

Centre for Remote Health, Alice Springs

The PHCRED team at CRH has been in full operation for less than a year and is composed of three people, each of whom has a different, although related rôle. They are:

- Dr. Fay Johnston: Research Advisor, based in Darwin;
- Dr. Michael Morrissey: Social Epidemiologist, based in Alice Springs; and
- Ms. Juanita Sherwood: Indigenous Research Fellow, based in Alice Springs.

Although all three contribute towards the goals of the PHCRED project, the major emphasis of the Research Advisor's work is on research and evaluation capacity and network building among health professionals.

By contrast, the major task of the Social Epidemiologist is research into the social determinants of Indigenous health; although it is expected that this research will have capacity building components, particularly at the levels of evaluation and the development of a research agenda.

The Indigenous Research Fellow also has a research rôle but her primary responsibility is capacity and network building for Indigenous health researchers and the development of Indigenous research methods. These differences apart, all three have a common task in terms of *outcomes*, namely:

- increasing the quality and quantity of research on the social determinants of Indigenous health, produced by health professionals, Indigenous communities and other academics;
- advocating and producing research which is of benefit to Indigenous communities;
- working in partnership with Indigenous communities in setting the research agenda and methodology; and
- increasing the quality of evaluation of health programs and systems and facilitating change in programs and systems consistent with evaluation results.

The following is a list of completed and continuing work undertaken in pursuit of these objectives.

Completed Research and Evaluation Projects

Needs Analysis of Women's and Children's Health in the Southern Barkly Region (Funding \$35,000)

A six month project commissioned by Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. The completed report forms the basis of a submission to The Regional Health Program of the Department of Health and Ageing by Anyinginyi Aboriginal Congress for a three year nutrition and general health program with PHCRED responsible for community capacity-building. (Anticipated funding \$850, 000)

Continuing Research and Evaluation Projects

Evaluation of the Katherine West Coordinated Care Trial (Funding approx. \$470,000)

PHCRED staff applied for and designed the evaluation of this major health initiative and will play the major part in completing it over the next three years.

Evaluation of the Katherine Allied health project

To commence January 2003, partly based on raising capacity of Allied Health staff to self-evaluate through a series of evaluation workshops.

Evaluation of Urapuntja Health Service Population Health Nurse Project.

Evaluation of twelve month pilot project involving research capacity-building in a remote area health service.

Injury Prevention through Community Development Initiatives in Central Australia

NHMRC funded project. In collaboration with non-PHCRED staff from CRH and Tangentyere Council.

NSW Cervical Screening and Breast Screening Project

Strategies to improve screening for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in NSW with NSW Health Department.

Health needs Assessment for Santa Teresa Community

In collaboration with non-PHCRED staff from CRH.

National Eye Health Review

In collaboration with non-PHCRED staff from CRH.

Collaborative submissions

- Future Directions Review of Secondary Education in the Northern Territory in collaboration with Australian Council of Deans of Education, RMIT and CAAC: proposal submitted.
- Hospital community care integration project (Katherine Hospital). Partner investigator on collaborative UDRH: proposal submitted.
- Management of ear disease in primary health care settings. Menzies, DHCS, and CRH: NHMRC proposal submitted.
- Air pollution from bushfires: ecology and epidemiological outcomes CRH, NTU, Menzies: ARC proposal submitted.
- Social determinants: evaluation of outstation programs in relation to employment opportunities, landscape health and human health and well-being. CRH, NTU, Menzies: submission to CRH collaborative fund for scoping project.

Workshops and courses

- Poverty and Indigenous Health (Menzies June 2002).
- One week Indigenous Research Workshops (NTU May and CRH September).
- Directions for Community Development (Tangentyere July 2002).

Papers

- Using evidenced based health care in the NT, presentation Menzies Health Inequalities Research Collaboration Primary Health Care Network Workshop April 2002.
- Landscape fires and human health in the Darwin region, presentation NTU April 2002.
- 'The social determinants of Indigenous health' General Practice and Primary Health Care Conference Melbourne May 2002.
- Issues in Indigenous Research NTU May 2002.
- Epidemiology in a changing world ANU May 2002.
- 'Culture and drug research: theoretical and methodological issues' WONCA Conference Alice Springs May 2002.
- 'The social determinants of health: a research agenda' Paper delivered at:
 - Alice Springs Hospital Grand Rounds March 2002
 - Tennant Creek Hospital Grand Rounds March 2002
 - Menzies School of Health Research Darwin March 2002.

Publications

- Grundy, J. and Johnston, F. *Developing the capacity of Primary Health Care Providers: Developing the PHCRED project in the NT.* submitted to AJPH
- Johnston, F. (Ed). *Tropical Health in the Top End, an introduction for health practitioners. Top End Division of General Practice.* In Press
- Johnston, F. et al *Bushfire smoke and asthma: an ecological study* (MJA June 2002) Correspondence MJA Oct 2002
- Morrissey, M. and Healy, V. *The Health of Women and Children in the Southern Barkly Region* Commissioned Report to Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Nov 2002

Advice to PHC providers and other organisations on projects, program evaluation and curriculum design (some examples)

- Danila Dilba Aboriginal Medical Service – evaluation of diabetes project;
- Miwatj Aboriginal Corporation and DHCS – strongyloides prevalence studies;
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's forum for Cervical Screening;
- Consultation to the University of NSW to review Indigenous education programs at Aug-Oct 2002;
- Wrote evaluation design for Tiwi Health Board Pharmacy Services September 2002;
- Provided statistical advice to Alice Springs Alcohol Restriction Trial Group;
- Membership, Tangetyere Council Indigenous Health Committee;
- Membership of Indigenous Workforce Forum. (Canberra) April 2002
- Membership of Central Australian Human Research Committee- (Indigenous Sub-committee).
- Central Australian Rural Practitioners Association – development of evidence summaries for the manual for PHC providers
- Central Australian Division of Primary Health Care: position papers on:
 - ARIA Formulae

- Access Economics Report on Supply of GPs
- Top End Division of General Practice
 - Immunisation program evaluation
 - Development of population and Indigenous health programs
 - Development of PHC research programs
 - Development and evaluation of Chronic Disease Program
- Galuwin'ku Health Service
 - Development of health promotion project
 - Parasite project
- Katherine allied health services evaluation project
- Royal Darwin Hospital emergency department – domestic violence study

Networks Established by PHC RED (CRH) Staff

- Evidence Based Practice/Research Interest Network of primary health care practitioners
 - Established and provide ongoing support of this informal email based network.
 - Established and provide secretariat for EBM small group CME (monthly evening meetings)
 - Participate in recently established national network for teaching and evaluating EBP in primary health care
- Established Indigenous Staff Network from UDRHs, first meeting Alice Springs December 9th – 11th 2002 to develop an Indigenous agenda in health research.
- Initiated establishment of Indigenous Health Research Network of PHC RED: preliminary teleconferences held for planning collaborative NHMRC submission relating to heart disease in Indigenous communities.

Remote networking/communication

- CRH Research Newsletter to Indigenous Communities (Oct 2002 and continuing) developed by Indigenous Research Fellow
- Long distance evening health seminar series (commenced November 2002) developed by Research Advisor
 - Collaboration between Divisions/SBO/PHCRED. An evening series for PHC practitioners who can never get to events such as hospital grand rounds or health seminars because they are too busy/distant or both.
- Trial and evaluation of two systems. Structured as interviews with journalist followed by discussion and questions.
- Nov 6th Teleconference – *GAA and anaemia*
- Nov 26th Talkback radio (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, Top End Aboriginal Broadcasting Association, covering Central Australia, NT Top End, Cape York and Northern WA) – *Mis-communication and other issues in providing health services for Aboriginal people*

Facilitating collaborations with providers and research transfer

- Representation on Collaborative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (CRCATH) Development and Transfer Committee;
- Representation on CRCATH Development Working Group;
- Facilitated submission for academic GP registrar position at NTGPE;
- ABCD project (Audit and Best practice in Chronic Disease management, in remote health centres in the Top End): member of advisory group and facilitating collaboration with TEDGP;
- Member technical advisory group and facilitating participation by TEDGP in DRUID project (Diabetes and related disorders in urban Indigenous people in Darwin – prevalence and intervention study).

Teaching

PHC RED staff currently perform the following teaching duties:

- Co-lecturer Menzies Master of Public Health. *Epidemiology and control of communicable diseases*
- Topic Coordinator CRH Master of Remote Health Practice *Public health theory and methods*
- Topic Coordinator CRH Master of Remote Health Practice *Primary health care and community development*
- Teaching in areas of Indigenous health, cultural safety and Indigenous management for CRH Master of Remote Health Practice
- Supervision of three Masters students and one PhD candidate.