screening.

The SPHERE Coalition's published consensus statements are available on the [SPHERE website](#):

Contraception-related issues

- Coalition consensus statement on the provision of long-acting reversible contraception during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Shortage of norethisterone-containing pills in Australia: Advice for GPs
- Contraceptive method considerations for individuals with active COVID-19 infection: a consensus statement
- Provision of emergency contraception: a consensus statement.

Abortion-related issues

- Using telehealth to provide early medical abortion during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: a consensus statement
- Evidence-based practice and policy recommendations regarding early medical abortion: a consensus statement
- Nurse and midwife-led provision of mifepristone and misoprostol for the purposes of early medical abortion: a consensus statement.

**SPHERE**

NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care

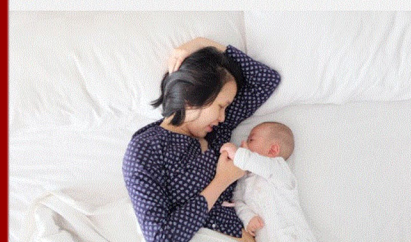
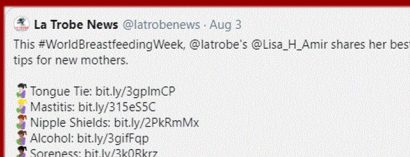
Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

In the media

During World Breastfeeding Week (first week in August) the Australian Breastfeeding Association published five mini-videos by Lisa Amir about common breastfeeding concerns (see www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info)



[Bendigo mums to be part of La Trobe University research into preterm birth](#) is the title of an article in the *Bendigo Advertiser* (30 July 2020) which reports on the grant Helen McLachlan and colleagues received to investigate whether continuity of care from one midwife through pregnancy, birth, and after-birth will lead to lower rates of preterm births.

Della Forster and the DAISY study were featured in an article in *The Age* (1 August 2020): [Debra knows how post-natal anxiety feels, now she's helping other mums](#)

Stacey Hokke's and co-authors' article, *Ethical issues in using the internet to engage participants in family and child research: A scoping review*, was showcased on the [ERIC website](#) (Ethical Research Involving Children) and associated social media channels in August.

ARC Future Fellowship success

Sharinne Crawford

In July this year, Dr Amanda Cooklin was successful in being awarded an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship. The highly competitive Future Fellowship Scheme aims to support "excellent mid-career researchers" to undertake high quality research that will be of benefit, both nationally and internationally. Mandi's work has been identified as an area of national priority.



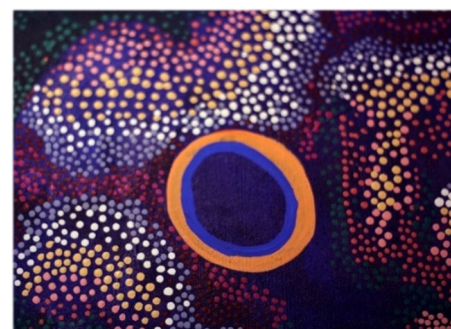
Australian research shows that one in three Australian parents report conflicts between their work and family demands. These conflicts are linked to lower productivity, poorer parent mental health, and may be an under-recognised factor in children's development. Policy and workplace solutions have not yet been widely effective. The Fellowship provides funding for four years and will fund a new program of research undertaken at JLC. Mandi's work will identify how parents' work-family stresses have flow on costs to children using data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, and interviews with employed parents. Her research will also identify opportunities, co-developed with industry partners, for new evidence-based strategies for employers to better support working parents. She also has a Visiting Fellow position planned to the Work Research Institute, at Oslo Metropolitan University in 2023 to build collaboration and seek expertise from the multi-disciplinary organisational scholars at the Institute.

Through this four-year program, Mandi hopes to develop options for solving urgent problems faced by Australian working parents and their families, which have recently taken on a new shape in the post-COVID working environment for many families.

Developing a culturally responsive trauma-informed public health emergency response framework for First Nations families and communities during COVID-19

Cindy Woods

The COVID-19 pandemic has created fear and anxiety among the population, especially in Victoria, the hardest hit state. At its peak, Victoria recorded over 700 new COVID-19 cases per day. As part of the Government's approach to prevent the spread of COVID-19, public health messages used fear appeals or "scare tactics" to motivate people to



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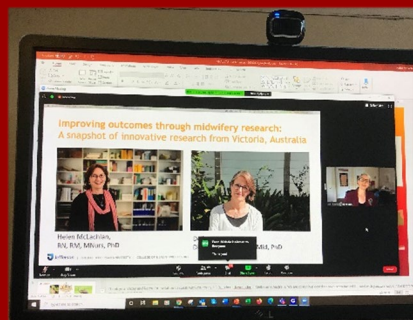
#53 December 2020

PhD student **Kerryn O'Rourke** was interviewed in an ABC Radio National Life Matters segment about doula support (29 October 2020 – see article within this Newsletter)

Amanda Cooklin and co-authors were cited in an article Self-employment entrenches traditional gender roles for parents in *The Age* (29 November 2020) which reported on research published in the *Sex Roles* journal.

Presentations

Helen McLachlan and Della Forster: *Improving outcomes through midwifery research: A snapshot of innovative research from Victoria, Australia.* Midwifery Thinks! Symposium, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, USA; August 2020



Fiona Burgemeister: Implementing Evidence-Based Programs in an Australian Place-Based Initiative for Children (poster presentation, online). Society for Prevention Research Conference, Washington, USA; July 2020

Sharinne Crawford: *The new 'neighbourhood'? How social media is shaping contemporary parenting.* Slovenian Australian Academic Association Annual Conference, Wellington, NZ (and online); November 2020

change their behaviour. Graphic images of people in intensive care units being assisted to breathe, with captions such as “My mum’s in ICU with COVID”, were used to generate fear of the negative consequences of not adopting the recommended behaviours. Health communication campaigns using fear appeals may produce unintended consequences, especially for people with pre-existing trauma.

Our new project aims to change the way public health emergency communication messages are designed, to make them more culturally responsive, safe and appropriate. This study brings together an Aboriginal-led team of researchers with public health expertise at the Judith Lumley Centre, Newcastle University, University of Melbourne, The Lowitja Institute and We AI-li Foundation. The first phase of this project involves interviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents of children up to five years of age to discover their experiences of complex trauma-related distress and COVID-19 experiences. We are interviewing parents across Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory and their experiences will inform strategies to reduce distress caused by public health messages. In the second phase of the project, we will conduct a workshop that brings together key stakeholders involved in the COVID-19 response, including health care professionals, to discuss, imagine and create a vision for a safer culturally responsive trauma-informed public health emergency response framework for First Nations families and communities during COVID-19, and beyond for future health emergencies. Our vision is that the framework for culturally responsive trauma-informed public health will incorporate the mind, spirit and environment as well as considering practical concerns raised about COVID-19. Our overall aim is to develop innovative solutions to complex situations guided by First Nation organisations and response teams.

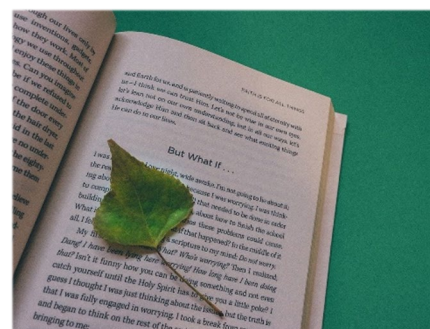
How an interest in health literacy led to a Professional Doctorate

Chris Murray

I have had an interest in health literacy for some time now, having investigated the topic when I did a Master’s health promotion subject a few years ago. Low health literacy is very common in Australia, with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimating that only 40% of Australians have adequate health literacy.

In January 2017 I began a Professional Doctorate at La Trobe University. This involved some course work and then a research project that looked at patient satisfaction in relation to health literacy, duration of consultation and patient knowledge. My initial interest was in health literacy but that seemed to grow as my studies went on. I also looked at the published evidence relating to this topic.

Following ethics committee approvals, I undertook my study at Mercy Hospital for Women Heidelberg and Werribee Mercy Hospital. My study involved doctors, nurses and physiotherapists at various



Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

Lunchtime seminars

The Judith Lumley Centre holds [lunchtime seminars](#) on the **first Wednesday of every month** (February to December) from **12.30 – 1.30 pm**.

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.

2020 Seminars

February – Associate Professor **Marcos Signorelli**, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil: *Brazilian research endeavors in gender, violence and health: multi-sectoral approaches*

March – **Mridula Shankar**, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health: *Novel approaches to measuring induced abortion incidence and the quality of informal abortion care: Findings from Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Rajasthan, India*

April – **Fiona Burgemeister**, JLC: *Implementation of evidence-based programs in a place-based initiative for children*
Dr **Stacey Hokke**, JLC: *Does flexible work 'work' in Australia? A survey of employed mothers' and fathers' work arrangements and health outcomes*

May – Dr **Anni Hine Moana**, La Trobe University: *Shame and alcohol use among Aboriginal women*

June – Professor **Christine East**, La Trobe University and Mercy Health: *Induction of labour: a date of birth and beyond...*

clinics and patients (women). Between September and December 2018, I recruited 222 women into the study. I talked to the women on three occasions – pre-consultation, immediately post-consultation and at one month (by telephone). The study used a satisfaction questionnaire and I assessed the women's health literacy using a health literacy test. I measured the duration of each consultation and asked patients what they thought about their knowledge of their condition or treatment.

Results included a low literacy rate of 25%. Overall, most women were very satisfied with the consultations with the doctor, nurse or physiotherapist. The average consultation duration was more than 26 minutes. Women's knowledge scores were high and increased immediately after consultation. I found that there was no association between satisfaction and health literacy or satisfaction and consultation length. There was an association between satisfaction and patient knowledge – if women felt knowledgeable, they were happier, regardless of what that knowledge was.

The study confirms the importance of good communication, regardless of a woman's level of health literacy. Good communication on a level that is appropriate for each woman leads to increased satisfaction. Future plans include a follow-up study examining these topics which involves women who use interpreters.

Realist evaluation of volunteer doula support for women experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage

Kerryn O'Rourke



photograph provided by *Birth for Humankind*

I am approaching the final year of my study, evaluating Australia's first volunteer doula support program provided by [Birth for Humankind](#) across greater Melbourne and Geelong. The program provides doula support to women experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, during pregnancy, childbirth, and early parenting. *Doula* is a Greek word which means to mother the mother. Doulas provide

Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020

July – Professor **Helen McLachlan**,
Pam McCalman, **Tanisha Springall**, JLC: *Updates on the Baggarruk trial*

August – Associate Professor
Meredith Nash, University of
Tasmania: *Caring during COVID-19. A gendered analysis of Australian university responses to managing remote working and caring responsibilities*

September – Dr **Josephine Barbaro**,
OTARC, La Trobe University: *Monitoring of social attention, interaction and communication (MoSAIC) in infants and toddlers*

October – Associate Professor
Melissa Graham, School of
Psychology and Public Health, La
Trobe University: *Women's reproductive choices, decision-making and consequences*

November – Dr **Kirsty Forsdike** and
Dr **Elspeth Frew**, La Trobe
University: *Commemorative events and public rituals: Redefining our leisure engagement with violent death as healing practice and/through social activism*

December – Associate Professor
Emily Callander, School of Public
Health and Preventive Medicine,
Monash University: *Efficiency and equity in maternal health care: the use of linked data to improve care for all*

If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive the lunchtime seminar invitation emails, please email us at jlc@latrobe.edu.au

emotional, practical and informational support to women during pregnancy, labour and birth, and early parenting. Birth for Humankind doulas work as volunteers and the service is free to women. It is also provided in addition to mainstream maternity care.

It is well established in international literature that doula support has very positive clinical and experience outcomes for women experiencing social and economic disadvantage. What is not understood, is how, for whom, in what circumstances and why doula support works. I am using realist evaluation methodology* to explore these questions. Realist evaluation uses mixed methods to look at program mechanisms and contexts in relation to outcomes. It assumes that programs will have differential outcomes, that a program will not benefit everyone everywhere, and seeks to explain why (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The doula program evaluation will inform the program's refinement, sustainability and scalability.

A volunteer doula and I were interviewed in an [ABC Radio National Life Matters segment](#) about doula support in October. This radio segment came about through some media advocacy by Birth for Humankind regarding my first [publication](#) about theories developed for the evaluation study.

I recently interviewed women from the two largest language groups supported by the program – English and Arabic. Realist interviews with Arabic speaking women were designed, piloted and facilitated in collaboration with bicultural researcher and fellow PhD candidate Nawal Abdulghani. This methodological work is submitted for publication and under peer review. My supervisors are Touran Shafiei and Michelle Newton from JLC, Jane Yelland from the Murdoch Children's Research Centre, and I am mentored by realist methodologist Gill Westhorp.

**Realist evaluation methodology is most commonly used in the United Kingdom and across Europe, but there are growing pockets of researchers using it in Australia.*

Kerryn established and co-facilitates the Melbourne Realist Research Group, an informal peer learning group for people using realist methodology. It has members from all Victorian universities and some consulting groups. New members are always welcome. Kerryn can be contacted at orourke.km@students.latrobe.edu.au

Demonstrating La Trobe Cultural qualities at the JLC Writing Retreat

Lael Ridgway

Innovative

During Academic Writing Month (AcWriMo), the Judith Lumley Centre Writing Retreat went online. Over ten half days and two weeks, around 15 JLC students and staff connected with, supported and motivated each other. The Shut Up and Write Pomodoro technique helped keep the focus on work, and breakout rooms meant people could choose their space – Pomodoro timed, no interruptions, 'café' ambience or space to 'pop out for a quick chat'.

Connected

We showed up to talk, laugh, stretch, dance and share our lives. Nutbush and Classic Flow Yoga were crowd favourites.

Judith Lumley Centre

for women, children and family health research

#53 December 2020



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Accountable

And in between times, we worked. A lot.

All sorts of work happened in these sessions, including thesis completions, reviews, publications, reports, presentations, data analysis, participant support, reading, planning and searching.

Caring

Sharing the load was a feature of planning and running the retreat. A team of organisers were ably supported by the session hosts. They ensured the sessions ran smoothly, on time, with plenty of opportunities to work, socialise, collaborate and recover. The retreat ended with an online social get-together where we just spent time as a group of friends, catching up. On a personal note, I'd like to give a big shout out to the rest of the planning crew (thanks Mandi, Kerryn and Catina)!

Want to know more about Shut Up and Write at La Trobe? See the [RED team events](#) page for daily session info.

JLC together at last at the End-of-Year party, December 2020



We are incredibly grateful to our Director, Jan Nicholson, during what has been a very challenging year for all. Her leadership as the Centre Director has been exceptional. We thank her for the work she has done in representing JLC staff and students at the University level, and for her transparency, empathy and support over the year.



JLC Newsletter Editorial team