2013 has been a year of expansion and diversification for the Centre for Health Initiatives (CHI). We have seen substantial growth in our membership, student enrolments, publications, and research funding.

CHI completed more than 30 research projects in 2013, many of which have already resulted in substantial changes to policy and/or practice and others that will contribute to future improvements in health and wellbeing. Rather than attempting to summarise all of the research activities that CHI-ers have undertaken throughout the year, this report highlights four projects that have already had a direct positive impact on their target communities (pages 4 through 11). Details of the full range of CHI projects are available on our website.

As always, CHI researchers have been extremely successful in having their work published. Our 2013 output includes 9 book chapters, more than 95 journal articles, and 28 refereed conference papers. We have also seen an increase to our research funding income, with total income in 2013 of $2.7 million.

CHI was successful in achieving renewal of our recognition as a Research Strength at the University of Wollongong in the 2013 review which saw a reduction in the number of recognised strengths. As part of this review process, a number of new members joined the CHI team, increasing the diversity of our research and the range of skills and methodologies within our toolkit (see page 2 for a list of our Members and Associate Members).

We also took the opportunity to review our management and governance structure in 2013, resulting in the appointment of a Scientific Director (A/Prof Peter Caputi) and two Associate Directors (Dr Lyn Phillipson and Dr Ross Gordon). This provided CHI with a strong leadership team which – in collaboration with myself and our Deputy Director, Dr Christopher Magee – has led CHI to an even stronger position than in previous years.

While we continue to be recognised as one of the leading social marketing research units in the country – with demonstrated expertise spanning the spectrum from formative research thorough development and implementation to evaluation of social marketing interventions – we also have considerable expertise in other disciplines and approaches. The development of strong multidisciplinary teams is key to our success as a research group and to ensuring the quality and relevance of our research outcomes.

We have continued our strong relationships with our many partners within leading government, non-government and community organisations – a commitment that is reflected in the projects profiled in this report. We have also continued to work with, and for, local communities and to provide high-quality research to underpin advocacy efforts to improve health and social outcomes in our local, national and international communities.

While this report highlights only a small number of our projects, what you will see throughout these (and in all the work that we do) is a reflection of the passion, commitment, and expertise of an amazing group of people who it has been my pleasure to lead for the last decade.
STAFF

Director
Prof Sandra Jones

Deputy Director
Dr Christopher Magae

Scientific Director
A/Prof Peter Caputi

Senior Research Fellow
Dr Ross Gordon

Research Fellows
Dr Jeong Kyu Lee
Dr Lyn Phillipson

Associate Research Fellows
Dr Danika Hall
Dr Samantha Reis

Research Manager
Mr Lance Barrie

Project Leaders
Ms Kelly Andrews
Ms Joanne Telenta

Project Managers
Katherine Butler
Julie Hall
Karen Larsen-Truong
Lauras Robinson

Research Assistants
Michael Chapman
Nicholas Corr
Jessica Iannella
Carol Keane
Elizabeth Smyth

Graphic Design
Joshua Beard

Administrative Officers
Mrs Christine Cairns

MEMBERS

Rachel Bailey
Stephen Barnett
Lance Barrie
Lindsey Brett
Renee Brighton
Gorgana Brícic
Angela Brown
Roy Brown
Tatiana Burns
Tanya Buchanan
Katherine Caldwell
John Carmody
Anna Cavanagh
Meng Cheow
Jesina Chigvaviria
Justine Connor
Timothy Coombs
Alisha Cork
Miriam Coyle
Alison Craiswell
Elizabeth Cridland
Kay Crookes
Natalie Cutler
Anna Dalecki
Sandra Daley
Michael Darragh
John Davey
Maris Depers
Bridget Dijkmans Hadley
Jennifer Douley
Aylín Dulagí
May El Haddad
William Erickson
Vivien Forner
Andrea Garner
Shereda Gho
Belinda Gibbons
Robyn Gillespie
Lisa-Marie Greenwood
Clementine Gritti
David Hammer
Mid Amlan Haque
Nafisah Mohd Hassan
Alexander Hayes
Leanne Heaton
Barry Hemmings
Anne van den Heuvel
William Hulín
Tara Hunt
Cedomir Ignjatovic
Susan Jain
Heidi Jarman
Joanne Jenson
John Kemley
Heather Kennedy-Eden
Douglas Kerr
Tanelle Kitchingman
Carolyn Annta Guek Choo Koh
David Kolevski
Angela Kwok
Sao Ian Leong
Teresa Lewis
Audrey Lowrie
Maria Mackay
Ely Marceau
Sue Martin
Donna Marynowski
Vivian Masukwedza
Kye McCarthy
Breanna McGaffin
Susan McInnes
Meliani
Dirk Melton
Helen Miller
Suellen Moore
Indrani Mukherjee
Karunathil Murali
Bita Najafi
Paula Olsen
Judy Pickard
Magno Queiroz
Fatemeh Rezaeibagha
Rachel Riedel
Lindsay Robertson
Laura Robinson
Paula Robinson
Kelly Rochow
Abigail Rodwell
Adani Rangan
Tamer Saket
Murad Safadi
Karim Sandquist
Kerry Searle
Jenny Sim
Ian Smith
Natalie Stefancic
Charlee Tjomruang
Sarah Tillott
Cornia Trimarchi
Louise Turner
Shae-Leigh Vella
Susan Vella
Louise Weinstein
Kathryn Williams
Virginia Williams
Angelina Wilson
Suwanna Yamasi

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Prof Fred Ashbury
Dr Andrew Dalley
Prof Jan Dewing
A/Prof Michael Flood
Prof Julian Gold
A/Prof Valerie Harwood
A/Prof Lisa Kervin
Prof Tony Okely
Dr Max Sutherland
Jeffery Thom
Prof Irene Garsch
Michele Goldman

HDR STUDENTS SUPERVISED BY CHI MEMBERS

Priscilla Almada
Abhijith Anand
Carina Andersen
Loretta Andersen
Megan Andrews
A. H. M. Mehbub Anwar
Errieede Ashcroft
Chantal Ashkar
Mohamed Assabri

Ms. Kelly Andrews
Ms. Kelly Andrews from The Centre for Health Initiatives graduated with a Masters of Science Research at the mid-year ceremony in July 2013.

Kelly’s Masters thesis was titled “Self management perceptions and practices of adults with Asthma”.

Supervisors: Professor Sandra Jones and Dr Judy Mullan.

CHI STUDENT GRADUATIONS

Dr Uwana Evers & Dr Pippa Burns

Dr Uwana Evers and Dr Pippa Burns graduated on Friday December 20, 2013 where both were awarded a Doctorate in Philosophy.

Uwana’s Doctoral thesis was titled “Get your life back: The development, implementation and evaluation of a social marketing campaign to increase awareness of asthma among older adults”.

Pippa’s Doctoral thesis was titled “Breathing not wheezing: The development and piloting of an online asthma education intervention for older Australians”.

Supervisors: Professor Sandra Jones and Dr Judy Mullan.
UOW MENTAL & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

INVESTIGATORS
Professor Sandra Jones
Dr Christopher Magee

FUNDING
UOW Student Amenities Fee (SAF) Funding

BACKGROUND
Mental health and emotional well-being are major issues facing university students. At UOW, approximately 25% of students experience mild to moderate psychological distress with a further 12% experiencing severe psychological distress. Furthermore, knowledge regarding the signs and symptoms of common psychological conditions (e.g., depression, stress, and anxiety) is low, and students are generally not aware of where and how they can access help and support.

This is concerning because poor psychological health can have a range of adverse consequences including poor academic performance, higher dropout rates from university, social exclusion, and chronic psychological problems.

THE PROJECT
This is a two year project to develop a comprehensive social marketing campaign across UOW campuses to:
- increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental health issues;
- decrease stigma around these issues;
- encourage help seeking behaviours among UOW students.

The first phase involved formative research with UOW students to investigate the key issues surrounding mental health among students (including awareness of signs and symptoms, and the influence of stigma on help seeking).

Based on this research, a multi-component campaign was developed that included posters, events, a website, infographic and giveaways to raise awareness about mental health. The next phase will focus on sources of help and support.

MAIN OUTCOMES
Formative research showed UOW students perceived that stress, anxiety and depression were common among the UOW student population but suggested they were not confident in being able to identify signs and symptoms. They themselves were likely to seek help from a partner, friend or parent before seeking any formal help. Of concern was that just over a fifth indicated they would not seek help from anyone if they were experiencing psychological distress.

Following extensive formative research and message testing, the campaign was launched in May 2013. This included the distribution of 1200 posters across all UOW campuses, student giveaways, 1000 postcards, and bus shelter advertising. There were additional events in September and October 2013 including an event on World Mental Health Day.

An evaluation survey following the first year of the project indicated that nearly three-quarters of UOW students had seen the campaign materials. A majority of these students had seen the mental health message in the form of posters and also indicated that this was the campaign strategy that they liked most.

In addition, the results suggest an increase in confidence about recognising signs and symptoms as well as increase in knowledge about the prevalence of mental health issues. Encouragingly, students felt that this project was in line with the values of the university, with 78% of students indicating that the campaign shows that the university cares about their health.

The campaign has just finished its second time point and is proving it has some exciting potential for the 2014 university calendar!
INVESTIGATORS
Dr Lyn Phillipson, Professor Sandra Jones, Ms Julie Hall, Ms Lesisa Pitts (ISLHD), Ms Zaga Trkulja (ISLHD), Ms Anica Petkovski (ISLHD), Geraldine Bevan (ISLHD), Stephen Dunn (ISLHD) and Ms Tina Hunt (Cancer Council NSW, Southern Region)

FUNDING
Cancer Institute NSW

BACKGROUND
It has been recognised that stigma associated with cancer can present a barrier to people from culturally diverse backgrounds accessing cancer prevention and screening programs or seeking help early when cancer symptoms manifest. Subsequent impacts can include delays in diagnosis and treatment, poorer prognosis and increased morbidity.

THE PROJECT
This project has utilised a social marketing framework to engage with Macedonian and Serbian communities in the Illawarra and cancer service providers within Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District to reduce cancer related stigma and to promote screening behaviours for breast and bowel cancer.

Formative research revealed that cancer was not openly discussed and was seen as a death sentence – and not associated with treatment or survival.

Research insights were translated into a tailored integrated and evidenced based community social marketing program framed to emphasise good news about cancer and promote screening for two priority cancers – breast and bowel.

Collecting and promoting personal stories of cancer survival and screening was also critical to facilitating open community discussion and improving screening rates. Multiple strategies were utilised to address literacy and language barriers including:

• radio ads on local ethnic radio
• community newsletters in language (print and downloadable on website)
• interactive powerpoint resources for use within bilingual health education seminars
• project website (multilingual)
• health education seminars

MAIN OUTCOMES
This project has resulted in the development of a suite of culturally sensitive resources about bowel and breast cancer for dissemination amongst the Macedonian and Serbian communities in the Illawarra.

PLANS FOR 2014
The campaign is still in progress with further events and promotion planned for Bowel Cancer Awareness Week in 2014.

Formal evaluation processes will be undertaken during 2014 to assess the impact of the project activities on changes in knowledge, attitudes and stigma amongst the communities of interest.

INVESTIGATORS
Dr Lyn Phillipson, Professor Sandra Jones, Ms Julie Hall, Ms Lesisa Pitts (ISLHD), Ms Zaga Trkulja (ISLHD), Ms Anica Petkovski (ISLHD), Geraldine Bevan (ISLHD), Stephen Dunn (ISLHD) and Ms Tina Hunt (Cancer Council NSW, Southern Region)

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A COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

INVESTIGATORS
Prof. Sandra Jones

FUNDING
ARC under the Future Fellowships scheme

BACKGROUND
Underage drinking is a major public health issue for Australia, the US, the UK and most other industrialized countries. A large proportion of Australian adults (including parents) perceive that it is acceptable to provide alcohol to young people, and many young people perceive (excessive) drinking as the social norm.

THE PROJECT
This is a four year project to reduce alcohol consumption among adolescents by altering the current culture so it is perceived by underage youth in the Illawarra region as being ‘okay not to drink’.

The project aims to engage the whole community and as well as deliver teen and parent specific initiatives. The range of interventions include:

- A social marketing campaign designed to alter social norms around underage drinking
- A youth component that includes school and community based activities
- A parent component that includes online and environmental activities

The pilot project began in Kiama in 2013 and will continue in 2014.

In January 2013 formative research began, including developing the research tools and materials as well as liaising with the Kiama community. The project was officially launched on Oct 9 2013. NSW Police Commissioner, Andrew Scipione, was guest speaker at the launch and other special guests included Kiama Deputy Mayor Neil Reilly, Gareth Ward MP, and local Olympians David McKeon and Casey Eastman.

MAIN OUTCOMES
The formative research included:

- Nine qualitative interviews with key members of the Kiama community, including parents, to gauge community attitudes and perceived norms regarding underage drinking.
- Two rounds of focus groups with teenagers (n=61), parents (n=27) and community members (n=27). The first round of focus group discussions focussed broadly on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in relation to underage drinking and participants’ opinions on previous social marketing campaigns to reduce underage drinking. The second round focussed on message testing and participants’ opinions on drafted concepts for the campaign.

Other outcomes include:

- Establishment of the Kiama Community Consultative committee that meets bi-monthly to advise and contribute to project development and implementation to ensure the project reflects contemporary local issues, perspectives and voices.
- Development and establishment of project website: www.stopunderagedrinking.com.au
- Marketing materials distributed throughout the Kiama LGA to increase awareness of the campaign including its tagline and website. Promotional strategies included:
  - 83 corflute signs displayed throughout Minnamurra, Jamberoo, Kiama, Gerroa and Gerringong.
  - Posters with three different images; 600 A4 and 600 A3 distributed throughout shops and offices in the Kiama LGA.
  - Signage installed on six Kiama coaches.
  - Three roadside banners for both road and pedestrian traffic in and around Kiama.
  - A large poster at the entrance of the Kiama shopping centre, with a further nine posters displayed in frames on the back of toilet cubicle doors.
  - Glow in the dark wristbands distributed at New Year’s Eve and Australia day celebrations

- Four Parent Workshops were developed and delivered to support and empower parents.
- A comprehensive alcohol and social norms curriculum was developed in conjunction with Kiama High School. This will be taught in PDHPE lessons during Term 1 2014 to Yrs 7-8 and 9-10.

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- Four Parent Workshops were developed and delivered to support and empower parents.
- A comprehensive alcohol and social norms curriculum was developed in conjunction with Kiama High School. This will be taught in PDHPE lessons during Term 1 2014 to Yrs 7-8 and 9-10.
A social marketing intervention was developed to create awareness of the guidelines and promote key benefits to parents, as well as provide a fun, social experience of active play for children which was inexpensive, convenient and sustainable in the home and school environment.

The school intervention comprised nine active play events in three local primary schools. Up to 230 children engaged in active games at each event and for each week there was a fun and playful theme (Beach Safari, Circus Clowns or Space Pirates). Children took home a variety of active toys with tailored active homework as well as printed information for their parents.

The community intervention included radio advertisements broadcast on two local stations, a website - www.activeeveryday.org.au which provided information and support for parents and teachers as well as posters, brochures, and postcards that were distributed to community organisations.

With the imminent release of the new Australian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children (5-12years) by the Commonwealth Government, a new approach is needed to improve public awareness, attitudes and uptake of the guidelines to improve child health and wellbeing.

THE PROJECT

Formative research was undertaken with children aged 5 to 12 and their parents. Research identified low awareness of the guidelines and beliefs that they were difficult to achieve or not necessary.

For parents, key benefits of physical activity for children were health, cognitive and social. Common barriers were time constraints/competing priorities, inconvenience and cost of structured activities.

For children key benefits of physical activity were the fun and social aspects. Common barriers were self-perceptions about abilities and competing priorities.

INVESTIGATORS

Dr Lyn Phillipson, Dr Danika Hall, Prof Sandra Jones, Prof Tony Okely; Dr Dylan Cift; Dr Stewart Vella; Ms Lisa Franco (ISLHD)

FUNDING

CHI Small Grant (2012); IHMRI Project Grant (2012)

BACKGROUND

Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours in children are contributing to increased rates of overweight and obesity in Australia.

Current physical activity guidelines recommend that children perform at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day. However past studies have found as few as 20% of parents and 14% of Year 6 students can correctly state the recommendations and less than 50% of primary school aged children achieve them.

The design and evaluation of this project will help to inform the promotion of the new Australian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children to be released by the Department of Health and Ageing in 2014.


**PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS**


