



NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

GET YOUR RESEARCH, NEWS, PAPERS, MEDIA RELEASES, RECRUITMENT TRIALS, EVENTS OUT THERE!!

Submissions by end September for our next issue out in October

Social Media submissions (TWITTER, FB AND LINKEDIN):

Submissions open anytime

Submissions must align with HDA:

We aim to promote, facilitate and enable multidisciplinary research to advance understanding of healthy development, ensuring the physical, psychological and social health of infants, children and adolescents.

OUR PARTNERS

PLATINUM



GOLD



University of South Australia



Flinders University

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Government of South Australia
Department for Education



Government of South Australia

Women's and Children's Health Network



Women and Kids



Wellbeing SA



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

BRONZE



UPCOMING HDA EVENTS



Join us for the **Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA)** forum on **Evidence-based support systems for vulnerable families**. This forum is held in conjunction with our partner organisation the Department of Human Services.

The forum will be held on **Thursday 3 August**, 5.30 -8.30pm at The Braggs, G60 lecture theatre, Braggs Building, Victoria Drive, Adelaide, University of Adelaide.

Socio-economic disadvantage is a significant and growing problem for vulnerable families and their children in South Australia. If society is to address this wicked problem, it is essential that systems and services approach this problem from an evidence-informed position. It is important that we understand and utilise evidence in the form of data/research, cultural wisdom, lived experience, and practitioner expertise. Our speakers will provide insights into the work underway to understand evidence-based practice for early intervention and child protection services from these different important perspectives so we can better support families seeking early support.

OUR SPEAKERS

Dr Henry Pharo, Director, Early Intervention Research Directorate (EIRD), Department of Human Services - **Creating an Evidence Base for Early Intervention Services**.

Rebecca, System Advisor, Early Intervention Research Directorate Lived Experience Network, Department of Human Services - **What helps families reach out for support early: From a lived experience perspective**.

Dr Rhiannon Pilkington, Senior Research Fellow, BetterStart Health and Development, School of Public Health, University of Adelaide - **Using the BEBOLD linked data platform to support the development and evaluation of child and family services in South Australia**.

Craig Rigney, Chief Executive Officer, KWY Aboriginal Corporation - **Engaging with Aboriginal families, my view, your view, our view**.

Sue Macdonald, Executive Director, Service Delivery and Practice, Department for Child Protection - **Sharing power with families: Family Group Conferences**.

OUR CHAIR

Professor Claire Roberts (HDA Co-Convenor), NHMRC Leadership Fellow / Professor and Matthew Flinders Fellow / Group Leader, Pregnancy Health and Beyond Laboratory (PHaB Lab), College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University.

Open to the public, everyone is welcome. Feel free to share to your colleagues and networks!

Full details and register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/671003117387>

HDA Member Publication

Netnography: A novel methodology for nursing research

Susan E. Smith, Nina Sivertsen, Lauren Lines, Anita De Bellis

The aim of this paper is to critically reflect on our team's experience of using netnography to explore vaccine-hesitant parents and pregnant women, a group who have traditionally been difficult to recruit to research studies and a methodology that is underutilized in nursing research.

Full paper can be found here <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jan.15798>

UPCOMING HDA EVENTS



Join us for the **Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA)** and **Flinders Caring Futures Institute** forum on **Inclusivity in the Early Years**.

The event will be held on **Thursday 24 August**, 5.30-8.30pm at The Braggs, G60 lecture theatre, Braggs Building, Victoria Drive, University of Adelaide, North Terrace campus.

A healthy start to life is something we all take for granted. Healthy pregnancies, healthy mums and babies, connected families, strong development, engaged learners are all valued. But it is not always the case. Despite our best efforts some children do not get the best start to life. They face challenges due to disability, social determinants of health, gaps in the network of adults around them, or lack of support for the tough job of parenting. The Flinders Caring Futures Institute brings together over 200 researchers to tackle the complex care challenges that limit health and wellbeing in our communities. The multi-layer barriers that are embedded in our health, education and social care systems are the focus of our interdisciplinary teams that utilize innovative research methods, theoretically-informed knowledge translation, health and social care economics and digital technologies to ensure all South Australians have the supports in place to thrive.

OUR SPEAKERS

Professor Joanne Arciuli, Lead: Communication, Cognition, and Wellbeing Research Group, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University on **Self-reported School Satisfaction and Disability**.

Dr Nina Sivertsen, Senior Lecturer, College of Nursing and Health Sciences, Flinders University on **Cultural continuity in health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in mainstream health**.

Dr Brittany Johnson, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Caring Futures Institute, Flinders University on **TOPCHILD: Using tailored evidence in policy and practice**.

Dr Sarah Hunter, Research Fellow, Caring Futures Institute, Flinders University on **Caring for Caregivers: Navigating the Early Years System**.

OUR CHAIR

Professor Rebecca Golley, Matthew Flinders Professor, Deputy Director of the Flinders Caring Futures Institute.

Open to the public, everyone is welcome. Feel free to share to your colleagues and networks!

For the full program and to register go here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/684362024237>

Machine Learning in Medicine Using AI to diagnose endometriosis without surgery

Two University of Adelaide research institutes – the Robinson Research Institute and the Australian Institute for Machine Learning – are working together to harness artificial intelligence to help change the way endometriosis is diagnosed. By combining ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and AI, the new technology aims to provide a cost-effective, accessible, and accurate way to diagnose the condition without surgery.

Read the full story here <https://sponsored.chronicle.com/machine-learning-in-medicine>

HDA MEMBER PROFILE - DR TY FERGUSON

ALLIANCE FOR RESEARCH IN EXERCISE, NUTRITION AND ACTIVITY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Dr Ty Ferguson is an early career researcher working in the Alliance for Research in Exercise, Nutrition, and Activity (ARENA) research centre at University of South Australia (UniSA). As a Research Associate, Ty works under the guidance of Carol Maher (HDA Co-Convenor), Professor of Population and Digital Health, broadly exploring how people use their time and its association with health.

Ty is currently involved in two NHMRC funded projects; *Activated OSHC*, a multistate RCT focused on improving children's physical activity and screen time in Outside School Hours Care services, and *Annual Rhythms in adults' lifestyle and health (ARIA)*, a 12-month longitudinal study examining temporal patterns in weight, activity, diet and wellbeing in Australian adults. Ty's main research interests lie in consumer-focused wearable activity trackers and working with big datasets. Ty enjoys the process of taking raw and complex datasets to the point where meaningful exploration can occur.

Earlier this year, Ty completed a PhD in Public Health. Ty's thesis focused on the temporal nature of sleep, sedentary behaviour, and physical activity using data collected during ARIA. During this study, 375 adults wore Fitbit activity trackers continuously for an entire year, providing a rich dataset of minute-level movement patterns. The key takeaway message of the thesis was that movement patterns typically follow an intra-annual cycle (e.g., across seasons, days of the week) with periodic fluctuations around society-wide events (e.g., Christmas-New Years, daylight savings transitions) or personal vacations.

Clinically, Ty's background is in paediatric physiotherapy. After a graduate year at the old Royal Adelaide Hospital, Ty shifted to working with children in community-based settings across Adelaide and regional South Australia. More recently, Ty worked as a clinical educator at UniSA, running paediatric clinics for final year undergraduate and graduate entry physiotherapy students.

Ty's looking forward to being a part of the Healthy Development Adelaide community, getting to know fellow members and collaborating in the future.

Email: ty.ferguson@unisa.edu.au

BECOME A HDA MEMBER TODAY ...

Join us in fostering South Australian multidisciplinary research, policy and practice at basic, clinical, social and population levels to enhance the healthy development and wellbeing of Australia's future generations.

HDA membership is open to researchers, PhD students and professionals working in areas relevant to HDA's research.

Membership benefits

- Access to travel grants (PhD students and early career researchers)
- Access to PhD scholarships
- Eligibility to apply for HDA awards
- Free HDA event attendance certificates towards your continuing professional development points
- Build relationships with people working in areas relevant to the health and development of young children and adolescents
- Contribute your knowledge and expertise to make a difference
- Support HDA into the future

1 year for \$20 or 3 years for \$50 (excluding GST).

<https://health.adelaide.edu.au/healthy-development-adelaide/get-involved>

HDA PARTNER & MEMBER NEWS ROBINSON RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Experts have been chosen to forge stronger ties between the science and technology sector and public policymakers as STEM Ambassadors for Science & Technology Australia. Their role is to help politicians gain a deeper understanding of the potential impact of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in Australia. They are 26 new STEM Ambassadors around Australia.



Dr Jodie Avery, a social researcher with a background in radiology and public health, will be the STEM Ambassador to SA Senator Marielle Smith.

Dr Avery is also part of the IMAGENDO project at the University of Adelaide with OMNI Ultrasound and Gynaecological Care and are finalists in this years 2023 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes within the ANSTO Eureka Prize for Innovative Use of Technology. 55 entries were shortlisted for 18 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes.

<https://australian.museum/get-involved/eureka-prizes/2023-eureka-prizes-finalists/>



Dr Angela Noack, Institute Manager for the Robinson Research Institute, will be STEM Ambassador to the Member for Mayo, Rebekha Sharkie.

Dr Angela Noack recently commenced as Institute Manager, Robinson Research Institute, at the University of Adelaide. Through its 45+ research teams, the Robinson Research Institute is comprehensively addressing how to give all children a healthy start in life. Angela is contributing to formulating and implementing the Institute's strategic direction, coordinating delivery of major research programs and assisting the Director to maintain excellent collaborative working relationships within the University and with external stakeholders.

Having worked in the university, state government and private sectors, and in many industries, such as education, NRM, mining and petroleum, environmental, agricultural, health and computer sciences, Angela has a breadth of experience in governance, policy advice, research, business and program management.

Angela rejoined the University of Adelaide in January 2021 as a Project and Engagement Officer in the Australian Institute for Machine Learning (AIML). She went on to manage the Centre for Augmented Reasoning (CAR) in AIML for two years, delivering investment by the Australian Government's Department of Education in people and research to develop machines that are better at interacting with humans, followed by managing the Centre for Advanced Defence Research in Autonomous and Robotic Systems (CADR-RAS) in the Defence and Security Institute before joining the Robinson.



Robinson Research Institute appoints new Deputy Director

Congratulations to **Associate Professor Michael Stark** on his appointment as Deputy Director Clinical Research at the Robinson Research Institute.

In his role, Michael will be responsible for the development and expansion of clinical research at the RRI in collaboration with the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN) and their Director of Clinical Research.

HDA PARTNER NEWS

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES / WELLBEING SA

Finding better solutions to **FOOD INSECURITY**



Let's find better solutions to food insecurity

The State Government has increased support to food relief organisations and is boosting financial counselling in areas of need, in an effort to help more South Australians through the cost-of-living crisis.

It is also taking steps to develop a lasting and systemic response to food insecurity in South Australia, with the Department of Human Services working alongside Wellbeing SA on a Secure Food Systems Project.

An innovative project

One of the many community organisations helping South Australians in need is The Food Centre at Gepps Cross, which uses a social supermarket model to provide pathways out of food insecurity.

This non-profit social supermarket provides low-cost groceries and provisions to people in need – and is considered a leader in the food security space.

The Food Centre is open to all, regardless of income, and connects people to other supports like financial counselling and no-interest loans that increase household financial sustainability.

The Food Centre has received \$266,000 (ex-GST) funding over two years through the Department of Human Services (DHS) to help it continue to develop its social supermarket model and provide low-cost food options including fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, and meal packs, in the northern Adelaide community. It will also receive \$891,000 (ex-GST) over nine years for its community hub which provides customers and the broader community with a space to socialise and access programs and services.

More support for food relief and financial counselling

In addition to this funding for The Food Centre, the 2023–24 State Budget included \$4 million over four years for food relief organisations, to help them assist South Australians in greatest need. The measure is designed to help charities keep up with demand and strengthen their food supply chain, while improving nutritional outcomes.

A further \$1 million over two years is committed for financial counselling in areas of need. The financial counselling is being provided as outreach in particularly disadvantaged communities. It builds on the way financial wellbeing services were provided in River Murray flood relief centres and will offer a range of services from financial counselling, debt renegotiation, access to no-interest loans and emergency financial assistance (cash for food or bills) locally in financially disadvantaged communities.

Phone for financial counselling and other supports

South Australians seeking financial counselling and other support can phone the Affordable SA Helpline on 1800 025 539 or visit the Affordable SA website here <https://www.affordablesa.com.au/>

Workshops to brainstorm ideas

The Secure Food Systems Project will explore new ways to secure equitable, culturally appropriate and dignified access to nutritious food, and how such models could be applied in South Australia.

DHS and Wellbeing SA are hosting workshops with the Food Relief Sector during July to support this work. It is anticipated the outcomes will be shared in summer 2023–24.

<https://dhs.sa.gov.au/news/2023/lets-find-better-solutions-to-food-insecurity>

HDA PARTNER NEWS DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

NAPLAN information for parents, carers and the community

NAPLAN results

The way NAPLAN results are reported has changed. From this year, each student's NAPLAN report will show how they're tracking against 4 levels of achievement, known as proficiency standards. These will replace the NAPLAN 10 band structure.

The proficiency standards are:

- exceeding
- strong
- developing
- needs additional support.

If a student's results are in the strong or exceeding category, it means they have demonstrated proficiency. If a student's results show they have not achieved proficiency, they will either be in the 'developing category' or the 'needs additional support' category.

The NAPLAN test has not changed, just the way the results are reported. The test continues to measure student achievement in numeracy, reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation.

It's important to remember that NAPLAN results reflect a specific point in time. They're designed to help identify areas for students, classes and schools to focus on. They provide a great opportunity for parents and carers to also speak with teachers about how students can be supported to be their best. School's will provide your child's NAPLAN report during term 3. 2023 is a new base year for reporting, meaning this year's NAPLAN results will not be able to be compared with previous years.

Further information here

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/parents-and-families/curriculum-and-learning/reports-and-assessments/naplan-information-parents-carers-and-community>

Our strategy for public education in South Australia

We aim to ensure South Australia's public education system can unlock every child's potential now and in the future.

Find out more here <https://discover.education.sa.gov.au/our-strategy/#section-Our-purpose-JkKoH2UO19>

A new plan for young South Australians



yourSAy

South Australia's Youth Action Plan 2023-2026

We are inviting you to tell us your ideas about the key issues affecting young people in South Australia.

We are developing South Australia's Youth Action Plan 2023-2026 to enhance fair and equitable access to opportunities, resources and supports for young people. We invite all young people, stakeholder organisations and anyone with an interest in young people to tell us their ideas about the key issues affecting young people in South Australia.

Consultation closes 6 August

Further info here <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/yoursay-sa-gov-au-youth-action-plan-2023-2026>

RECENT HDA EVENTS

Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA) and Australian Association for Infant Mental Health SA branch (AAIMH) forum on **Bonding Before Birth**.

Our speakers included **Valerie Aylesbury**, Perinatal Infant Mental Health Clinician, Child and Family Health, Women's and Children's Health Network on *AAIMH SA Branch - Benefits of Membership*; **Heather Warne**, Mental Health Occupational Therapist and Psychotherapist, Private Practice on *Who am I to you in your heart and mind?*; **Dr Ros Powrie**, Senior Consultant Psychiatrist, Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Liaison Team, Women's and Children's Hospital, Women's and Children's Health Network on *Clinical issues for pregnant mothers who are challenged to "hold their infant in mind"*; **Dr Anthia Rallis**, Specialist Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Private Practice / Visiting Medical Specialist, Women's and Children's Hospital, Women's and Children's Health Network on *How does pregnancy itself affect bonding with your baby*; **Amy Schwarz**, Midwife, Women's and Children's Health Network / Community Midwife, Southern Adelaide Local Health Network on *Issues that can impact our babies in our hearts and minds: working with vulnerable families*; **Angkuna Connelly**, Aboriginal Cultural Lead / Aboriginal Cultural Child and Family Support Consultant, Child and Family Health Service, Women's and Children's Health Network on *Sit down and Yarn*; **Dr Alyssa Sawyer**, Senior Lecturer and Clinical Psychologist, School of Psychology, University of Adelaide and **Vanessa Richardson**, Clinical Services Manager, Child Protection Services, Women's and Children's Health Network on *New Parents New Technology (NTNP)*. Chaired by **A/Professor Zohra Lassi** (HDA Co-Convenor), Robinson Research Institute and School of Public Health, University of Adelaide.

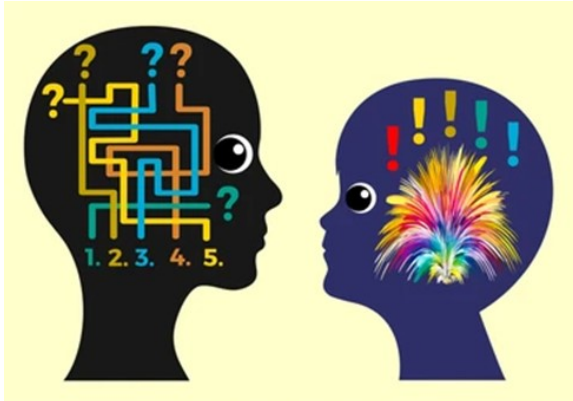


Healthy Development Adelaide (HDA) and Women's and Children's Hospital Grand Round presented by **A/Professor Ivanka Prichard** on **Body image and motherhood: Implications for practice**.

A/Professor Ivanka Prichard is the Academic Lead in Health Sciences and Deputy Director of SHAPE Research Centre and Caring Futures Institute researcher, Flinders University.

Ivanka covered what we know about body image during pregnancy and postpartum, role modelling positive body image to children, interventions to improve body image among new mums, and how health professionals can support positive body image.

PSYCHOLOGY STUDY - PARTICIPANTS NEEDED! LOGIC KIDS VS LOGIC ADULTS



Logic Kids vs Logic Adults - Characterising the cognitive processes that drive reasoning development

We are looking for children aged 10-12 years to participate. A parent is very welcome to participate too at the same time (but not compulsory)! The study aims to investigate how people reason - that is, how they draw conclusions from information.

This study will be held at Adelaide Develop Well Lab at the University of Adelaide (Hughes Building, North Terrace, Adelaide).

Participants will complete a computer-based reasoning task (approx. 30 minutes; bookings are 45 minutes). Participants will be asked to consider some reasoning problems in which they need to use the information provided to make judgments about different conclusions. A fun logic training module is included in the study.

Each participant will receive a \$20 electronic gift card (e.g., if a parent and child both participate, the total received is \$40). Child participants will also receive a Certificate of Attendance and a small gift.

Eligibility requirements: Your child and you are eligible to participate in this study if you both:

- are aged 10 - 12 years (child) or over 18 years (parent)
- speak English fluently
- with no known intellectual disabilities
- have normal or corrected-to-normal vision.

For further information, or if you would like to participate, please make a booking here:

https://adelaideunisop.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9zfcYSks9tCwcBg
or email the research team directly: reasoning.decisions.lab@gmail.com

Parents Invited!

Experiences of parenting with a person who has a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder

Are you currently sharing the parenting role of a child/ren aged 0-5yrs with someone who has a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)?

We are interested in hearing about your experiences of parenting, support needs and preferences, and wellbeing. You are invited to participate in an interview via zoom (or face-to-face or telephone), at a time suitable to you.



You are eligible to participate if:

- You have a child/ren aged 0-5 years
- You share the parenting role (e.g., as a wife, husband, de facto partner, separated but co-parenting) with someone who has a diagnosis of BPD
- You are over the age of 18
- You live in Australia
- You speak fluent English

This research has been approved by The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), HREC-2023-042.

For more information please contact:

Dr Alyssa Sawyer: alyssa.sawyer@adelaide.edu.au

Dr Melissa Oxlad: melissa.oxlad@adelaide.edu.au

Dr Dianna Bartsch: dianna.bartsch@sa.gov.au

Ms Claire Pascoe: claire.pascoe@student.adelaide.edu.au

ARE YOU A SERVICE PROVIDER? TAKE THIS SURVEY!

This project is funded by the Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation and conducted in partnership with the South Australian Refugee Health Service, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), Can:do 4 Kids and Novita SA, and in collaboration with other key migrant, refugee and disability organisations (Disability Advocacy & Complaints Service of South Australia Inc (DACSSA), National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), Multicultural Communities Council of SA, Australian Refugee Association Inc, Refugee Council of Australia.

Growing up well in Australia: Supporting mental health and wellbeing for children with disability from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Are you a service provider in any of the following sectors?

- disability
- migrant and refugee settlement
- child/youth
- mental health
- education
- community

If yes, please take our survey

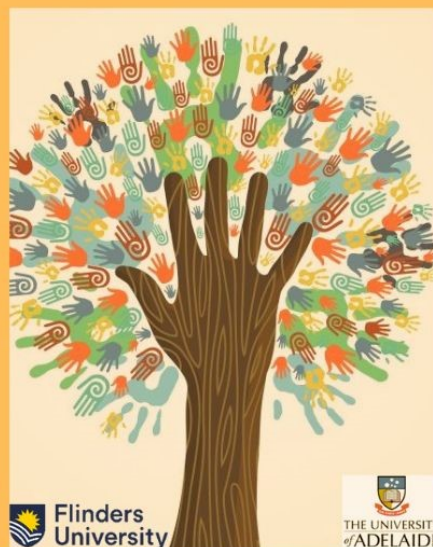
Our study is exploring the perspectives of service providers across sectors about their experiences working with young people with disability from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Even if you do not work closely with this group, we are still keen to hear your views.

The survey will take about 15 minutes and is confidential.



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HMKGW77>



Flinders University

THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE



You can call or text Moira Walsh for more info on 0484 308 061 or email moira.walsh@flinders.edu.au.

The project has been approved by Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID 4147).

Social Media Psychoeducation Study



Looking for participants to participate in an online experimental study focusing on social media psychoeducation with the opportunity to win a \$40 voucher.

You can participate in an online study to assess the outcomes of social media psychoeducational videos. Participation will involve completing online surveys and watching a brief video, as well as using Instagram for a period of time, using your personal account. You will also be sent a brief follow-up survey three days later. To thank you for your participation in both surveys you can enter a draw to win a \$40 Coles/Myer.

If you are aged 16 years and over, fluent in English, have access to an Instagram account and are interested in participating in our study, please access via the link:

https://adelaideunisop.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bJzFeaf4THRyqxM

More diet advice evidence needed for those hoping to get pregnant

Media Release - 20 July, University of Adelaide



Experts from the University of Adelaide and Monash University say more research is needed on preconception diets after a collaborative review found a lack of evidence about the best foods to help boost the chances of becoming pregnant.

University of Adelaide Senior Research Fellow Dr Jessica Grieger says while preconception health is important for the health of the baby, there is no official guidance about which dietary approaches may improve fertility.

The Monash University-led study found benefits in the Mediterranean diet, reducing trans fats and consuming less junk food and sugar-sweetened drinks. But there was insufficient evidence to support a specific diet for improving fertility.

Published in *Human Reproduction Update*, the comprehensive analysis of existing evidence aimed to determine potentially effective dietary patterns and components around pre-pregnancy diet.

The team reviewed 36 studies published from 2007-2022 that included women of reproductive age during the preconception period and evaluated preconception diet and fertility-related outcomes.

The plant-based Mediterranean diet, which includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, legumes, white meat and healthy fats from olive oil, had anti-inflammatory properties conducive to fertility and displayed the strongest and most consistent association with improved pregnancy rates.

Reducing trans fats and discretionary food intake were also consistent with broad healthy eating guidelines, had little to no risk, and offered a plausible set of possible pre-pregnancy fertility benefits. Seafood, dairy and soy demonstrated incon-

sistent findings across the few included studies.

Senior Author Associate Professor Lisa Moran, who heads the Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation's Healthy Lifestyle Research Program, said the preconception diet was supposedly a modifiable risk factor for infertility.

However, there was no official guidance for women about which dietary approaches may help. "This scoping review offers the most comprehensive overview of the relationship between type of diet and fertility and the evidence gaps that must be filled prior to adoption into clinical practice," she said.

"Most of the dietary advice regarding conception revolves around pregnancy rather than the pre-pregnancy or the pre-conception period, except for guidance on folic acid and iodine supplementation. "Despite the increasingly accepted notion that improving nutritional intake improves fertility outcomes, there remains a lack of dietary advice for women in the preconception period in Australia and worldwide.

"We require evidence-based and tailored recommendations for women in the preconception period if we hope to improve fertility outcomes for the widest range of women."

The same team has already published a paper looking at the data from this review on the types of diets in more detail. This also underlined the benefits of the Mediterranean diet. Dr Grieger, who is also a senior author on this study and leads the Nutrition, Metabolic and Reproductive health group within the Robinson Research Institute, said more research was needed.

"We know that nutrition is important for reproductive health and the success of a healthy pregnancy," Dr Grieger said. "We encourage further, high quality dietary studies to build the evidence, so that we can better support women and couples, when planning a pregnancy".

First author and Monash University PhD candidate Simon Alesi said a father's diet was also important. "While approximately 50 per cent of infertility is caused by female factor infertility, 20-30 per cent is a combination of both female and male factors," he said.

"Therefore, male fertility is also important and optimising men's health will improve the likelihood of a couple conceiving. We are currently conducting a male review that links to this female review, and preliminary findings related to the potential for anti-inflammatory diets such as the Mediterranean diet to improve fertility are similar."

Preventing weight gain: Yo-yo no-go zones for Australians

Media Release - 28 July, University of South Australia



There's no doubt that Aussies love a good celebration. We're all in when it comes to the weekend, and most of us can't go past a Christmas celebration without a little bit of overindulging. But all this comes at a cost, and it's taking a massive toll on our waistline.

Now, a world-first study from the University of South Australia exposes the real weight gains of everyday Australians, in a move to tackle overweight and obesity.

Funded by the NHMRC, and published in JAMA Open Network today, the study explored how weight changes across a 12-month period, finding that weight fluctuated throughout the year.

Specifically, the study found:

- Holiday weight gains – weight gain spiked during festive periods such as Easter (+0.29% or about 244g) and Christmas/New Year (+0.65%, or about 546g).
- Weekly weight gain cycles – we lose weight across weekdays, and gain it on weekends. Each week, weight fluctuates by 0.3% (about 252g).
- Seasonal weight gain cycles – people were significantly heavier in summer and lightest in autumn. Weight gradually increased during winter and early spring, then dipped at the end of spring (-0.27% compared to summer).

UniSA lead researcher, Professor Carol Maher, says such weight cycling is undesirable.

“Obesity is a major health concern across the globe, increasing the risk for many preventable chronic diseases and health conditions, including heart disease type 2 diabetes and even some forms of cancer.”

Yet despite this, two in every three adults are overweight or obese.

“Understanding the factors that contribute to weight gain are a vital step in developing potential interventions. In this study, we found that Australians' weight cycles significantly fluctuate over a year, more so than our counterparts in the Northern Hemisphere,” Prof Maher says.

“In Europe and North America, peoples' weight typically cycles up and down once a year – up in winter, down in summer – whereas our results revealed that Australians' weight cycle twice a year, like a yo-yo – up in summer, down in autumn, up in winter, down in spring. This sort of weight cycling – often seen with “yo-yo” dieting – is not healthy and is associated poor metabolic health, and unfortunately, long-term weight gain.”

Prof Maher says the study presents new opportunities for weight gain interventions.

“People tend to gradually gain weight slowly as we age, but knowing when these weight spikes are more likely to occur can provide us with valuable information to target temporal hot spots,” Prof Maher says.

“Interventions and education campaigns focusing on risk periods (especially Christmas and winter) could help curb unhealthy weight fluctuations and prevent unwanted weight gain.

“Maintaining a healthy weight through healthy eating, exercise and other health habits is important for life-long health and wellbeing. This research takes us one step closer to reducing the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australia.”

New Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) appointed Flinders University



Flinders University has appointed award-winning **Professor Raymond Chan** to lead its future research endeavours as its new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), following an extensive national and international search.

In a critical role to Flinders University and the growth of South Australia's homegrown research and innovation, Professor Chan will commence from 1 January 2024, following the retirement of Professor Robert Saint AM.

Full story here:

<https://news.flinders.edu.au/blog/2023/07/21/new-deputy-vice-chancellor-research-appointed>

More children than ever are struggling with developmental concerns

Media Release - 19 July, The Conversation



Early childhood has received a great deal of attention in recent weeks, as Australia has sought to understand ways to relieve the cost pressures on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The NDIS independent review has released its interim report, which noted many more young children with developmental concerns were entering the scheme than was ever anticipated when it began ten years ago.

A common explanation is the lack of services available to children with developmental concerns outside of the NDIS, making the scheme the “only lifeboat in the ocean”. This is accurate, and there is near universal recognition that families need accessible options broader than just the NDIS to seek support for their child.

However, less attention has been paid to another possibility: that there are actually more children than ever before who are struggling with developmental difficulties.

Early childhood development in Australia

Early childhood is generally considered to be the period from birth to entry into primary school – typically around five years of age in Australia.

Early childhood is a critical period of rapid growth and development in a child’s life. The skills and security that children are provided in these years lay the foundations for health and wellbeing that impact their whole life.

Recent data shows signs Australian children may be experiencing developmental concerns at a greater rate than before.

The Australian Early Development Census of more than 300,000 children entering primary school found slightly fewer children were “developmentally on track” in all areas of development – down from 55.4% in 2018 to 54.8% in

2021. At a time when Australia has never been wealthier, any backward shift in child development is a cause for concern.

It is also not just the NDIS that is receiving increased referrals for child developmental concerns. Health systems in states and territories have recently experienced unprecedented demand for child development services, leading to wait lists up to two years long.

While interpreting population-wide trends is an inherently complex task, this is clear circumstantial evidence Australian children are struggling more than ever before.

Decades of research has identified ingredients that can help promote optimal child development. These “protective” factors provide a roadmap for how we can support children and families during the early years.

Society has experienced significant change over past decades, and there is evidence these environmental changes have weakened some of the protective factors that support children during early development. Parents are under pressure, and they need help.

Weakening of protective factors in early childhood

Children learn best in the early years through a combination of play, exploration and social interaction. Critically, the conditions that enable this learning are created by the relationship between the child and the community around them, primarily parents and carers.

In supporting children’s development, parents’ most valuable commodities are time, attention and energy. But these commodities are also finite – if they are spent in one place, then they must be taken away from somewhere else.

The changes we have experienced as a society over the previous decades have put particular pressure on these commodities.

While parents are spending more time than ever with their children, they are spending no less time in paid employment.

The creation of increasingly busy households negatively impacts parents’ stress and mood, which can change the family environment and the quality of parent-child interactions.

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More children than ever are struggling with developmental concerns

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Further impacting this is the rise of digital technology, such as smart phones. The now ubiquitous use of smartphones means that when parents are engaged with their child – for example, play, mealtimes and bedtime routines – they are also often expected (or feel compelled) to be available to friends and work colleagues.

The divided attention this creates has been found to decrease the quality of, and time for, parent-child interaction, with potential flow-on effects on child language development and behaviour.

Connectedness to community is one other protective factor for families, linking families to broader support as well as a sense of belonging. This is particularly true for families experiencing social disadvantage or who have a child with developmental disabilities. However, there is increasing evidence within Australia, as with other Western nations, that social contact between people is declining, which weakens the power of this protective factor.

Rebuilding protective factors

In the short-term, we are unlikely to reverse trends in parental employment or digital technology use. There is also an argument that we shouldn't seek to do so.

Work can provide families with increased financial security, and parents with a sense of purpose and belonging outside of the demands of parenting. Digital technology has also created significant ben-

efits to the community, including social connectedness through an online environment.

However, we must also start the process of building back these protective factors for families. Parents and families are doing all they can to create safe harbours within their own home. But we must do more to help parents undertake their most important role in a more supportive ecosystem.

Part of the solution is empowering parents with the knowledge of the importance of play, exploration and social interaction in child development.

Parents want to find every way possible to support their child. Helping parents understand the key ingredients of child development, and their critical role in creating the time and space for those activities, is a vital first step towards this goal.

But we must also build systems that meet the modern demands of parenting and child development. These would include employment systems that recognise the importance of the quality of family time, not just the quantity of it. And education systems that build communities from birth, not just from age five. The restructuring of health systems to support families within communities, rather than take families out of them. Finally, economic systems that financially support parents to connect with young children, rather than financially disadvantaging those who do.

Society has changed, and unless we change too, our children will get left behind.

Young People and Gambling Survey

SA Commissioner for Children and Young People

As your Commissioner, it is my job to promote the rights and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia.

This survey is designed for young people aged 13 to 22 years old living in South Australia. It is a chance for you to share your thoughts about gambling. You don't need to have gambling knowledge or experience to participate.

When we talk about gambling, we are talking about any activity that involves spending or betting money or something of value with the hope of getting more money or a prize.

Your responses will inform my advocacy work and may be shared with a range of people, including politicians, decision makers, researchers, and the wider public. Your privacy is important to us and we won't ask for any information that could be used to identify you.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/gamblingsurvey>

Carers also need help to navigate their child's early years

Caring Futures Institute news - 23 June, Flinders University



It's not only young children who need more focused attention in their early years. Care providers also need improved support, as researchers from Flinders University's Caring Futures Institute have identified in a new study.

To examine the complex needs of early childhood support, the South Australian government established the Office for the Early Years in 2021, to optimise children's early learning, health and development by creating a primary point of leadership for the state's new Early Years System.

However, understanding of this new system – which aims to provide effective, efficient, accessible and equitable services to all South Australians – and how it is experienced by clients is currently limited, so new research is finding ways to help streamline the process.

Wellbeing SA and Flinders Caring Futures Institute entered a Public Health Partner Authority Agreement in June 2021 to develop a combination of policy action, programmatic responses, research translation and capability development that will support parents and caregivers for improved health and wellbeing in a child's early years.

Navigating the Early Years, which commenced in 2022, is the first in a range of research projects within this agreement. Designed to understand caregivers' perceptions of South Australia's Early Years System, this project collected interview data from parents and caregivers of children younger than 6 years, service providers and organisation managers in SA's Early Years System.

"Using journey mapping interviews with caregivers provided varied experiences of caregivers and a really robust understanding of the Early Years System, along with how it is experienced by different end-users," says Flinders University's Dr Georgia Middleton, who is project manager for Navigating the Early Years. Talking to caregivers about their journey was such a rewarding aspect of this work. It was wonderful talking to so many different people, from so many different backgrounds, with

so many different experiences. The frontline workers and organisation managers are so insightful and such passionate workers – and learning from them will improve the system for all caregivers and families, so we can have the best outcomes for our children."

Navigating the Early Years researchers found there is currently not enough support or services for caregivers that focusses on attending to their own health and wellbeing needs.

"While there are abundant services targeting the health and wellbeing of children in the Early Years System, a caregiver's needs are not being met and supported through the system," says Dr Middleton.

The researchers found that caregivers in South Australia currently have piecemeal engagement with the Early Years System – and it often misses those who need it most, such as those from culturally and linguistically diverse families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island families, families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, families residing in rural and remote areas and families living with, child or caregiver disability.

Findings from this project, published in the Navigating the Early Years report, have been used as key evidence in Caring Futures Institute submissions to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care and the Royal Commission into the Early Years Strategy. These findings have led to another new project commissioned by Wellbeing SA, which will involve Flinders CFI working closely with Children and Families Health Service (CaFHS) to explore what more can be done to care for caregivers in the essential period of a child's initial 12 months of life.

The researchers are reviewing universal wellbeing interventions that are currently being provided to caregivers in first 12 months of their child's life. They will also be arranging focus groups with caregivers and CaFHS staff to get their perspectives on what programs are needed to best support the health and wellbeing of caregivers during this important time.

"Being able to use these findings to support Royal Commission responses, and to inform this important work we are undertaking with Wellbeing SA and CaFHS has been a very rewarding aspect of this work," says Dr Middleton.

This project aligns with Flinders CFI's focus on a healthy start to life, and supporting life-long health and development of children, along with their families and communities. "With this work, we aim to support caregivers to care for their children," says Dr Middleton, "setting them on a positive health and wellbeing trajectory through life."

Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation *Women in Mental Health High Tea*



Breakthrough Mental Health Research Foundation – Women in Mental Health High Tea.

Join us for an extraordinary morning of compassion, empowerment, and heartfelt connections as we come together to uplift and support women's mental health. We invite you to our Women in Mental Health High Tea, where we'll be shining a light on Breakthrough research in women's mental health.

Throughout the event, we'll be hosting speakers who will share their stories of resilience, strength, and what they are doing to help create a life free from mental illness. Your generous contributions will go directly towards funding mental health research and initiatives aimed at destigmatising mental health challenges for women.

Stamford Plaza on North Terrace, on Friday 18 August, at 9.30 am (for a 10 am start), where our guests will indulge in a glass of bubbles on arrival, and a delightful high tea. *This is an event to support women and all genders are welcome.*

Individual ticket: \$75 (includes High Tea and a glass of bubbles on arrival)

Table of 8: \$575

Your presence will make a tangible difference in the lives of women who are helping create a life free from mental illness.

Register here:

<https://breakthroughfoundation.org.au/events/high-tea-women-in-mental-health-event>

Marcé Society and Helen Mayo House Joint Perinatal Mental Health Conference



September 7-9, Convention Centre, Adelaide, South Australia.

This conference is a unique collaboration between the Marcé Society Australasian Chapter and Helen Mayo House, bringing together health professionals from around the world to explore the theme of **"Resilience and Recovery: Sensitive perinatal mental health care for all women and their families."**

With an exceptional lineup of keynote speakers and invited experts, this conference promises to be a valuable opportunity for networking, learning, and staying up-to-date with the latest perinatal mental health care developments.

<https://pecbookings.eventsair.com/pmhc/delegateregistration/Site/Register>