Health Economics Collaborative Research Projects

In 2004, funds totalling more than $5.4m were attracted by Dr. Luke Connelly to the Health Economics (HE) program at the Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine (CONROD), The University of Queensland. The health economics program was involved in applications to fund three major collaborative initiatives, one of which involves the establishment of the new Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health (ACERH). Dr Connelly’s teaching activities at the School of Economics include:

- **ECON7810 Health Economics & Evaluation**
- **ECON7830 Health Economics & Policy**
- **ECON7900 Special Unit (Health Insurance & Health Care Financing)**

**Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health**

The HE program’s successful funding submissions included a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) application to establish, in conjunction with partners at the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of Western Australia (UWA) the new Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health (ACERH). The $4.5m award to ACERH was the largest grant provided under the program. The Chief Investigators (CIs) are James Butler (National Centre of Epidemiology and Population Health, ANU), Luke Connelly (CONROD, UQ), Alexandra Sidorenko (NCEPH, ANU), Warwick McKibbin (Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis, ANU, Brookings Institution USA) and D’Arcy Holman (School of Population Health, UWA). Data partners include Medibank Private Limited (MPL), the Health Benefits Fund (HBF, Western Australia) and the Data Linkage Unit in the West Australian Department of Health.

ACERH will operate as a virtual centre with physical sites at The University of Queensland (UQ), The Australian National University (ANU) and The University of Western Australia (UWA). The program of research will focus on three themes:

- Ageing
- Health Insurance
- Economic Burden of Illness and Injury.

An important resource that will underpin the work is the population dataset that has been constructed for Western Australia. The dataset involves linked unit-record data, at the level of the individual, on public in- and out-of-hospital services dating back to the pre-Medicare period as well as more recent data on pharmaceuticals use. In addition, data sources such as police crash data have previously been linked to this dataset. Under an established and approved protocol that is already in place in WA, ACERH proposes also to link private health insurer data from MPL and HBF to the public dataset. Together, these two insurers have approximately 80 per cent of the private health insurance market share in Western Australia and the resulting dataset will represent a unique resource for health economics research.

The CONROD component of the research program involves at least two full-time PhD scholarships, one Senior Research Fellow post, one Research Fellow post and one half-time research assistant position.

**Whiplash Associated Disorder (WAD): Randomised Controlled Trial**

Together with the School of Rehabilitation Sciences (Jull, Sterling) and the Social and Behavioural Sciences Program at CONROD (Kenardy), the CONROD Health Economics Program (Connelly) was part of a successful grant application to the NHMRC for funding to conduct a randomised controlled trial (RCT) on whiplash associated disorder (WAD). The purpose of the RCT is to investigate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a stratified pragmatic management approach to reduce the incidence of progression of acute whiplash injuries to chronicity. The management approach will be directed by the presenting pain, musculoskeletal and psychological features and compared with usual...
care. The trial will be conducted over a three-year period (2005-2007) and was awarded a grant of $378,450.

**Whiplash Associated Disorder: Prognostic Follow-Up Study**
Another collaborative initiative between these researchers (Sterling, Jull, Kenardy, Connelly) was funded under the ARC-Linkage scheme. This international, prospective, multi-centre study, aims to

1. Validate a set of measures of physical and psychological impairment identified as prognostic indicators of outcome following whiplash injury in a large multicentre international cohort.
2. Conduct the first economic health production study on WAD to examine the relationships between health outcomes and their determinants (including service utilisation, patient characteristics and insurance status).
3. Study the relationships between claim propensity and payout magnitudes for whiplash injuries in Queensland.
4. Study the correspondence, or otherwise, of the economic costs and payout magnitudes for WAD in terms of functional recovery measures (recovered, mild pain and disability, moderate/severe pain and disability).

Under the ARC-Linkage scheme, $522,011 was provided to conduct this study. Half of this amount was provided in cash and kind by the Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC) and Suncorp-Metway, with the remainder supplied via the ARC.
CONNELLY – PUBLICATIONS (2004-)

CHAPTERS IN PEER-REVIEWED MONOGRAPHS


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