

CONROD NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2008



Welcome to **CONROD News**; **CONROD's** news and knowledge hub. The Centre aims to create and distribute this informative newsletter on a regular basis to foster the ongoing support the Centre currently enjoys and to facilitate an even greater casting of our knowledge net.

CONROD's fresh online look

CONROD has recently launched its new and improved website.

www.conrod.uq.edu.au is a fresh and innovative communications tool enabling the Centre to promote its five core research teams and the practical ways in which CONROD research impacts on our community.

When designing the site the CONROD team wanted to create a functional and informative application that not only enabled the community to learn more about the Centre's initiatives, but would facilitate clear and pragmatic communication links with government, stakeholders, the media and general public.



Take a look for yourself at www.conrod.uq.edu.au.

Connolly invited to address Rehab conference

CONROD chief health economist, Professor Luke Connolly, gave an invited keynote address to the annual conference of the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors in Canberra, on 12 September, 2008.

Professor Connolly's presentation, entitled "Personal Values with Acquired Disability: Some Economic Issues" addressed the way that economic theory may be used to model disability as an exogenous shock to the stock of human capital and to consider the effect of systemic changes (such as tort reform) on the welfare of people who are injured and disabled (e.g. via a motor vehicle crash).

The presentation also outlined economic approaches to the evaluation of specific interventions and the associated problems of health status measurement. These techniques, which are used extensively in the Australian health care sector, are not widely used to assess the cost-effectiveness of the non-medical rehabilitation therapies. He argued that the advent of their use by the purchasers of care (e.g. public and private insurers) in the rehabilitation sector would create a range of commercial threats and opportunities for providers and that consumers of rehabilitation services would be likely to benefit as a result.

CONROD leads the way in child trauma research

CONROD's Social and Behavioural Research programme, under the direction of Professor Justin Kenardy, has recently completed the final wave of assessments in one of the largest studies of children with traumatic brain injury in the world.

The study recruited 205 children from the Royal Children's Hospitals in Brisbane and Melbourne and the Mater Children's Hospital with mild, moderate and severe brain injury. Follow up with the children and their parents continued from shortly after their initial visit to hospital through to 18 months after

their injury. This project has been a huge team effort involving a range of staff based in Brisbane and Melbourne.

Most of the data has now been entered and data analysis has begun. The study's main focus is to fill the gaps in our understanding of how traumatic brain injury impacts on children's and parent's stress reactions. In addition, the team will be exploring the interaction of traumatic brain injury on children's brain and emotional functioning.



CONROD drives whiplash research

A pioneering CONROD research project will investigate the biological and physical aspects of whiplash in order to significantly improve our understanding of the condition.

The research project, headed by Dr. Michele Sterling and Dr. James Elliott, will involve collaboration between the UQ School of Pharmacy (Dr. Peter Cabot) and The Centre for Magnetic Resonance (Prof. Graham Galloway) in an attempt to better understand the relationship between the biological markers of inflammation and degenerative changes in neck muscle.

"Previous research conducted by the UQ whiplash research unit has identified whiplash as a complex condition and we need to start to unravel the complexities to improve our diagnostic knowledge" Dr. Elliott said.

The aim of this particular project is to determine whether
1) muscle changes seen on magnetic resonance imaging and
2) altered levels of inflammation in the blood can help us

better identify and diagnose those patients who are at risk for having painful symptoms in the long-term.

To be involved, participants should be:

- Aged 18-55 years with no history of neck pain prior to this motor vehicle accident (MVA) and,
- Have had an MVA in the past 3 days and are experiencing neck pain as a result of that MVA.

Eligible participants will undergo four separate MRI scans of their neck. These will be conducted 3 days, 14 days, 3 months and 6 months after the MVA. Participants will not incur any cost for these scans.

To volunteer or for further information please contact Mr. Andrew Popple (07) 3365 5383 or email at a.popple@uq.edu.au. Alternatively, learn more about this and other whiplash research projects by visiting www.somc.uq.edu.au/whiplash

Did you know...

- ¶ The Queensland Trauma Registry collects data on patients admitted to hospital for 24 hours or more following serious injury in 15 hospitals throughout Queensland.
- ¶ In 2007, the Queensland Trauma Registry recorded over 13,000 admissions to hospital following serious traumatic injury.
- ¶ In 2007, road traffic crashes were the main cause of major injury and the second most common cause of all injuries reported in the QTR. Just over 35% of all road traffic crashes involved motorbike riders or pillion. Approximately 75% of patients involved in a road traffic crash were male.

Welcome

Ms Kathy Harvey has recently joined the CONROD team. Kathy comes to us from Queensland Health where she headed the department's Health Collaborative for Health Care Improvement programme. This great experience will stand her in good stead as she takes over as the new Manager of the Queensland Trauma Registry (QTR).

RCH & CONROD to investigate paediatric admissions

NEW RESEARCH TO BEGIN IN PICU AT THE RCH

On Monday 2nd June, staff from the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at the Royal Children's Hospital and researchers at The Medical School, University of Queensland will begin a twelve month pilot study exploring post traumatic stress symptoms in children and parents following PICU admission.

Research already undertaken both internationally and with the Royal Children's Hospital suggests that some families may experience ongoing traumatic stress symptoms following admission to the hospital.

The research team including Prof. Justin Kenardy; Dr Robyne Le Brocque (pictured below), Dr Sam Keogh, RN Debbie Long and RN Amanda Ullman (pictured below) will be recruiting 200 families following PICU admission of children aged 2+ years at both the Mater and Royal Children's Hospitals, Brisbane.

Researchers will be asking mothers, fathers and the children themselves (6+ years) to report post traumatic stress symptoms and problems during the acute phase and will be followed up at 3 and 6 months.

Belinda Murray (pictured below) is a doctoral candidate also attached to the study and her interest is in the children's memories of PICU and how these impact on children over time.

Research Fellow Dr Robyne Le Brocque said sometimes a visit to the hospital can be a very traumatic experience for parents and children, especially when the visit includes admission to the PICU.

"A visit to the hospital can sometimes be a traumatising experience and it is our hope to identify environmental factors, treatment as well as illness and injury factors that may predispose to symptoms of stress."

"The team also hopes to gather research about follow up treatments that may be beneficial to families once they have left the ICU and any extra support that might be necessary," Dr Le Brocque said.

Researchers from the PICU are happy to collaborate with The Medical School and will provide experience with managing the often hectic surroundings of the ICU.

PICU Nurse Researcher Amanda Ullman said this research is about beginning to understand a more holistic and collaborative approach to health and recovery in the ICU and at home.

The researchers have submitted a National Health & Medical Research Council grant application and hope that the larger project will be funded. If funded, this grant will be used to expand the sample size to over 400 and will also include children and their parents recruited from the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.



Dr Robyne Le Brocque, Belinda Murray, Amanda Ullman

Extract from RCH Staff News

QTR set for prosperous future

CONROD has recently participated in a comprehensive review of the Queensland Trauma Registry (QTR) facilitated by KPMG.

The QTR is structurally located within CONROD's Acute Trauma Care Program. The review was initiated by Queensland Health and the resulting recommendations have been fully addressed. CONROD has been successful in reaching an in-principle funding and operational agreement with Queensland Health, which will sustain the Registry at CONROD from 1 July 2008 until 30 June 2011. The Motor Accident Insurance Commission will continue to be a major funder of the Registry, with co-funding provided by Queensland Health. The formal agreement is currently being drafted for eventual sign off by both Queensland Health and The University of Queensland.

The review recommendations have positive implications for CONROD. Some of the highlights include the appointment of a dedicated QTR Director and a QTR Manager. Both of these positions are critical to the functionality and future development of the Registry. The recommendations also call for expansion of the Registry to include hospitals in Logan, Bundaberg and Hervey Bay. An additional QTR research position has been created, and new administrative and governance structures have been planned for implementation this year.

CONROD and its QTR staff are delighted by the State Government's ongoing commitment to the Registry which has been located at CONROD for over 10 years, and look forward to further developing the Registry in directions that help inform policy and practice change in the trauma system for the benefit of injured Queenslanders.

Psych team attend innovative trauma forum

A contingent of CONROD's Social and Behavioural team attended an innovative traumatic stress conference recently in Melbourne.

Attendees of the annual Australasian Conference on Traumatic Stress (ACOTS) were treated to a CONROD presentation symposium entitled, "Paediatric Medical Prevalence to Prevention" chaired by team leader and CONROD deputy director, Professor Justin Kenardy.

Professor Kenardy led an all star CONROD cast of researchers as they outlined some of their recent findings:

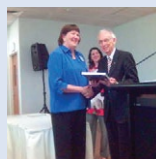
- Katherine Olsson, CONROD research assistant, presented the effectiveness of the combined screening tool, the Child Trauma Screening Questionnaire and heart rate, in predicting children's posttraumatic stress symptoms.
- PhD researcher, Alexandra De Young, presented preliminary findings from her burns research, in particular the difficulties and debate surrounding the diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in young children.
- Catherine Cox presented her findings from her PhD research which evaluated the effectiveness of a web-based early intervention (<https://experiment.psy.uq.edu.au/safety/>) for children and their parents following unintentional trauma.

The presentations were very successful, stimulating much discussion and enjoying positive feedback from clinicians and researchers in the field.

In particular, the Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss & Grief Network has expressed interest in placing the child accident website as presented by Catherine and launched publically in February, as a resource on their website.

Announcements

Dr Cliff Pollard has been engaged as the new Director of the QTR. He also holds the same position for Trauma Services at the RBWH. Dr Pollard has been involved with CONROD for a number of years through our National Trauma Registry Consortium and we are looking forward to his increased contribution.



One of CONROD's pillars was recently acknowledged for her wonderful contribution to the Centre. Ms Deb Sunners, CONROD's Business Manager, recently received a UQSOPA (the UQ Secretaries' and Office Professionals' Association) Miracle Worker award presented by UQ Chancellor, Sir Llew Edwards. The awards celebrate those who have inspired their peers through qualities in the workplace such as sharing of knowledge, providing leadership and willingness to go above and beyond expectations. From all of us in the Centre, thanks Deb.

Dr Cheryl Swanson has taken up a position at the Centre for Chronic Disease here at UQ. Cheryl has been at CONROD for almost 6 years and in that time she has worked on a range of projects, commencing within the Health Outcomes Programme and later on secondment to the RBWH, Physiotherapy Services. She will be missed by her colleagues, but promises to visit, at least for the morning teas. All the best Cheryl.