

# **Honours, Masters, PhD in PRIMARY HEALTH CARE**

**2009/2010**

**INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE  
STUDENTS**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE  
SCHOOL OF POPULATION HEALTH & CLINICAL  
PRACTICE**

**DISCIPLINE OF GENERAL PRACTICE**



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## Honours Information

### Introduction

This booklet provides information about the Honours Primary Health Care program for 2009. Honours Primary Health Care is offered by the Discipline of General Practice, and can be undertaken by students who have completed degree studies in health sciences, social sciences, nursing, psychology, or medicine.

Honours Primary Health Care is suitable for students interested in a career in health research and those who are interested in working in applied health settings in primary care or public health.

### What is Primary Health Care?

The term Primary Health Care is used to describe a philosophy of health care, as well as a strategy for organising health care and a level of care.

Primary Health Care is based on a philosophy emphasising social justice, equity, community participation, and use of socially acceptable technology on the basis of the needs of the population. It is usually the first level of contact for individuals and community with the health system. The philosophy of Primary Health Care emphasises working to improve the root causes of ill-health and working with people to enable them to make decisions about their needs and how best to address them.

Primary health care research is a growing area of research endeavour that often involves multi-disciplinary research teams focusing on a range of health and health care related issues.

### The Discipline of General Practice

The [Discipline of General Practice](#) is part of the School of Population Health and Clinical Practice in the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide. Since its establishment in 1995 it has been involved in both teaching and research. The department also manages and operates a network of multi-professional general practices that provide training opportunities for students. The Department has a broad range of skills in education and research, with more than 100 full time or part time staff members.

The Department's vision is to be the leading academic Department of General Practice in Australia that integrates the education of medical students, general practitioners and other primary health practitioners, with research and applied solutions. The department's research and education program is internationally recognised and attracts national and international postgraduate students and researchers.

The Discipline is organised into a number of [research units](#), which enable the expertise within the Discipline to be easily identifiable. The major research units are:

- [Primary Care Respiratory Unit](#)
- [Primary Care Mental Health Unit](#)
- [Cardiovascular Research](#)
- [Health in Human Diversity Unit](#)
- [Medic GP and Data Analysis Unit](#)
- [Medical Workforce Analysis Unit](#)
- [Yaitya Purrana Indigenous Health Unit](#)

Typically, students work within a research unit and are encouraged to participate in the full range of meetings and workshops organised for unit staff, as appropriate.

## **What does Honours Primary Health Care entail?**

Honours Primary Health Care is an advanced program of study and research. It is a demanding year that requires (for full time students) a commitment of five full working days per week.

The program is designed to encourage and engage interest in primary health care research and provide (i) an understanding of the philosophy and practice of Primary Health Care, (ii) training in critical thinking skills and; (iii) training in academic skills. Importantly, the Honours year is an opportunity for you to undertake hands on research that you have had a major role in planning, under the supervision of an experienced academic.

The year consists of two main components (i) the research project and (ii) a structured programme of professional development, providing training in critical thinking and research skills.

## **Components of Honours Primary Health Care**

### **Research Component**

- A written research proposal
- Oral presentations of the research proposal and research findings
- A research thesis

### **Professional Development Component**

- Primary Health Care Placement (optional)
- Keeping a field work journal
- Attendance at Honours Primary Health Care workshops
- Attendance at the fortnightly Discipline of General Practice Seminar series

## **Assessment**

In 2008 the assessment comprised four elements. These were weighted to produce the final grade as described below. The assessment scheme will be reviewed for 2009.

Written proposal (30% of final grade)

Oral presentation (required but not graded)

Field Journal (10% of final grade)

Thesis (60% of final grade)

## **Choosing a Research Project**

The research project is the major element of the Honours year. A detailed description of current research projects can be found on the Discipline of General Practice website <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/health/gp/>. You are encouraged to choose several projects that may be of interest, and to contact the relevant supervisors and Honours coordinator to arrange a meeting.

Alternatively, you may have your own ideas for research and may wish to propose a project you have devised yourself. In this case, students are encouraged to contact the Honours coordinator and discuss suitable supervisors.

It is important to consider what interests you have as well as your potential career paths after your honours year. What skills will you need? What knowledge should you have? Are there particular skills and knowledge that you wish to acquire?

## **Joint Honours**

Primary health care research is often multi-disciplinary and consistent with this students may work across research units within the discipline or across academic departments in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

### **Applications and Eligibility**

To commence Honours Primary Health Care, candidates will have completed a Bachelor's Degree. Candidates will have an excellent undergraduate record in the biological, health or social sciences, having taken subjects appropriate to their project of interest. Medical students may also undertake the Honours course at the end of their third year, for the degree of Bachelor of Medical Science (Hons).

### **Scholarships**

A small number of Honours scholarships are available to support outstanding students through the research component of the fourth year of their undergraduate program. In 2007 the scholarship will attract a stipend of \$2500.

### **Who to Contact**

If you have any questions or issues that you wish to discuss at any stage in the year, please ask the Honours Coordinator.

Students intending to do Honours in the Discipline of General Practice should complete the form on the next page and submit it to the Honours coordinator.

Honours Coordinator.

Dr Karin Ried

Level 3, Eleanor Harauld Building

The Royal Adelaide Hospital

Ph 8303 3460

Fax 8303 3511

Email: [karin.ried@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:karin.ried@adelaide.edu.au)

Web: <http://health.adelaide.edu.au/research/ugresearch/honours/#pop>

## PhD & Masters Information

The Discipline of General Practice offers a variety of postgraduate courses and can provide support in a number of research and content areas (see [Academic Staff – Research Interests](#)). For further information click on the links below:

<http://health.adelaide.edu.au/research/higher/#pop>

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/health/gp/education/postgrad/courses/>

or contact

The Adelaide Graduate Centre  
The University of Adelaide  
South Australia 5005

Telephone: + 61 8 8303 5882

Facsimile: + 61 8 8303 5725

Email: [graduate.centre@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:graduate.centre@adelaide.edu.au)

Web: [www.adelaide.edu.au/graduatecentre](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/graduatecentre)

## Primary Health Care List of Projects 2009

### ***Cardiovascular disease research in the Discipline of General practice***

Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD) is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Australia. It accounts for 40% of all deaths and the largest proportion of recurrent health expenditure (12% or \$3.9 billion in 1993-1994). Furthermore people in lower socioeconomic groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to die from IHD compared to other Australians. Primary and secondary prevention are acknowledged as appropriate strategies for reducing morbidity and mortality with guidelines focussing on the major risk factors of smoking, high blood pressure, cholesterol levels and diabetes. Management of hyperlipidaemia is of particular concern, because of the cost of statins to the PBS, \$806 million in 2002-2003.

Most Primary Health Care (PHC) interventions to improve the primary and secondary prevention of IHD have focussed on improvements in identifying patients at risk and multifactorial interventions, usually incorporating nurse led clinics - however there is debate about how successful these strategies have been. Few studies have been undertaken in the Australian setting, and although GP barriers to, for example, the use of statins have been identified, there have been few interventions to improve individual GP care. Furthermore little research has explored what incentives might encourage consumers to attend GPs for IHD risk assessment or motivate them to adhere to management (e.g. weight loss, smoking cessation and compliance with medication).

We have a multidisciplinary group exploring the management of IHD in the primary care setting – including the assessment of cardiovascular risk and health inequalities – and we would welcome enquiries from individuals interested in pursuing honours or postgraduate research in this area. We have recently obtained funding for further studies in general practice and the community and the Department has a strong track record of published research in this area. A full list of current research can be found at

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/health/gp/research/current/cardio/>

Please contact Dr Nigel Stocks ([nigel.stocks@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:nigel.stocks@adelaide.edu.au) or +61 88 303 3460) for further information.

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## ***Projects in the Primary Care Respiratory Unit***

### Unit Description:

The Primary Care Respiratory Unit (PCRU) is seeking applications from individuals wishing to undertake research in respiratory health leading to the award of Honours, Masters or PhD. The PCRU is one of the few academic units around the world specialising in primary care respiratory research and training. We currently have a number of projects available that would be suitable for Honours research. These include the respiratory health of fire fighters, anxiety & depression in asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), alexithymia –failure to recognise or report symptoms in pulmonary disease, palliative care in pulmonary disease, economic impact of pulmonary disease.

Interested students with a background in medicine, health sciences, health psychology, or public health should contact the director of the PCRU, A/Prof Alan Crockett, to discuss potential projects and supervisors. A complete list of research underway in the PCRU can be found at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/health/gp/research/current/respiratory/>

### Contact Person:

A/Prof Alan Crockett

Director

Primary Care Respiratory Unit

Department of General Practice

Email: [alan.crockett@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:alan.crockett@adelaide.edu.au)

Ph 8303 3460

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## ***Projects in the Health and Human Diversity Unit***

Opportunities exist in the Discipline of General Practice for students wishing to undertake Honours research in the area of health and human diversity. This potentially includes a wide range of topics across different aspects of physical, mental and social health, with an emphasis on exploring the intersections between socio-cultural context, gender, health and health care.

### **Project 1 : Massage and Natural Therapies in Refugees**

About 600 refugees settle in Adelaide each year. Many of these people have muscular conditions or have developed symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in their country of origin or during their journey to Australia. Many people have been tortured and many of the women have been sexually abused.

They are likely to have difficulties with relating to other people, have muscle pain, injuries, stress-induced illnesses, fear (especially of being touched) and other physical and psychological problems.

Massage is used in many centres throughout the world, including in Adelaide, in the treatment of physical and psychological disorders in refugees. It has many advantages over usual medical therapies such as:

- an informal atmosphere
- trustworthy touch
- relaxation of muscle tension
- a non-threatening place to be vulnerable
- decrease in pain
- decrease in anxiety

There are theories that massage and natural therapies can be of particular usefulness in those people with PTSD. PTSD is a very difficult illness to treat and medication and psychotherapy often have only limited success.

On a brief literature review there is no literature on the therapeutic benefits of massage in refugees though there is some anecdotal evidence that it is helpful.

An assessment of the benefits of therapeutic massage for refugees with muscle pain and PTSD symptoms would be very useful to inform treatment programmes and training.

Contact Dr Jill Benson on 8303 3460,  
email: [jill.benson@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:jill.benson@adelaide.edu.au)

### **Project 2: Cultural practices of people from CALD backgrounds in Australia that put them at an increased risk of contracting Hepatitis B**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that two billion people are infected with hepatitis B world-wide. Most infections of hepatitis B and C throughout the world are 'vertical', from mother to child, from household contacts, or from unsafe injection practices, often by health care practitioners. Over one million people die each year from cirrhosis of the liver or hepatocellular carcinoma with 92% of the world's hepatocellular carcinoma occurring in developing countries. Most people carrying these viruses will be asymptomatic and infection will only be detected with screening. Australia, like most industrialised countries, has a more 'horizontal' pattern of hepatitis B transmission where the majority of infection is sexually acquired or through sharing of injecting drug equipment.

The notification rate of hepatitis B fell in Australia to 1.5 per 100,000 in 1997 but since then has begun to rise to 2.2 per 100,000 in 2001. With this has come a rising prevalence of hepatocellular carcinoma. This increase in notifications is due to the increase in migrants and refugees from high prevalence countries. Refugees to Australia come from countries such as sub-Saharan Africa and Asia where about 10% of the population have chronic hepatitis B, the majority contracted in childhood.

Many refugees come from cultures where practices such as circumcision, tattooing, piercing or sexual practices put them at a higher risk of contracting hepatitis B than the rest of the population. Understanding the increased risk, even after settling in Australia, may alert health professionals to be more vigilant about vaccination and inform them so as to counsel people appropriately.

Contact Dr Jill Benson on 8303 3460,  
email: [jill.benson@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:jill.benson@adelaide.edu.au)

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## ***Projects in the Primary Care Mental Health Unit***

The Primary Care Mental Health Unit's vision is optimal health outcomes for individuals with mental health problems, and their families, in the primary care setting. Our mission is to undertake research and teaching in the area of primary care mental health, and to collaborate with other organizations and the health professionals involved in primary care mental health, for the benefit of patients, families, and the community

Current research programs in the PCMHU can be found by following this link:

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/health/gp/research/current/mentalhealth/>

Contact:

Dr Cate Howell

Director PCMHU

Phone: (08) 8303 3460

Email: [cate.howell@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:cate.howell@adelaide.edu.au)

Project 1: An exploratory study of an instrument to screen for bipolar depression in general practice

Bipolar disorder (BPD) is common, particularly in individuals diagnosed with depression. The recognition of BPD by General Practitioners (GPs) however is very low. It is especially difficult to recognise BPD in patients with depression. It is important to distinguish between depression and BPD because treatments of the two conditions are different. Patients with BPD are often diagnosed as suffering from depression and treated as such. This treatment may be ineffective or even lead to deterioration in the patients well being.

A screening test is required to exclude BPD in individuals being treated for depression in the general practice setting. A screening instrument, the 'Screening Measure for Mood Swing Disorder' has been developed and requires piloting prior to a larger validation study. The instrument has the potential to significantly improve the diagnosis and treatment of BPD.

Aims:

The long-term aim of this work is to produce a valid instrument for general practice that is capable of reliably detecting BPD in patients presenting or being treated for depression. Currently available screening instruments are complex and have a low sensitivity and / or specificity that make them impractical in clinical situations. The production of an effective screening instrument for general practice will be a significant step forward, and it will have wider application to other health service settings.

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## ***Integrative medicine and complementary health care research***

The Discipline of General Practice offers opportunities for students wishing to undertake Higher Degree (PhD, Masters, Honours) research in the area of integrative medicine, complementary and alternative health care.

Integrative medicine is an approach to treatment that uses conventional medical treatments alongside other practices (e.g. nutritional supplements, herbal remedies, meditation and Traditional Chinese Medicine etc.) to improve health. Past and current research projects have focussed on cardiovascular health, women's health, bone health, and gastrointestinal health. The Discipline can give academic supervision across a variety of research methods including quantitative and qualitative studies and systematic review and meta-analysis.

For current research projects see: <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/directory/karin.ried>

Postgraduate students interested in exploring research into integrative medicine and complementary health care with a background in public health, health science, nursing, medicine, social science and psychology are encouraged to contact:

Dr Karin Ried on 8303 6281 or [karin.ried@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:karin.ried@adelaide.edu.au)

Potential projects may include:

- 1) Systematic review & meta-analysis on dietary supplements and blood pressure
- 2) Systematic review on menstrual health and Traditional Chinese Medicine
- 3) Respiratory health in pregnancy and Impulse Oscillometry (IOS)

## ***Projects in the Medical Workforce Analysis Unit***

### Unit Description

The Medical Workforce Analysis Unit is a joint initiative of the Discipline of General Practice at the University of Adelaide and the Adelaide to Outback GP Training Program, a provider for vocational general practice training. The Unit was established in 2004 and its current Director is Ms Caroline Laurence. Unit staffs undertake research into workforce issues at all levels of the medical training continuum. A list of current projects can be found at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/health/gp/units/mwa/currentfuture/>

3 projects are being offered in the Medical Workforce Analysis Unit for Honours students in 2007:

### **Project 1: Characteristics and career intentions of Australian trained International medical graduates**

Supervisor:

Ms Caroline Laurence

Director, Medical Workforce Analysis Unit

Ph: (08) 8303 4951

Email: [caroline.laurence@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:caroline.laurence@adelaide.edu.au)

### **Project 2: Exploration of reasons for changing medical speciality training.**

Supervisor:

Ms Caroline Laurence

Director, Medical Workforce Analysis Unit

Ph: (08) 8303 4951

Email: [caroline.laurence@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:caroline.laurence@adelaide.edu.au)

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## ***Projects in the Yaitya Purrana Indigenous Health Unit***

### Unit Description:

*Yaitya Purrana* is Kurna for 'Our Own Health'. This is the new name for the Indigenous Health Unit of the Department of General Practice. Yaitya Purrana, Indigenous Health Unit, was established to accommodate the increasing numbers of Indigenous staff and students in the Faculty of Health Science, and provide a local presence for the Australian Indigenous Doctor's Association (AIDA). The Unit provides an important base in order to continue the development and implementation of the Indigenous health and education initiatives in the Faculty.

This Unit is important for Indigenous medical students, Indigenous academic and general staff, and the broader Indigenous community visiting and working with the Medical School. It is also intended for the non-Indigenous students and staff of the Medical School to seek academic advice and support in the field of Indigenous health.

Please review the unit website [http://health.adelaide.edu.au/school\\_phcp/ypih/](http://health.adelaide.edu.au/school_phcp/ypih/) and/or speak to Rus Nasir to discuss possible Honours projects.

### Contact

Rus Nasir

Ph 8303 6275

Email: [rus.nasir@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:rus.nasir@adelaide.edu.au)

## Expression of Interest Form

### Honours Primary Health Care 2009, Discipline of General Practice

Students intending to do Honours in the Discipline of General Practice should complete this form and **return it to the Honours Coordinator, Discipline of General Practice:**

<b>Full Name:</b>	<b>Student Number:</b>
<b>Contact Address</b>	
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Home Phone</b>	<b>Mobile Phone</b>
<b>Present enrolled degree</b>	<b>Date of first enrolment</b>

List below your choice of Honours projects in order of preference. If you are uncertain about a specific title at this stage, please record "to be advised". You may also nominate a given supervisor and record 'any' under the heading 'project'. Please supply as much information as possible.

<b>Preference</b>	<b>Project Area/ Research Area</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>Project Title</b>
<b>1</b>			
<b>2</b>			
<b>3</b>			