Research projects now available in the School of Population & Global Health (SPGH)

As a world-class research university, UWA offers research opportunities of the highest calibre. You will work closely with an expert supervisor on a specific research topic to produce a manuscript of significant academic scholarship.

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As an honours or 24 point dissertation research student with us, you will develop, under supervision, a paper for publication in a scientific journal - this is the first step in your research career!

How does research training at SPGH work?

You will work with an academic researcher to investigate an important and topical area of public health. Responsible, conscientious students, who meet the eligibility criteria, with well-developed interpersonal and written communication skills are sought for these projects.

Although some projects use linked data and require a high degree of analytical aptitude, there are many other projects that require different skills. Given the scope of projects available, a great project can be found to match your own interests and skills.

Want to know more?

If you’re interested in an Honours or a MPH 24 point dissertation
Contact our Honours & Dissertation Coordinator by email - karen.martin@uwa.edu.au
Research Areas & Centres at SPGH

Our research strengths include a strong evidence-based approach to services and health program evaluation. We have a proven record of achievement in preventative, clinical and occupational epidemiology and have been instrumental in setting world standards in population health databases through record linkage.

**Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology**
Aims to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease through research into trends and determinants of acute events, treatment, management and outcomes.

**Centre for Health Services Research**
Is a leader in its field through its work with linked medical and health data and the evaluation of health services, patient safety, surgical care and pharmaco-epidemiology.

**Child & Adolescent Development and Health**
Early influences on child and adolescent health significantly impact on health and development outcomes throughout life. Our research draws on the skills and experience of our teams’ multi-disciplinary backgrounds to engage with stakeholders and deliver high quality research with real world policy and practice implications.

**Global Environment and Health**
Investigates the relationships between ecosystems, environmental and occupational agents and health, at local and global scales, in order to determine ways that we can improve global human health. We research disease outcomes resulting from occupational and environmental exposures, such as mining hazards, asbestos, air pollution, heat, noise and water. We are also investigating the positive impact of green and blue spaces on health, and a developing area of interest is health promotion in relation to global and environmental health.

**Health and Labour Economics**
To improve resource allocation and decision making in the health sector through systematic evaluation and assessment, with an economic perspective.

**The Raine Study** - [https://www.rainestudy.org.au/](https://www.rainestudy.org.au/)
The Western Australian Pregnancy Cohort (Raine) Study is one of the world’s largest successful prospective cohorts of pregnancy, childhood, adolescence and now early adulthood. These families have provided environmental, developmental and health information over the past 30 years offering a unique and valuable resource covering a wide range of health areas.
Neuropsychiatric Epidemiology Research Unit (NERU)
Focuses on psychiatric epidemiology, taking a cross-disciplinary approach to the study of psychotic disorders including schizophrenia and other severe mental illness.

Vulnerable Groups
Aims to improve health and social outcomes and reduce the disease burden among some of society's most at-risk populations.

Western Australian Centre for Rural Health -http://www.wacrh.uwa.edu.au/
The Western Australian Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) aims to improve rural, remote and Aboriginal health through research, education, student support and community service activities. WACRH operates with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and support from the University of Western Australia but also works closely with numerous health organisations, on a local and national level.

Contact information for SPGH Coordinating Supervisors (listed under each project title):

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Projects under the Busselton Health Study

**Busselton Health Study Projects**
*Dr Kevin Murray*

The Busselton Health study is a series of internationally recognised cross-sectional and longitudinal population health studies carried out on the population of Busselton, Western Australia which aims to provide a better understanding and management of disease and illness.

Research activities undertaken as part of the Busselton Health Studies are diverse and encompass a wide range of health conditions and measures.

Projects under Cardiovascular Research Epidemiology

**State-of-the-Art Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Research**
*A/Prof Tom Briffa*

**Background:** CVD is costly and prevalent worldwide. Monitoring and reporting trends is a national priority health area and is a driver of health policy aimed at improving healthcare delivery and outcomes.

**Outline:** Various projects in specific areas are offered. These will involve examining the trends and models of care in CVD prevention, treatment and management and may consider clinical epidemiology, health outcomes, pharmacotherapy, prevention, cost-effectiveness and community engagement.

A range of topic areas include:
- Atherothrombotic disease across the vascular territories
- Busselton Health Study
- Monitoring coronary artery disease
- Management of CVD in the Indigenous population
- Diabetes and CVD
- Peripheral arterial disease
- Risk Factor Prevalence Study
- Coronary artery revascularisation
- Chronic kidney disease and CVD

**Methodology:** The cardiovascular research group uses clinical data collected from cohorts in Western Australia together with person linked administrative data from hospitals and registers to examine influences, trends and epidemiology of CVD health outcomes.

**Project Length:**
Honours/24 point MPH
Developing reliable algorithms for monitoring coronary heart disease in Australia

Dr Lee Nedkoff

Background: Coronary heart disease in Australia is very common and kills more people than any other disease. A number of factors including changing diagnostic criteria means that current methods for monitoring and measuring the trends in coronary heart disease are becoming out of date.

There are a number of potential projects available under this topic encompassing validation of heart attack coding in hospital data, developing algorithms to reliably monitor coronary heart disease over time, and translation of findings into national data through our collaboration with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Outline: Develop new models for national monitoring of heart attack and coronary heart disease in Australia.

Methodology: The project will use a linked database from multiple sources.

Project Length: 24 point MPH

Processing evaluation of the Healing Right Way trial

Dr Judith Katzenellenbogen

Background: This project is part of a process evaluation of the NH&MRC-funded randomised control trial (RCT) entitled ‘Enhancing rehabilitation for Aboriginal Australians after brain injury: Healing Right Way’ (HRW). This project is focused on providing culturally secure rehabilitation services for Aboriginal patients with acquired brain injury. HRW uses a randomised cluster step-wedge design of a complex intervention (consisting of culturally secure training (CST), and the introduction of an Aboriginal Brain Injury Coordinator (ABIC) role) in four metropolitan and four regional Western Australian hospitals.

We have designed and implemented a mixed methods process evaluation which is being undertaken both prospectively and retrospectively, enhancing the conduct and interpretation of the parent study.

Outline: To determine processes, barriers and facilitators that have influenced the implementation of the trial and ongoing partnerships with stakeholders during the first two years of the RHW.

Methodology: Qualitative study using data collected prospectively as part of the process evaluation.

Data collected includes minutes of meetings, interviews with project staff, surveys with participants of cultural security training in hospitals, review of communication with project partners.

Project Specific Requirements: Knowledge of evaluation frameworks, qualitative methods.

Project Length: 24 point MPH
The epidemiology and experience of rheumatic heart disease in Australia
Dr Judith Katzenellengbogen

Background: Acute rheumatic fever (ARF) and rheumatic heart disease (RHD) persist as significant sources of health burden among Indigenous Australians. End RHD in Australia: Study of Epidemiology (ERASE) Project aims determine the baseline burden of ARF/RHD in Australia and to develop further insights into the progression of the disease as a basis for improved monitoring. The project also investigates factors affecting the management of these conditions in primary care.

Outline: A number of potential projects associated with the ERASE project are available for students, including epidemiological analyses and analyses related to health systems. Translation of findings will occur through the End RHD Coalition as well as dissemination of results to communities.

Methodology: The project use a multi-jurisdictional linked database from multiple sources as well as qualitative data on primary care systems to support RHD management. An appropriate methodology will be developed depending on the research question, available data and the level of skill/interest of the student.

Examples:
- Missed opportunities in the diagnosis of ARF in hospital (review administrative records of ARF/RHD diagnosed patients to identify whether ARF had not been diagnosed in previous emergency department and hospital encounters)

- Descriptive study of PHC data of patients diagnosed with ARF and RHD in NT.
- Development and evaluation of resources for dissemination of findings to communities.

Project Specific Requirements:
- For linked data analysis, competence in SAS; R or SPSS or preparedness to learn quickly.
- For Health systems research, preparedness to learn qualitative methods.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

Use of statins in coronary heart disease patients
Dr Frank Sanfilippo

Background: Statins are frequently used drugs in coronary heart disease (CHD) patients to prevent heart attacks.

Outline: This project will investigate a number of important areas of statin utilisation including identifying age- and sex-specific risk thresholds for use of statins and determining levels of risk in patients who cease statins. There are also opportunities to investigate a broader range of secondary prevention medications in this patient group.

Methodology: The project will use linked administrative datasets including hospital morbidity/mortality and PBS data.

Project Length: 24 point MPH
Projects with the Centre for Health Services Research

Exploring the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing of Reception Prisoners
Prof David Preen; Mr Craig Cumming

Background: People who go to prison experience social disadvantage, mental illness and trauma at far higher rates that the general community. To investigate mental illness and emotional wellbeing in this group further 719 adults were recruited and interviewed within one week of entering prison. They were asked a range of questions on topics that included mental health, life stressors, drug and alcohol use and unmet needs.

Outline: The project aims to describe and quantify the nature and extent of mental disorders including alcohol and substance misuse disorders amongst WA reception prisoners, as well as their met and unmet needs. A main project aim is to provide high quality data that will assist in the planning and provision of mental health services to mentally disordered offenders both within the criminal justice system and in the community.

Methodology: Cross-sectional survey data collected within one week of reception into prison.

Project Specific Requirements:
Reasonable knowledge of biostatistics

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

Projects under Child and Adolescent Health

Physical activity interventions targeting dog owners
Dr Hayley Christian

Background: Almost half of all Australian households owns a dog. Dog walking has been shown to be a potentially viable strategy for increasing the number of people (adults and children) who meet national physical activity recommendations.

Outline: This project will involve intervention research to examine the potential of dog walking to contribute to owners physical activity levels. The project is likely to have significant implications for physical activity promotion and will involve working closely with key stakeholders, nationally and internationally.

Methodology: Qualitative; Quantitative community based survey; Intervention research.

Project Specific Requirements:
• Ability to conduct quantitative/qualitative research.
• Excellent writing skills.
• Statistical analysis (SPSS and/or SAS).
• Ability to work as part of a team.
• Good interpersonal communication skills.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Health benefits of natural outdoor environments
Dr Hayley Christian

Background: Natural outdoor environments including blue spaces help reduce stress, promote physical activity and social connections, improve overall health and well-being, improve connection to place and reduce urban heat effects. The health benefits associated with exposure to blue space (oceans, rivers, lakes etc) likely follow similar pathways and mechanisms to those identified for green space.

Outline: This research will determine the health benefits of blue space. It will involve stakeholder interviews and/or intercept surveys to investigate how Western Australians access and use different types of blue spaces in their community and what the health and wellbeing benefits are (and potential negative effects)?

Methodology: Literature review; Qualitative; Quantitative survey.

Project Specific Requirements:
• Ability to conduct quantitative/qualitative research.
• Excellent writing skills.
• Statistical analysis (SPSS and/or SAS).
• Ability to work as part of a team.
• Good interpersonal communication skills.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

Physical activity policy for early childhood education and care-parent engagement
Dr Hayley Christian

Background: Daily physical activity is critical during the early years of life for facilitating children’s health and development. Only one in three Australian children aged 2 to 5 achieve the recommended level of three hours of daily physical activity. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are a key setting to intervene to increase physical activity.

Outline: The student will be part of a multi-jurisdictional NHMRC funded project and have the opportunity to work with eight partner agencies. The project will provide in-depth knowledge about parents’ barriers and enablers for improving parent-child, and parent-educator engagement around children’s physical activity.

This will involve exploring, identifying and better understanding the factors that strengthen the educator-parent engagement process to boost children’s physical activity in the home and ECEC environment.

Methodology: Literature review; Qualitative.

Project Specific Requirements:
• Ability to conduct quantitative/qualitative research.
• Excellent writing skills.
• Ability to work as part of a team.
• Good interpersonal communication skills.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Testing the capacity of an online tool to promote safe sun behaviours in teenagers

Dr Hayley Christian; Shelley Gorman (Telethon Kids Insitute - shelley.gorman@telethonkids.org.au)

Background: In this project, we will test a recently developed prototype app, designed to help young teenagers better balance their sun health needs. Sun protection is important as excessive exposure (causing sunburn) in childhood and adolescence is a major risk factor for melanoma. Indeed, young people in this age group are at increased risk of sunburn. However, some safe sun exposure is necessary for health benefits, such as vitamin D. We will test the capacity of the designed app to actively engage young people in an entertaining and age-appropriate way to deliver rigorously vetted health information around optimal sun protection and exposure.

Project Aim: To pilot test a prototype app that aims to improve the knowledge and behaviours that young adolescents have around safe sun protection and exposure practices for vitamin D.

Methodology: In school- and community-based pilot studies, we will test end-user responses (‘process’: engagement, functionality, aesthetics and information quality) to using the app, as well as its capacity to improve their safe sun knowledge and behaviours.

Specific methodological approaches:
1. Assess responses to questionnaires on ‘process’ outcomes related to using the developed app;
2. Assess the knowledge gain related to sun health outcomes in response to using the app, comparing with baseline answers to a standardised multiple-choice test; and
3. Measure skin type, sun sensitivity and normal sun exposure patterns of participants and sun exposure behaviours before and after using the app (questionnaires, polysulfone badges).

Project Specific Requirements:
The student will help the research team to: supervise young adolescents complete questionnaires; measure sun exposure behaviours; collate and record all data and feedback; perform statistical and other data analysis, using analyses such as student’s t tests, one-way ANOVA and simple correlations on programs like Prism GraphPad and Microsoft Excel; and, prepare a manuscript that describes and critically discusses study findings in a publication.

Essential skills for this project include excellent written and oral communication, very good organisation, motivation and dedication. If accepted for the project, the student will need to complete police and working with children checks, which will be funded by the study.

Project Length: 24 point MPH
Projects under Global Health

In addition to the projects listed there may also be opportunities to get involved with research projects in northern Thailand. One potential topic is a SinLek rice project which is a placebo-controlled cross-over trial of a heritage black rice vs a white rice in a primary school in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Any students interested in undertaking a project in this area please contact Dr Justin Denny.

Scholarship - The Governor Sanderson Scholarship in Population Health (Dr Haruhisa Handa Leadership Scholarship Program) [F15096] encourages and enables graduates from a variety of professional backgrounds to undertake a Master of Public Health degree course with a field component (related to their dissertation) in East Asia.

Chronic kidney disease in Sri Lanka

Prof Jane Heyworth in collaboration with Dr Tanuja Ariyananda (Lanka Rain Water Harvesting Forum) and Dr Gayan Bowatte (University of Peradeniya)

Background: There are approximately 70,000 estimated CKD/CKDu patients in 6 of the 9 provinces in Sri Lanka. Despite many studies conducted in this area, the risk factors for this disease are still uncertain (thus “u” in CKDu). According to studies carried out to date, CKDu maybe a result of drinking water contamination.

In the Northern province, a preliminary survey conducted of CKDu patients in households with rain water harvesting system installed in the northern province indicated that the patients “feel healthier” after drinking rain water and that their condition remain stable. However, further research is needed to confirm these finding and to identify differences in the constituents of harvested rainwater and other drinking water.

The Lanka Rain Water Harvesting Forum (LRWHF) has installed over 500 RWH systems in households Northern & Uva province.

Outline:
- Is drinking harvest rainwater associated with a reduced risk of CKD?
- Are the symptoms of CKDu improved among patients drinking rain water?
- What factors in drinking water sources might lead to differences in risk?
- What are other potential risk factors for CKDu?

Methodology: Establish/undertake a case control study of CKD in Sir Lanka.
1. Identify methods for selecting cases and control.
2. Develop survey instruments for assessing exposure to water and other risk factors.
3. Monitor water quality of different water sources ( RW, RO, well)

Project Specific Requirements: Good performance in epidemiology and biostatistics units.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Developing a mHealth intervention to promote antenatal health and immunisation

Dr Julie Saunders; Prof Jane Heyworth

Background: mHealth initiatives are becoming more prominent in low and middle income countries as a means of engaging residents in public health activities. The Kaski District Public Health Office (DPHO), located in Pokhara, Nepal wish to develop more effective ways of delivering health reminders around antenatal care and vaccinations to persons living in rural Nepal. Mobile phones are commonly used in Nepal, thus mHealth initiatives may be an efficient method of reaching families living in rural areas. DPHO and Kanchan Nepal, our partner organization, will provide advice on the local context, including antenatal care and immunisation schedules.

Outline: To develop a culturally relevant mHealth intervention to convey specific health messages to rural Nepalese women.

The objectives are to:

- Review the literature on the use of mHealth interventions for health messaging;
- Determine the messages that might be most effectively conveyed by this approach;
- Develop culturally appropriate and engaging messages with input from the local community;
- Pilot and evaluate the health messages for the app among the local community.

Methodology: The student will work with DPHO and Kanchan Nepal to determine the schedule for delivery of health messages and seek their input into the appropriate style of message. The project may include interviews with staff of the DPHO and community health posts as well as focus groups with rural community members. The student will prepare a project plan for the mHealth intervention that includes recruitment, access, messages and ongoing or longer-term evaluation.

Project Specific Requirements:
UG: Completed PUBH2216 Communication and Project Planning in Health or PUBH3302 Health Promotion or their equivalent with a Distinction or High Distinction grade.

PG: Completed PUBH5754 Health Promotion or PUBH5805 Qualitative research methods in health, or their equivalent with a Distinction or High Distinction grade.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Migration widows: The impact of the international migration of workers on those who stay behind
Dr Julie Saunders; Prof Jane Heyworth

Background: Nepal has a long history of labour migration with an estimated 3.5 million Nepalese working abroad (Simkhada et al 2017). Labour migrants from Nepal are predominantly males; 15% of all economically active males (aged 15 years and older) compared with 2% of Nepali females (Maharajan, Bauer, Kner, 2012). The majority of these males are from agricultural backgrounds.

Despite research into the health risks for those who migrate for work, there is little research on the health and wellbeing impacts for those who stay behind. However, an understanding the contextualised impact on women and families left behind is important.

Outline: To estimate the extent of social, health and gender impacts of the international migration of male workers from Nepal on the women and families left behind. Specific objectives are to:

- Develop a questionnaire based upon the results of recent qualitative research.
- Pilot the questionnaire with 100 women in the Central (Kathmandu) and Western (Pokhara) Development Regions in Nepal.
- Undertake a reliability study with a sub-sample of this population.
- Estimate and compare the prevalence of key impacts among those left behind with those whose partner has not migrated for work.

Methodology: We have undertaken qualitative research with women whose partners have migrated for work and the current study will build upon those findings to develop a questionnaire. A quantitative survey of 100 women who have a child aged under 5 will be undertaken. The sample will be stratified on the basis of whether a partner has migrated for work in the past 12 months. A sub-sample of 50 women will participate in a test-retest reliability study completing the questionnaire on two separate occasions, two to three weeks apart. The student will be supported by a local research assistant to recruit the sample and administer the questionnaire. The student will analyse and interpret the data and write up these findings. The student will prepare a report the findings to be provided to the NGOs, prepare a video of the key messages of this research and a conference abstract.

Project Specific Requirements:
UG: Completed PUBH3305 Health Research Design and Methods and PUBH2203 Foundations of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, or their equivalent with a Distinction or High Distinction grade.
PG: PUBH4403 Epidemiology and PUBH4401 Biostatistics1, or their equivalent with a Distinction or High Distinction grade.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Health risk assessment of artisanal brick kilns in low-and middle-income countries
Prof Jane Heyworth

Background: The artisanal brick kiln industry is an important source of air pollution in low to middle income countries. In addition brick workers are among the most marginalized of unskilled workers and the industry is in need of urgent environmental, occupational health and safety interventions. There are over 300,000 highly polluting brick kilns throughout low- and middle-income countries, emitting over 890 million tonnes of CO2 each year as well as high levels of PM 2.5, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and black carbon. These emissions are responsible for serious impacts on human health in workers and residents of surrounding areas.

This project will involve describing the global artisanal brick industry and the associated risks to human health, and estimating the potential reduction in health risks with the implementation of ‘improved’ kilns that have been developed to reduce adverse environmental emissions. A case study of post-earthquake brick kiln reconstruction in Kathmandu valley will be undertaken.

Outline:
1. Describe the artisanal brick kiln industry from a global perspective;
2a. Identify the hazards associated with artisanal brick kilns and the associated health and environmental outcomes for particular levels of exposure;
2b. Identify the exposed population and the potential for prevention;
3. Investigate the changes in hazards and exposure levels with the implementation of ‘improved’ kiln technologies; and
4. Investigate the implementation of ‘improved’ kiln technologies in the Kathmandu Valley since the Nepal earthquake of April 25, 2015.

Methodology:
The project will require you to:
• develop, prepare and submit a research proposal;
• review the literature on artisanal brick kilns in low-middle income countries;
• conduct a qualitative health risk assessments based on analysis of the available literature;
• obtain and compile available information on brick kiln reconstruction in the Kathmandu valley since April 2015;
• prepare manuscripts for publication.

Project Specific Requirements:
Well-developed literature searching and reviewing skills.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Smoke from domestic wood heaters in the Perth region

Prof Jane Heyworth

Background: Research has linked air pollution to lung and heart disease as well as many other health problems. However, air pollution is inherently complex and more investigation is needed to better understand the role that poor air quality plays on health and disease. Sources of air pollution in the Perth metropolitan area are varied and emissions may arise from both point and fugitive sources, predominantly from burning of fossil fuels, such as motor vehicle emissions, power generation, other industrial combustions, residential wood fires and bush fires. Smoke emissions from domestic wood fires have been previously identified as one of the principal sources of particulate matter (PM) in the Perth region.

Outline: This project will examine data pertaining to emissions from wood heaters within the Perth region. The main aim will be to test the reliability of outputs from models that are used to measure exposure to ambient air pollution as a result of wood heaters.

Approaches to enable testing model outputs include:
- reviewing data inputs used to develop estimates of ambient air pollution as a result of wood heaters;
- collecting additional data where there are gaps in the knowledge around how wood heaters are used as a source of heating within Perth;
- comparing modelled estimates of air pollutants directly against observed data from monitoring stations and/or independent data sources, i.e. validation data;
- assessing the sensitivity of modelled outputs to modifying the assumptions on data inputs to models, e.g. can we assume the level of wood heater usage is homogenous across Perth.

Methodology:
The project will require you to:
- become familiar with the Health in Men and Air Quality Study (HIMAQs) and liaise with HIMAQs investigators;
- review emissions inventory data for the Perth region on the uses of wood as a primary or secondary source of residential heating;
- collect additional data and/or develop a better method to estimate of wood heater usage in the Perth Region. This may involve contacting organisations that have relevant information, e.g. the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This part of the project may lead to designing and implementing a small survey. There may also be scope to test the use of personal monitors to measure individual exposure levels. Personal monitors are an emerging technology and have potential to add a lot of value to this research area.
- analyse data, compile results, and assist with preparing manuscripts for publication.

Project Specific Requirements:
Good statistical knowledge and skills.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
What is the impact of vegetation on air quality?
Prof Jane Heyworth; Ania Stasinska; Dr Natasha Pauli (School of Agriculture and Environment UWA)

Background: There is emerging evidence that green space is associated with health and wellbeing. Some of the mechanisms by which this might occur include: increased physical activity, reduced stress, improving air quality and reducing urban heat effects. Vegetation may be both beneficial and harmful for air quality as trees can filter out particulates in air, but some may also produce volatile organic compounds or pollens. In order to plan greening in urban areas to improve health more in-depth knowledge is needed regarding the specific settings and greening characteristics that will maximize benefits.

Outline: To understand the relationship between green space and air pollution in Australian urban environments.

Methodology: Literature review.

Project Specific Requirements: Good analytical and writing skills

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

Health and well-being impacts of interactions with green space: Does perception of biodiversity influence outcomes?
Prof Jane Heyworth; Dr Natasha Pauli (School of Agriculture & Environment UWA)

Background: Perth is within a global biodiversity hotspot, with a high proportion of endemic species coupled with a dramatic reduction in total area covered in native vegetation. There exists a broad body of literature detailing the links between green space and impacts on physical and mental health and wellbeing. However, there is a relative lack of information on how the biodiversity of green spaces is a) perceived by the general public and b) is linked with health and well-being.

Emerging research has shown some potential correlations between access to areas with higher biodiversity, respiratory health and allergic conditions. However, the degree to which people’s perception of biodiversity influences their use and opinion of green spaces with varying levels of native biodiversity has been little explored in the Australian context.

This research project will use a mixed methods approach to explore perceptions of a cross-section of the community to a spectrum of green spaces that could be used for recreation, highlighting the likely impacts on wellbeing and physical activity.

Outline: To understand variation in the perception of biodiversity; and to assess whether people’s views on biodiversity are linked with differential impacts on health and well-being.

Methodology: Literature review, questionnaires, focus groups, qualitative and/or quantitative data analysis.
The aim of this study is to investigate noise levels in WA mines between 1996 and 2016 to determine: 1) the main contributing factors to elevated level and 2) if there have been reductions in noise over that 20 year period.

Methodology: Noise data has been collected by DMIRS since 1996. We will initially model the determinants of exceedance of the full-shift workplace noise exposure limit ($\text{LAeq,8h} \geq 85 \text{ dBA}$) using logistic regression analyses. Models will include the type of mine, place of collection (eg surface or underground), and activities conducted during collection. Trends over time will then be calculated.

Project Specific Requirements: Statistical competency (ideally biostats II)

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
and silica, two of the most common mining exposures. The cohort has been linked with administrative health records allowing assessment of various health outcomes. The overall aim of this study is to investigate the short- and long-term health effects of modern-day mining exposures, specifically silica and diesel.

Outline: Are current mining emission regulations sufficient to preserve miners’ health?

This project offers potential students the opportunity to choose from a variety of health outcomes (e.g. cancer, pulmonary, cardiovascular, renal, etc.). The scope of a project will be tailored to suit the candidate’s goals.

Candidates will gain hands-on experience of applying core epidemiological concepts and understand how epidemiological evidence is generated and used to inform policy and planning of occupational health standards and guidelines.

Methodology: Students will undertake a comprehensive literature review on their chosen research question and develop a research proposal, followed by quantitative analyses of large linked datasets including the cohort’s occupational and health histories. Analyses will include generation of disease frequencies, general population comparisons, time trends, estimation of risks and dose-response relationships, etc. Scientific manuscripts for peer-reviewed publication will be prepared.

Project Specific Requirements: Good literature reviewing skills and statistical knowledge, e.g. Biostatistics II essential.

Project Length: 24 point MPH
Building a robust Nursing workforce

Dr Ian Li; Mr Rory Watts

Background: The nursing workforce is an important component of the health workforce. However, research into the nursing workforce has been hampered by a lack of rich, representative data. At the same time, prior literature indicates that Australia is likely to face a lack of nurses to meet demands for the future. More recently, media reports suggest that newly qualified nurses are unable to secure appropriate employment within Australia, and have had to pursue nursing careers overseas. Shortages in the nursing workforce and the inability to secure appropriate employment, has come to be known as the ‘nursing workforce paradox’.

It is thus imperative that more research is conducted into the education-work transition of nurses, from universities into the workplace.

Prior research looking at underemployment of nursing graduates over 2008-2015 has tackled some of these issues, however, this research has only focussed on short-term outcomes post-university completion. The proposed program of study will examine longer term outcomes.

Outline: The aim of the study is to examine labour market outcomes for nursing graduates from Australian universities. A time-series of data is available, and hence trends in the following research objectives can also be explored.

These outcomes include unemployment, earnings, underemployment, and contract type.

1. To examine the unemployment and underemployment rate of nursing graduates, and the transition from unemployment to employment in the longer term
2. To examine employment contract and permanency for nursing graduates
3. To examine earnings of nursing graduates in the short and long term, as well as the distribution of earnings.
4. To examine whether employment outcomes differ for nursing graduates with an undergraduate qualification, as opposed to a Masters entry-to-practice type qualification

Methodology: The analyses for this study will be primarily quantitative in nature. The analyses will utilise a national survey of Australia graduates available from 2010-2017, which also includes longitudinal follow-up of the survey respondents.

Project Specific Requirements: Essential

• Excellent report writing skills and proficiency in English.
• Biostatistics I or equivalent.

Desirable

• Biostatistics II or equivalent.
• Competent in SPSS, Stata or equivalent.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
How do unhealthy behaviours influence employment outcomes

Dr Ian Li

Background: Unhealthy behaviours and lifestyle factors are areas of focus for health policy. Thus far, most studies looking at these factors have focussed on their impacts on diseases and health outcomes. It has also been hypothesised that unhealthy lifestyles could also have further reaching impacts on employment outcomes. Consideration of the costs of adverse employment consequences would lend further policy weight in tackling unhealthy behaviours and lifestyles.

Outline: The aim of this study will be to look at several unhealthy behaviours derived from the literature and examine the causal impact of these behaviours with several measure of employment outcomes.

Methodology: This study will use data from a nationally representative, longitudinal dataset called the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) study. The HILDA study commenced in 2001 and has an annual follow up, with the 17th wave of data being made available recently. Longitudinal analytical regression techniques will be used for this study.

Project Specific Requirements:

Essential
- Excellent report writing skills and proficiency in English.
- Biostatistics I or equivalent

Desirable
- Biostatistics II or equivalent.
- Competent in SPSS, Stata or equivalent.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

The undergraduate public health student: Where do they come from? Where will they go?

Dr Ian Li; Mr Rory Watts

Background: Historically, the public health degree in Australia has been a Master of Public Health (MPH). However, much of the public health education taught is now at an undergraduate level, either through specific public health degrees, or through majors and units in other degrees (e.g. health science).

Similarly, most research about public health students is focussed on the MPH, leaving an important research gap about the outcomes that undergraduate public health students attain, and the value they add to the workforce.

Outline: The research project aims to answer the following questions about undergraduates of public health:
1. What are the employment rates in terms of underemployment, unemployment, part-time and full-time work, hours worked and contract type?
2. In which jobs and industries do public health graduates work and do they feel this is a good-fit?
3. If undergraduates go on to further study, what do they study?
4. How have these changed over time?

Methodology: The analyses for this study will be primarily quantitative in nature. The analyses will utilise a national survey of Australia graduates available from 2007-2018, which also includes longitudinal follow-up of the survey respondents. Linear and binary outcome regression techniques will be used in the analysis of the data.

Project Specific Requirements:

Essential
- Excellent report writing skills and proficiency in English.
Disentangling the influences on well-being on young lives in developing countries

Dr Ian Li and Dr Ishita Chatterjee (UWA - Business School)

Background: Well-being has been recognised as being an important measure for individuals, and encompasses various dimensions, including human function, mental health, meaning in life and life satisfaction. Well-being has also gained increasing importance in the perspectives of policy-makers, with many countries now prioritising well-being of their populations as a policy objective.

There have been substantial research efforts dedicated to the assessment of a plethora of outcomes for children in low and middle income countries, including assessments of their health status, educational attainment and cognitive ability. Much less research has been devoted to an examination of the influence of the well-being of children in developing economies. This is mainly due to a lack of quality data.

However, the holistic and multi-dimensional encapsulation of outcomes from examining well-being is of policy importance, and disentangling the factors that lead to improved well-being is of utmost importance.

This program of research will use longitudinal data on children from four low-income countries (Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam) to examine the determinants of well-being. Other secondary outcomes that can be researched include self-efficacy, aspirations and hopes for the future.

Outline:
There are several research questions that can be examined:
1. How does changes in the economic situations of household influence well-being of the children in the household? Further, does the permanency of the changes in finances (i.e. one-off shocks contrasted with permanent income changes) have an effect on well-being?
2. How do childhood circumstances (including health and educational attainment) influence well-being in young adulthood?
3. How do major life events – such as natural disasters – influence well-being?
4. Other research questions can be developed in consultation with the Dr Li and Dr Chatterjee.

Methodology:
This study will use a multi-country, longitudinal survey of children and households called the Young Lives study. The analyses for this study will be quantitative in nature. Linear and quantile regression techniques that permit utilisation for the analysis of panel data will be used in this study.

Project Specific Requirements:
Essential
• Excellent report writing skills and proficiency in English.
• Biostatistics I or equivalent.
Desirable
• Biostatistics II or equivalent.
• Competent in SPSS, Stata or equivalent.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Projects under the Neuropsychiatric Epidemiology Research Unit

Survey of High Impact Psychosis (SHIP) projects
Prof Vera Morgan

The SHIP survey took place in 2010 and is one of the largest and most comprehensive face-to-face assessments of psychotic disorders undertaken in Australia and internationally. Its main aim was to collect prevalence and profile data on a representative Australian sample of men and women with psychotic illness in contact with public mental health treatment services and NGOs.

Over 1500 data items were collected from 1825 participants covering, among others: education, housing, employment, income; psychopathology; cognition; functioning and quality of life; service utilisation; medication use; and physical health (including fasting blood tests). Students interested in undertaking epidemiological projects using the SHIP data should contact Prof Vera Morgan for details.

The Raine Study

The Raine Study is a longitudinal pregnancy birth cohort and a rich resource for the study of genetic, phenotypic, behavioural, environment and social factors that affect health and development. 2,900 pregnant women were recruited between 1989 and 1991 and their offspring formed the Raine Study Gen2 cohort. Information was collected on the pregnant mother and subsequently both parents and the child. The Gen2 cohort participants have been assessed at birth, and then at 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 14, 20, 22, 27 and 28 years of age. Today the Raine Study has data on four generations of participants – Gen0 (grandparents of the main cohort), Gen1 (their parents), Gen2 and Gen3 (their children). Information available includes questionnaire data (demographic, developmental, psychological), clinical assessment information (anthropometry, DXA, physical fitness), genetics (GWAS, EXOME, EWAS) and biological sample analysis.

Information collected over the last 30 years has been utilised to obtain an understanding of how events during pregnancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood affect health and development.

The Raine Study information can be used to examine complex causal pathways associated with health and social outcomes. Information has been prospectively collected 12 times over the life course of the Gen2 participants and provides a unique opportunity to examine longitudinal data to answer important research questions.

A range of research opportunities are available for utilising the Raine Study Dataset. Data is available on research areas including genetics; cardiometabolic; respiratory, immunology and inflammation; hormonal and reproduction; musculoskeletal; psychological; senses; bio; perinatal; built environment and social environment; and education and work. Detailed information on questionnaires and data collections are available on the Raine Study website rainestudy.org.au.

Enquiries: Aggie Bouckley - aggie.bouckley@uwa.edu.au
Projects under Vulnerable Groups

Perceptions and/or portrayal of sugar and/or oral health in the community and media
Prof Linda Slack-Smith; A/Prof Angela Durey

**Background:** Sugar has long been associated with poor oral health and obesity, yet it remains a common part of our diet. This project will conduct qualitative interviews to investigate community perceptions and/or investigation of the role of the media in promoting sugar despite evidence of its relationship to significant health problems. (Project could be qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods)

**Outline:**
Potential aims may include:
- a Lit review to determine context in which sugar/oral health is portrayed in the media using quantitative and qualitative approaches (frequency of use, terminology used, contexts, related terms in text);
- determining community perceptions about the role of sugar in diet and meanings associated with it e.g. rewards in various groups such as parents/older adults/refugees etc (perceived risks, role in health etc);
- conducting a comparative analysis of similarities and differences between groups.

**Methodology:** There are options to undertake simple content analysis of news media or to undertake qualitative interviews depending on skills and preferences of students. News media would be extracted using Factiva or similar approaches

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Stakeholder perspective on oral health for people in the community with mental health disorders
Prof Linda Slack-Smith; A/Prof Angela Durey

**Background:** We have undertaken research on dental professional and mental health worker perspectives on oral health for those with mental health disorders but it is really important to gain perspectives of broader stakeholder and consumer groups.

**Outline:** To determine stakeholder and consumer perspectives on oral health care for people in the community with mental health disorders.

**Methodology:** Qualitative.

**Project Specific Requirements:** Appropriate skills to undertake qualitative work in the community.

**Project Length:** Honours/ 24 point MPH
Social inequities and health
Prof Linda Slack-Smith

**Background:** Quotes “The measure of a civilization is how it treats its weakest members,” and “The greatness of a nation can be judged by how it treats its weakest member” have both been attributed to Gandhi. The current extraordinary time of pandemic has demonstrated the vulnerability of our society where people are marginalised. Inequities occur across the life-course from access to safe contraception to how we treat older adults.

**Outline:** There are a range of potential projects to explore inequities and health. Options for projects might include:

- perceptions of ageing in our community;
- potential for inequities in reproductive, maternal and child health resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- health inequity and gender;
- perceptions of inequity in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methodology:** Various projects possible – could be quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods

**Project Specific Requirements:** Ability to work independently. Interest in inequities. Skills required will depend on the particular project.

**Project Length:** Honours/ 24 point MPH

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Projects in oral health and inequities
Prof Linda Slack-Smith; A/Prof Angela Durey

**Background:** Good health including oral health is often unfairly distributed among different populations. Poor oral health results in significant morbidity, particularly for the marginalised and underserved populations. Especially vulnerable groups including young children and older adults. Our focus is on health inequities generally with a particular interest in viewing such inequities through the lens of oral health.

**Outline:** There are a range of potential projects investigating and addressing oral health and health inequities across the lifespan (including child or older adult) and in various groups: Aboriginal Australians, people with disability, people with mental health issues, young children, the aged, those in residential aged care refugee and migrant groups, rural Australians, homeless and those with co-morbidities.

Potential projects also include oral health in primary care and role of inter-professional collaboration.

**Methodology:** Project approaches include systematic reviews, quantitative, qualitative and policy/translation (including models of care).

**Project Specific Requirements:** Student needs appropriate background for particular projects, for example statistical skills for quantitative projects.

**Project Length:** Honours/ 24 point MPH
Projects with the Western Australian Centre for Rural Health

Disability and disaster management in the Pilbara
A/Prof Monica Moran; A/Prof Rohan Rasia

Background: The Pilbara region of Western Australia is well known for the frequency and ferocity of its weather related natural disasters. While such events pose significant risks for all residents in the times before, during and after the crises, evidence from other similar geographic locations suggests that the risks for people with physical disability are likely to be elevated.

A recent systematic review suggested that the voices and need of people with disability are rarely considered in emergency planning, disaster management and post disaster recovery activities.

Outline: This study will involve a desktop audit of governance, policy and procedure documents of public and private agencies funded to support the lives of people with physical disability in the Pilbara region of Northern Western Australia. The audit will focus on identifying the specific strategies already in place to support and empower people with physical disability to prepare for, manage and recover from the impacts of weather related natural disasters. The results will be mapped against best practice recommendations both nationally and internationally. Based on outcomes of the audit and the mapping with best practices a set of specific recommendations will be generated for the Pilbara with strategies for disaster response and recovery that are tailored to meet the needs of people with disability.

Methodology:
The project will require you to:
• review literature related to disaster management and disability;
• become familiar with the range of service providers engaged with people with disability and involved in disaster management across the Pilbara;

Family and Domestic Violence
Prof Colleen Fisher

There have been a number of research projects related to family and domestic violence that have been undertaken in the past, from exploratory research to program evaluation. We have also undertaken research with participants across the lifespan (from childhood to older age) and with mainstream and CaLD groups, including those from a refugee background.

There is opportunity to develop a research project in the area of family and domestic violence.
• develop an audit tool and conduct a detailed review of service documentation related to disaster management contingencies for people with disability;
• develop, prepare and submit a research proposal and application for ethics approval; and
• analyse and synthesise data to generate best practice guidelines and prepare manuscript for publication.

Project Specific Requirements:
• Sound literature searching skills.
• Commitment to empowering people with disability.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

The challenges of career development for health professionals in rural/remote locations
A/Prof Monica Moran; A/Prof Rohan Rasiah

Background: The health workforce in remote Western Australia is a particularly transient one and the turnover of health personnel has a significant negative impact on service provision for communities in remote areas. In addition the cost of a rapid turnover of health professionals introduces an additional financial burden on health services. Finally for health professionals themselves the upheaval of taking up and then leaving a position in a short period of time has many negative connotations.

Much has been written about the factors that impact on health professionals’ reasons to stay or leave a remote position. Concerns regarding limited opportunities for career development in remote settings are frequently identified.

Outline: This study will involve the generation, development, implementation and analysis of an on-line survey to health professionals across a large remote area of Western Australia. The survey will explore the perceived career development needs of these health professionals including needs for mandated continuous professional development, needs for education and training specifically related to remote practice contexts, and needs for advanced education to support career advancement. The results will be used to inform health services’ managers and education providers regarding specific strategies to enhance the sustainability of the remote health workforce through the development of a comprehensive postgraduate educational program.

Methodology: This project will require you to:
• review the literature related to Australian health workforce in the context of rural/remote practice areas;
• generate and deploy an online survey for health professionals;
• develop, prepare and submit a research proposal and application for ethics approval;
• analyse data, compile results, and prepare manuscripts for publication.

Project Specific Requirements:
• Sound knowledge and skills in survey development.
• Interest in rural/remote health workforce and service delivery.

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH
Experiences of families with children with disability in remote locations during a global pandemic
A/Prof Monica Moran; A/Prof Rohan Rasiah

**Background:** The City of Karratha and Town of Port Hedland in the Pilbara region of Western Australia are amongst the most remote towns in Australia. Since early 2020 the world has been in the grip of the Covid19 pandemic. Despite their remoteness people living in these towns have been exposed to the same restrictions as more urban areas including social distancing, reduction in face to face health services and shortages in essential products. Emerging evidence from across the world suggests that children with disability and their families are experiencing increased disadvantage and challenges in accessing therapeutic, educational and primary health services during this time. The project focuses on an exploration of the experiences of these families living in Karratha and Port Hedland during this time.

**Outline:** This study will involve a qualitative exploratory investigation of the lived experiences of remotely located families who have a child/ren with disability during the social restrictions associated with the Covid19 pandemic. The study will provide a detailed picture of the challenges they experienced and the support mechanisms available to them in maintaining their usual lives, including access to education, healthcare needs, social connection and community access. Results of the study will contribute to the scant body of knowledge regarding the experiences of children with disability.

**Methodology:** This qualitative study will draw on interview transcripts collected during the project. Participants will also be invited to take part in a Photo-story methodology where they will help select images to reinforce, elaborate or clarify their experiences. Analysis will be conducted using a narrative lens to develop stories that reflect the lives of participants during the social restrictions associated with the Covid19 pandemic.

**Project Specific Requirements:**
- Working with Children Check;
- Basic knowledge of qualitative research approaches;
- Literature searching skills;
- Good communication skills;
- Ability to work collaborative with families of children with disability.

**Project Length:** Honours/24 point MPH
Experiences of adults with disability in remote locations during a global pandemic.
A/Prof Monica Moran; A/Prof Rohan Rasiah

Background: The City of Karratha and Town of Port Hedland in the Pilbara region of Western Australia are amongst the most remote towns in Australia. Since early 2020 the world has been in the grip of the Covid19 pandemic. Despite its remoteness people living in these towns have been exposed to the same restrictions as more urban areas including social distancing, reduction in face to face health services and shortages in essential products. Emerging evidence from across the world suggests that people with disability are experiencing increased disadvantage and are at greater risk of neglect during this time. The project focuses on an exploration of the experiences of adults with disability living in Karratha and Port Hedland during this time. Australia are amongst the most remote towns in Australia.

Outline: This study will involve a qualitative exploratory investigation of the lived experiences of remotely located adults with disability during the social restrictions associated with the Covid19 pandemic. The study will provide a detailed picture of the challenges they experienced and the support mechanisms available to them in maintaining their usual lives, including healthcare needs, social connection and community access.

Results of the study will contribute to the scant body of knowledge regarding the experiences of people with disability. Recommendations will be co-designed with participants using an appreciative inquiry, strengths based framework.

Methodology: This qualitative study will draw on interview transcripts collected during the project. Participants will also be invited to take part in a Photo-story methodology where they will help select images to reinforce, elaborate or clarify their experiences. Analysis will be conducted using a narrative lens to develop stories that reflect the lives of participants during the social restrictions associated with the Covid19 pandemic.

Project Specific Requirements:
• Working with Children Check;
• Basic knowledge of qualitative research approaches;
• Literature searching skills;
• Good communication skills;
• Ability to work collaborative with families of children with disability

Project Length: Honours/24 point MPH

Exposure and attitudes to violence in Geraldton - analysis and comparison of local and national data
Prof Sandra Thompson

Background: A Local Community Attitudes and Exposure to Violence Survey (LCAEVs) to assess community attitudes to gender inequality and FDV, and personal exposure to violence. The survey instrument has been developed, utilising and adapting questions from the National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) to simplify the survey. The population survey is open to adults in Geraldton in October/November 2019. The dataset will be available for analysis January 2020.
Outline:
1. To undertake analysis of attitudes and exposure to violence by key demographic variables.
2. To compare reported attitudes and prevalence of exposure to violence reported in the NCAS.
3. To make recommendations on modifications to the survey to improve its useability and performance.

The survey will help map progress with local efforts to prevent family violence. The survey will enable comparison of the attitudes and norms of the local population.


The survey collects demographic factors, and has components that examine: Knowledge of violence against women; attitudes towards gender equality; attitudes towards violence against women; and bystander action.

• Undertake frequencies of items and comparisons by key demographic variables
• Assess validity of Composite Measures – that is groups of questions to measure an overall concept (such as Understanding violence against Women Scale, Gender Equality Attitudes Scale and scale themes; Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale (CASVAWS) and scale themes; Intention to Act Construct (ITAC).

Project Specific Requirements: Quantitative data skills.

Project Length: Honours/24 pt MPH

Assessing contributions of international students to rural Australia

Prof Sandra Thompson

Background: The Australian Government funds a number of rural academic centres as part of building the rural workforce (a program known as the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program - RHMT). The Western Australian Centre for Rural Health (WACRH) is part of the School of Population and Global Health and has its main office in Geraldton, plus offices in Karratha and Perth.

International graduates make a major contribution to the Australian workforce, and particularly in rural areas.

International students form a varying proportion of allied health and nursing cohorts. Support for international students is not encouraged under the RHMT.

WACRH has supported two major types of international students:
• those enrolled in health science courses with requirements for clinical supervision;
• those undertaking public health degrees or internships.
Outline:
1. To assess the contributions made by international students who have undertaken a placement with WACRH
   i) to the health workforce;
   ii) to the community and academic work of WACRH.
2. To explore the challenges and benefits experienced by people who were supported as international students by WACRH during their degree.

Methodology:
This is a mixed methods study and can be adapted for the project length required.

WACRH maintains a student database which includes questions which students complete related to their placement. It includes student status (domestic or international) as well information such as name, demographics, contact details and student’s self-reported satisfaction with their placements. There were 100 international students from 2010 to 2018 (~3% of WACRH’s students)

For 1.i) data on all students for a period (say 2010 to 2019) to be analysed to assess the nature of international placements and any differences by category of student. Analysis of the type and nature of international student placements over time will be described.

Using the contact details in the database, attempt to contact previous students to find out their current location and work role. (Tracking can also use of the AHPRA public register and other information – this has limitations). Of particular interest is how many of the alumni are working in Australia and in a rural setting.

1.ii) Assessment of contributions to the community and academic centre will be assessed through interviews with:
   • WACRH staff including academic supervisors
   • Community and health service partners (purposive sampling)

The key focus here is on what value these students brought to the staff and the local community in which they were placed, and the nature of those contributions. (Staff may also have information on alumni)

Project Specific Requirements:
This requires basic quantitative analysis skills. And interest in interviewing and qualitative methods is essential. The work can be undertaken from Perth or in Geraldton.

Project Length: The project length can be adapted to any of the unit requirements by selecting individual components of the research.