School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Student Research Program 2015  
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Project 49: Hand Hygiene among patients: a pilot study

**Supervisor(s):** Professor Lesley Wilkes

**Supervisor(s) contact information:** l.wilkes@westernsydney.edu.au

**Project description**
This student project will assist in the completion of a study in which nurse and patients’ attitude and behaviours towards hand hygiene for patients is being explored at Nepean Hospital. This is an important project as it provides data on an international directive from the World Health Organization (WHO) and NSW Health, that hand hygiene is essential to prevent infections in hospitals. Research on patient hand hygiene has not been documented to a large extent.

Registered nurses and patients from three Wards have completed a survey which measures patient and nurse attitudes and behaviours towards patient hand hygiene. The patients have been observed using a validated audit tool to measure opportunities and actual hand hygiene events.

The data from the surveys and observations will be entered into SPSS. The student will assist in data analysis and the writing of a research article which will be submitted into peer-reviewed journals such as the Journal of Clinical Nursing and Nursing and Health.

**Project Aims**
The aim of this project is:

- Complete analysis of survey and observation data using descriptive and inferential statistics
- To write a paper in a publication on the results which will include scholarly contributions from all members of the research team, including the student.

**Project Methods**
This project has been given ethical approval by Western Sydney University and NBMLHD Human Research Ethics Committees

As data collection and data entry has been completed, the methods to be adopted for this project will be related to:

1. Data analysis using SPSS- both descriptive and inferential statistics will be employed. The student will require some basic statistical knowledge but it is assumed that during the project the supervisor will provide ongoing tuition and training as needed. There will also be a project officer in the Centre for Nursing Research and Practice Development (CNRPD) on hand to provide ongoing assistance.

2. Writing the article- this will involve completion of a literature review and writing a background which will be completed by a member of the research team and will be edited and checked by others. The student and the project officer will be responsible for writing the method and findings section, under the supervision of Prof Wilkes. The
discussion will be written by all members of the team. Checking of article will be the responsibility of all members of the writing team

3. If the opportunity avails itself, an abstract for a nursing conference in 2016 will be written and submitted. It will be hoped that the student could present this paper.

Opportunity for Skill Development
The student will learn simple statistics, gain experience in structuring a paper for publication, gain experience in reviewing other peoples work. The published paper will provide the student with an advantage if pursuing HDR scholarships in the future. The project will also provide a good example of teamwork that can also be translated into clinical practice.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply
The student will be required to have some writing skills, data entry skills, some knowledge of statistics and an understanding of teamwork.
Project 50: Examining antecedents of plagiarism, and evaluating the effectiveness of support strategies to prevent and reduce plagiarism in higher education

Supervisor(s): Associate Professor Yenna Salamonson

Supervisor(s) contact information: y.salamonson@westernsydney.edu.au

Project description
This project is part of the strategic teaching and learning initiative, focusing on academic literacy support in the School of Nursing & Midwifery (SoNM). There is an increased recognition in universities that literary plagiarism in assessment, defined as passing off someone else's writing as one's own, has become a serious problem. In a recent Four Corners episode, explicit links were drawn between an increased in numbers of international students and 'the increase in plagiarism'. But is there evidence that international students plagiarise more than domestic students? This project will systematically examine the literature on academic dishonesty, in particular, plagiarism and individual characteristics (e.g. mature-aged, gender, country of birth and enrolment category) of students. As universities are urged to do more to widen university participation for students from diverse backgrounds, it is becoming increasingly important to examine the association between English language proficiency and plagiarism, including other student characteristics.

It is also intended that the literature review in this project will include the exploration of contextual factors that are associated with plagiarism, with the view of developing proactive, preventative intervention strategies to assist students who are identified to be at risk of literary plagiarism, particularly commencing undergraduate students in the first year of their nursing or midwifery studies.


Project Aims
• The aims of this project are to:
• Review the literature on plagiarism, personal and contextual factors associated with plagiarism
• Identify the effectiveness of strategies used to prevent or reduce the incidence of plagiarism in higher education
• Evaluate the application and the utility of these interventions for commencing undergraduate nursing and midwifery students
Project Methods
The student will engage in the following activities:

- Electronic literature searches using library databases, Google Scholar including searches of the grey literature on:
  - plagiarism in relation to personal and contextual factors of students;
  - evidence-based strategies that prevent or reduce the incidence of plagiarism among undergraduate students in higher education
- Evaluate the utility of the identified interventions for plagiarism for undergraduate nursing and midwifery students
- Building a comprehensive EndNote library for the identified study and make notes for each fulltext article
- Prepare summary tables for papers included in the studies using appropriate headings in consultation with supervisor

Opportunity for Skill Development
- Develop proficiency in literature searches using various databases, with assistance and support from the supervisor (YS) and the Western Sydney University School Librarian
- Skills consolidation in the use of EndNote Referencing package, which will be beneficial for his/her ongoing and further studies (e.g. Honours and PhD research degrees)
- Opportunities for co-authorship in the paper
- Supervised training on how to prepare for peer-review publication
- Will provide the assigned research intern with a written reference at the end of the internship program

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply
Nursing students enrolled in the 2nd or 3rd year of the Bachelor of Nursing program are invited to apply. The student will need to computer skills with Microsoft Word, Excel, and some experience in using the referencing software EndNote. Although some training will be provided, the student will need to have skills in sourcing literature from a range of electronic databases (e.g. Medline, Embase, CiNAHL, ERIC, Google Scholar). The student will be working onsite, in Campbelltown campus for the period of the project.
Project 51: A meta-ethnographic study of migrant men’s experiences of becoming a father in a new country

Supervisor(s): Dr Rakime Elmir and Professor Virginia Schmied

Supervisor(s) contact information: r.elmir@westernsydney.edu.au
v.schmied@westernsydney.edu.au

Project description

In contemporary developed societies, women’s movement into paid labour has been met with societal expectations that men actively engage with their young children. The ‘new’ father is viewed as being both financially responsible for his child(ren) and actively involved in routine caregiving. Yet fathers continue to be depicted as helpers and second to mothers in terms of involvement and responsibility. Men articulate their desire to play a larger role in the direct care of their children however they also report difficulties in living up to the new demands of being a father, feeling frustration, confusion, lack of confidence, tiredness and at times depression. In a study of African men in the UK, fatherhood was seen as a core aspect of the men’s identities. Fathers focused on their availability to their children, providing physical care, communication with children, economic provision, protection, and helping their children learn. Fathers in this and other studies wanted to be a good role model and to help children learn to live/respect others build social relationships and become good citizens through formal education, spiritual learning and other life skills. A study of South Asian fathers highlighted the importance the men placed upon preserving values from their own parents. Overall, these men did not believe that maternity or child health services were designed for men and that health professionals did not understand the needs of their families/communities. Migrant men also reported that they neglected their own health needs as they had to meet the obligations of family life and paid work. Factors associated with parenting difficulties for immigrant fathers included poor mental/physical health, poverty, racism, social isolation, children’s behavioural problems, stresses related to changed gender roles, trauma, acculturation difficulties, and differing cultural expectations.

This preliminary search of the literature demonstrates a small but increasing interest by researchers in the experiences of fathers who are migrants or refugees living in a new country. This meta-ethnographic study will be the first synthesis internationally to examine migrant fathers’ experiences and will form important baseline work for a program of research on newly arrived migrant men and fatherhood in Australia. Currently no Australian research has been directed at this topic. The first investigator together with other colleagues plan to undertake a number of pilot studies in 2016 examining the experiences of fathers from a range of cultural backgrounds. Our main focus will be on understanding the mental health of men (and women) who are newly settled in Australia and are becoming parents for the first time.

Project Aims
The aim of this meta-ethnographic synthesis is to examine the experiences of men who are socio-economic or humanitarian migrants and are becoming fathers for the first time in a new country.

Project Methods
A search strategy will be designed for this meta-ethnographic synthesis and will include qualitative studies and or mixed methods studies with a strong qualitative component that have examined migrant and refugee men’s perceptions and experiences of pregnancy, birth and postnatal period and the care provided to their female partner by health services. Databases will include, PsychINFO, Scopus, Social Science Index, Medline, Cinahl, The Cochrane Library, PubMed, Embase, Studies will be limited to those published or available in English, in peer reviewed journals, and undertaken between 1990 and the present. This timeframe has been selected as there are few studies in this area and it will allow us to capture experiences of men across the different waves of migration from low and middle income countries to high income countries. Information generated from this review will inform refugee health policy and practices in maternal and child health services by identifying ways in which migrant and refugee men can be better supported in the transition to fatherhood.

We plan to undertake a meta-ethnographic synthesis informed by the work of Noblit and Hare (1988). Noblit and Hare [4] coined the term ‘meta-ethnography’ in 1988 and described this as a process involving the ‘translation’ of findings of one ethnographic study into the findings of the next to derive interpretive explanations and understanding. The constant comparison and interpretation of reported qualitative findings can lead to a greater depth of understanding about the area of interest. This approach has been developed further by other scholars and is increasingly advocated as a technique that accompanies meta-analysis of interventions to inform health service policy and delivery. The synthesesing of qualitative findings does not amount to simply summing up or reducing the findings to one common conclusion, but rather is about enlarging the interpretive possibilities of findings.


Opportunity for Skill Development
The student will be supported to develop new knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- design and develop a search strategy and conduct a search related to the topic area
- develop an Endnote database to store the search outcomes
- develop an understanding of approaches to qualitative synthesis particularly meta-ethnography
- work as part of a research team to prepare a synthesis of studies reporting the experiences of migrant and refugee men in resource rich countries
- To prepare a paper for publication using journal guidelines and new knowledge of the submission process.
Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

The student is required to be a 2\textsuperscript{nd} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} year undergraduate student in health or social sciences. The student needs to have demonstrated skills in written and verbal communication, particularly preparing a literature review. Priority will be given to a student who already has a working knowledge of library databases in a range fields and the techniques for database searching using key terms. It will be an advantage if the student has used Endnote. Training will be provided in both database searching and Endnote.
Project 52: Student Literacy Strategies Project

**Supervisor(s):** Dr Paul Glew and Dr Kathleen Dixon

**Supervisor(s) contact information:** p.glew@westernsydney.edu.au  
k.dixon@westernsydney.edu.au

**Project description**
The project is located as a strategic area of research with a focus on academic literacy support for nursing students within the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SoNM). The Student Literacy Strategies pilot project for undergraduate programs commenced in 2010. The research involving the strategies was developed throughout 2011 to 2013 and has been extended for undergraduate and postgraduate programs until February 2015. The proposed project will examine literature on literacy support strategies and the effectiveness of screening and literacy support in facilitating the literacy development of nursing students. The preparedness of students for university study has been identified as a matter of significance given student diversity in Western Sydney University programs. Preparedness encompasses not only developing discipline knowledge but broader literacy skills, including English Language proficiency, and written and oral communication skills relevant to program. The Western Sydney University Our Future Plan and the Learning and Teaching Plan highlight the critical importance of developing students’ academic literacy. The proposed project, therefore, aligns with SoNM and Western Sydney University academic literacy and language support strategies to meet the literacy development needs of nursing students. The researchers are conducting the project as pilot work in the nursing program with the intention to submit an Office of Learning and Teaching grant proposal to assess the effectiveness and impact of academic literacy strategies using the intervention strategies and academic literacy assessment tools for students in other program contexts. This will measure levels of improvement in literacy skills, assess student uptake of interventions and evaluate student experience of the intervention strategies.

**Project Aims**
The aims of this project are to:

- review and synthesize literature on academic literacy support strategies;
- identify and report on the effectiveness of literacy support strategies in meeting the literacy development needs of nursing students; and
- develop an evaluation document on the methods and tools used to assess the academic literacy and language of students, particularly those in the discipline of nursing.
Project Methods
The methods to be used in the project will involve the student:

- reviewing literature searches using library databases on academic literacy screening and support strategies, and synthesizing the literature on extent to which these meets the literacy needs of students;
- exploring of findings on the impacts and effectiveness of literacy support strategies and reporting on the results of the uptake and outcomes of this support; and
- developing a document on the evaluation and outcomes of the methods and tools used to assess the academic literacy and language of students in nursing

The results of this project will guide development of future planning and implementation of the academic literacy strategies.

Opportunity for Skill Development
The project will provide the research student with support and opportunities to:

Search literature and import literature sources into designated Endnote files, and to:

- Collaborate with the researchers and a Western Sydney University Librarian to identify published studies for inclusion in a review and synthesis of the literature on student literacy support;
- Enter the identified references and build an EndNote Library for a review paper;
- Read, make notes and code identified published papers for inclusion in the review paper in discussion with the researchers; and
- Build a summary table of the literature using heading determined by the researchers

Enter data on literacy support strategy in order to:

- Compile documents and reports for analysis on the literacy support program;
- Classify data in NVivo10 for thematic analysis; and
- Compile reports in Word and Excel spreadsheets

Benefits for the research student in this project include:

- Development of proficiency in literature searches using various databases, with assistance and support from the researchers and the Western Sydney University School Librarian;
- Consolidation of skills in the use of an EndNote Referencing package, which will be beneficial for his/her Honors or future research degrees;
- Potential opportunities for co-authorship in a paper that the research student will be working on for the literature search and review. Participation in completion of the paper would occur outside of the 8 week period and would be unpaid involving the student’s willingness to contribute to completion of the paper for journal submission and peer review for publication; and
- Development of knowledge of NVivo software and document entry for analysis.
The researchers will provide the assigned research student with a written reference at the end of the 8 week program.

**Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply**

The research student will need:

- Skills in accessing library resources and e-resources to search for literature
- Computer skills in using Word and basic use of Excel spreadsheets
- A willingness to develop data entry skills for NVivo, with support from the researchers
- A willingness to develop skills in using Endnote for referencing in Word documents.
**Project 53: An analysis of unsolicited patient complaints reported to a tertiary care hospital**

**Supervisor(s):** Associate Professor Bronwyn Everett and Associate Professor Yenna Salamonson

**Supervisor(s) contact information:** b.everett@westernsydney.edu.au  
y.salamonson@westernsydney.edu.au

**Project description**
While often regarded in a negative light, patient complaints about their healthcare experience are a valuable source of data which can provide unique insights into healthcare delivery, and be used to improve systems of care and patient safety. By filing unsolicited healthcare complaints (as opposed to reporting dissatisfaction in patient satisfaction surveys), patients give information to the hospital in their own language and on their own terms—the patients choose to report on what was important to them. However, the degree to which complaints may be useful to hospitals is dependent on this data being systematically collected and analysed. Importantly, when complaints are considered at an organisation level they increase the potential to detect systematic problems in healthcare provision and can provide valuable information to improve outcomes for patients. However, a standardised approach to collecting and analysing patient complaint data is essential if learning from complaints is to be achieved.

**Project Aims**
- to review unsolicited patient complaints from a tertiary healthcare facility in order to identify the type and prevalence of issues that underlie the complaints
- to gain an understanding of the nature of complaints made about nursing and midwifery staff

**Project Methods**
A retrospective analysis of patient complaints submitted to a tertiary healthcare facility in South Western Sydney during 2015 will be analysed. Patient complaints will be de-identified and imported into NVivo qualitative data analysis software to facilitate data management and analyses. Reader et al.’s three-level patient complaint coding taxonomy will be used to identify, code and interpret issues raised within the complaint. Researchers will independently code the complaints, and coding disagreements will be resolved through discussion and consensus established. Test-retest reliability will be established.


**Opportunity for Skill Development**
- Develop skills extracting data for retrospective studies
- Develop skills in using qualitative data analysis software
- Develop an understanding of coding data and qualitative analysis (content analysis)
If the student accepts the opportunity to be a co-author on the planned manuscript then skills development related to writing for publication (including using EndNote) is an anticipated outcome. (It is not expected that the manuscript will be completed within an 8-week period and so the student will need to be prepared to meet the supervisors on occasion following completion of this scholarship).

**Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply**

The student will need computer skills in Word and Excel, and be willing to develop data entry skills, and skills in using NVivo with support from the supervisors.

A literature review has been undertaken in preparation for this study however, the student will be offered the opportunity to be a co-author on publications that arise as a result of this project. To this end, the student will need a moderate level of writing skills and so a second or third year student would be needed.

The student will also need to be prepared to spend some of the time at CANR, which is located on the Liverpool Hospital Campus, in addition to Campbelltown Campus.
Project 54: Intimate Partner Violence among migrant and refugee population: A literature review of Interventions

Supervisor(s): Dr Olayide Ogunsiji

Supervisor(s) contact information: o.ogunsiji@westernsydney.edu.au

Project description
Domestic violence is widespread in Australia and intimate partner violence (IPV) is a central focus among all the violence subsumed under domestic violence, with a vast majority of victims being women abused by their male partners. Migrants and refugees are among the groups reported to be disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence (Yeon-Shim & Hadeed, 2009). Yeon-Shim & Hadeed (2009) through literature review connected social isolation, lack of social support, acculturation stress and the traditional patriarchal cultural ideologies with the enduring experience of intimate partner violence among the Asian migrants in the United States of America. Moreover, significant studies have shown that migrant and refugee women are less likely to report incidences of domestic violence and abusive relationship and least likely to access preventive and other treatment services for a number of reasons that range from socio-cultural, language and institutional barriers. Considering migrant and refugee women’s experience of racism, gender and class, their experience of intimate partner violence subject them to unprecedented victimisation. Yet our knowledge of interventions used by service providers in supporting migrant and refugee women who are victims of IPV is limited. Apart from this, the perception of migrant and refugee women about the effectiveness and relevance of available interventions is invisible in literature. Many studies ignore ethnic groups in samples and the voices of many migrant women are not represented in government reports on intimate partner violence. Particularly negligible attention has been paid to migrant women in Blacktown local government area of Sydney, Australia contributing to health disparities and absence of appropriate, culturally sensitive health services. This study will fill this gap by reviewing available interventions for intimate partner violence with the aim of identifying possible relevant intervention for promoting healthy family relationship among migrant and refugee population in New South Wales.

Project Aims
- To complete a literature review for publication on the topic “Intimate Partner Violence among migrant and refugee population: A literature review of interventions”.
- To develop literature review writing skill in successful candidate for the project.

Project Methods
The proposed project for which this current pilot literature review is feeding into will be utilising participatory action research to promote healthy family relationship among migrant and refugee population in Blacktown Local Government Area of New South Wales. The project will be in two phases. Phase one is a mixed method project utilising self-report survey and focus group discussions to explore migrant and refugee women’s experiences of intimate partner violence in Sydney. The quantitative survey will be distributed at various Women’s Health
Centre in all the 78 suburbs of Blacktown Local Government area. A set of close-ended items on the survey will be developed to include items on vulnerability, health issues and perceptions about healthy family relationships. Literature will be used to develop the survey items. The focus group discussion will be conducted after the survey with those women who volunteer. The focus group will be qualitative with the underpinning philosophy that the people who go through an experience are in the best position to explain the nature of the experience (Heidegger, 1962). The focus group discussion will enhance the data from the survey to determine the women’s perception of vulnerability, health issues, suggestion of interventions for intimate partner violence and healthy family relationships. It is anticipated that 4 focus group discussions of six women each, who have experienced intimate partner violence from Blacktown will be engaged in the face to face discussion which will last for up to 90 minutes. Answers to the survey items will be tallied and descriptive statistics calculated and displayed in tables and figures. The digitally audio-taped focus group discussions will be transcribed and text imported into Nvivo 10. Phase two will be based on the data from phase one particularly from the women’s suggestions about relevant intervention for intimate partner violence and promotion of healthy family relationship. This phase two will utilize participatory action research in working with interested migrant and refugee women in promoting healthy family relationship in Blacktown. The successful student for which this application is being put in will only be required to develop a literature review.

Opportunity for Skill Development
Working on this project will provide the student with an opportunity to develop research skills in the area of completing a literature review.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply
Students need to be at least in their second year second semester with a minimum 5.2. Knowledge of Endnote referencing management is beneficial.
**Project 55: Process Evaluation of the Midwifery Initiated Oral Health Program for Pregnant Women In Greater Western Sydney**

**Supervisor(s):** Dr Ajesh George

**Supervisor(s) contact information:** a.george@westernsydney.edu.au

**Project description**

Pregnant women are prone to dental problems and this can have a negative impact on birth and infant outcomes. Unfortunately only a third of pregnant women in Australia seek dental care even when a dental problem exists with one of the main barriers being lack of awareness. To improve maternal oral health it is now recommended that antenatal care providers such as midwives offer oral health education, assessment and referrals to pregnant women so that dentists can provide timely dental care during pregnancy. At present there is a lack of emphasis on oral health by Australian antenatal care providers with current initiatives focusing mostly on the postnatal period, particularly on children. Pregnant women in Australia have no system in place that can offer them regular oral assessment during pregnancy and prompt dental treatment at minimal or no cost as experienced in other developed countries. It is also evident that the unique potential of midwives to assess and improve maternal oral health is not being thoroughly utilised.

To address the gaps in our services and the oral health needs of pregnant women, a unique midwifery initiated oral health program has developed for the first time in Australia. This program, led by Dr George, incorporates oral health guidelines into normal midwifery practice and provides appropriate care pathways where pregnant women can be referred for prompt dental treatment. The program has been systematically developed, implemented and evaluated over the following six phases:

- Phase 1: Systematic review and the development of guidelines
- Phase 2: Perceptions of a new MIOH program from midwives and pregnant women
- Phase 3: Designing of the MIOH program and oral health competencies for midwives
- Phase 4: Oral health education, training and assessment of midwives
- Phase 5: Piloting of the MIOH program.
- Phase 6: Multicentre trial of the MIOH program.

The MIOH program has been successfully evaluated and shown to significantly improve the oral health knowledge and confidence of midwives to promote oral health as well as the uptake of dental services, oral hygiene, oral health quality of life and knowledge of pregnant women. With the effectiveness of the MIOH program established it is now important to undertake a process evaluation to explore the acceptability and feasibility of the intervention from the perspectives of the health professionals (midwives and dental team) and participants (pregnant women) involved in the multicentre trial. This evaluation will greatly inform the scalability of the MIOH program and enhance our understanding on whether the intervention can be translated into practice in real world conditions. This project will provide a Western Sydney University student the opportunity to be involved in the process evaluation.
**Project Aims**
The aim of the process evaluation is to explore the perceptions of the midwives, dental teams and pregnant women (involved in the MIOH multicentre trial) towards the intervention. These perceptions will be explored to determine the practicability, acceptability and feasibility of the program if it were to be up-scaled and implemented into practice.

**Project Methods**
This project will have a qualitative design involving focus groups with midwives and dental teams and telephone interviews with randomly selected pregnant women involved in the multicentre trial at Nepean, Campbelltown & Fairfield Hospitals. We are currently awaiting ethics approval and anticipate that data collection will be undertaken between August-November 2015. Based on the data collected, the successful candidate will be engaged in the project over the eight-week period as follows:

**Stage 1 (two weeks):**
- Receive training in using NVivo and SPSS software's;
- Data entry of focus group, interview and demographic data into NVivo and SPSS
- Review focus group and interview transcripts;

**Stage 2 (three weeks):**
- Assist supervisor with developing a thematic coding framework for interview and focus group data
- Code focus group and interview transcripts using coding framework

**Stage 3 (three weeks):**
- Assist in writing up the findings for a journal article
- Compile a final report based on the findings

The student will be supervised throughout the 8 weeks and will be provided ongoing feedback on drafts of the article and final report.

**Opportunity for Skill Development**
The successful candidate will:

- Receive training in using new data analysis software's including NVivo and SPSS;
- Learn how to review and organize qualitative and quantitative data for analysis;
- Conduct qualitative and quantitative data analysis (thematic and descriptive);
- Co-author a publication in an peer-reviewed journal;
- Work in the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research – a multidisciplinary research facility that provides endless opportunities and networks such as their weekly seminar series;
- Engage in the vibrant and supportive research culture of CANR – receiving mentorship and support in building a potential future career in research
- Receive the opportunity for ongoing engagement with CANR such as co-authorship on upcoming publications and conferences anticipated to result from this project.
Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

**Essential skills:**

- Currently enrolled in their third/fourth year of their undergraduate degree at Western Sydney University in the areas of Nursing, Health Sciences, Medicine or Psychology;
- Completed a research unit;
- Computer literacy (Microsoft Word & Outlook, Internet, Library);
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills;
- Proven ability to work as a team member or independently as required, including the ability to prioritise tasks and meet strict guidelines;
- Demonstrated report writing experience.

**Desirable skills:**

- Basic understanding of qualitative research methods;
- Basic understanding of how to write up qualitative research results.
**Project 56: Registered nurses’ experiences of caring for people with disabilities in an acute care setting**

**Supervisor(s):** Dr Peter Lewis and Dr Nathan Wilson

**Supervisor(s) contact information:** p.lewis@westernsydney.edu.au
n.wilson@westernsydney.edu.au

**Project description**

People with intellectual disability (ID) require hospitalization more frequently than the general population, and yet their experiences of hospitalization are generally unsatisfactory. Their physical safety can be compromised by unnecessary or inappropriate physical restraint, or when their signs and symptoms are mistakenly attributed to their ID rather than to any underlying pathology. Their dignity is compromised when health care professionals fail to respect their autonomy or to observe their rights to privacy, instead interacting with professional or informal carers and treating carers as proxies for decision-making and consent purposes. People with ID are consequently hospitalized less frequently and for shorter periods of time than they often need to be. This has an adverse effect on their general health and overall sense of well-being.

Progress has been made towards improving the quality of care delivered to people with ID in some health care services internationally. For example, in the UK the National Patient Safety Agency has produced evidence based guidelines for the appropriate care of people with ID in the acute care setting from the perspectives of people with ID themselves (NPSA, 2004). Part of the NSPA’s strategy is to raise awareness of the needs of people with ID amongst health care professionals who care for them. Although attempts to develop evidence for the delivery of high quality care to people with ID necessarily engage with the perspectives of patients and their carers, little research has been conducted into the experiences of nursing staff responsible for caring for people with ID during hospitalization for treatment of acute illnesses.

Inevitably, the delivery of nursing care relies at least in part on the beliefs, values, and preferences that nurses bring to their work. Some of the behaviours exhibited by people with ID, especially when they are unwell or distressed for other reasons, can challenge nurses’ beliefs, values, and preferences. For example, nurses in emergency departments in the UK have experienced fear while caring for people with ID and have failed to understand what comprises high quality care for this patient population (Sowney and Barr, 2006). It is too simplistic to label nurses who feel personally challenged by the behaviours of people with ID as incompetent or uncaring. We need to know more about how nurses experience their roles and interpret those experiences in order to support them in the delivery of high quality care to people with ID in an acute care setting. By partnering with colleagues at **South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD)**, Western Sydney University’s biggest industry partner, findings from this study will make a significant contribution to the SWSLHD strategy of implementing a disability and carer action plan.

**References**


Project Aims

- To describe registered nurses’ experiences of caring for people with ID in acute care settings in Australia.
- To understand the enablers and barriers to the delivery of high quality care to people with ID in acute care settings in Australia.
- Gain insight into what factors might improve the care of people with ID in acute care settings in Australia from the point of view of the registered nurse.

Project Methods

This is an interview based, qualitative study designed to provide pilot data to support the development of a competitive grant funding application in the future.

Procedure

Ethics approval from the SWSLHD human research ethics committees by November 2015, we will promote the study amongst registered nurses working in the acute care hospitals in SWSLHD.

We will recruit participants by e-mail circulated to all nursing staff. Nursing staff will be asked to contact the research team directly if they wish to participate thereby ensuring their identity remains confidential.

We will use purposive sampling to ensure participants have experience of caring for people with ID in an acute care setting.

We will collect data using one on one, face to face, semi-structured interviews with registered nurses who volunteer to participate. We anticipate recruiting a total of between 8 and 12 registered nurses. Each interview will last between 30 and 50 minutes depending on the level of experience of the RN and the level of his or her engagement with the topic.

All interviews will be digitally recorded and recordings will be transcribed by the student scholar.

We will undertake a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the transcripts using a framework approach (Ritchie, 2003).

Dr Lewis has used these methods of data collection and analysis extensively in previous research and has taught these methods to qualitative health researchers at master’s level. He is well equipped to teach the student the application of these methods. The student will, therefore, be involved in all stages of data collection and analysis.

Findings will be disseminated through a manuscript for publication in a service delivery specific ISI-listed journal.


**Opportunity for Skill Development**

The student will be guided in the development of a range of research skills which include but are not limited to:

- Literature searches – strategies and evaluation of articles
- Composition of appropriate interview questions for this participant population
- Process of recruitment
- The conduct of qualitative research interviews
- A process of qualitative data analysis including the conceptualization of an analytic framework
- Dissemination of findings

This will ensure the student has a rich and rewarding experience of collecting, organizing, and analysing qualitative data. As is common practice in qualitative research, we will commence writing about our methods and our emerging findings contemporaneously with data collection. The student will have the opportunity to generate and revise text that will most likely be used in a manuscript reporting the findings of our study upon which the student will be named as an author.

**Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply**

- The student must be enrolled in an undergraduate degree in the School of Nursing & Midwifery OR an undergraduate program in one of the allied health professions (e.g. OT)
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Proficient computer skills
- A desire to work with and enhance the lives of people with disabilities.