

Research Unit Update – Autumn 2022

CAH Research Symposium

The inaugural CAH Research Symposium was held on 27th April via videoconference, with over 65 people attending from across Victoria. The Symposium featured 10 presentations covering research projects on nutrition, health promotion, surgery, the impacts of COVID-19, domestic violence, innovation in social work practice, along with presentations from Deakin Rural Health and Institute for Health Transformation Directors. Thank you to all the presenters who shared their innovative and inspirational projects!



Congratulations to **Peter Kelly**, who was awarded Researcher of the Year in recognition of his outstanding research efforts at CAH in 2021, and **Cara Hill**, who was the recipient of the Research Impact Award for her project that has led to significant changes in the provision of texture modified foods across our organisation.

If you would like to watch a recording of the 2-hour event, please use this [link](#) (but please don't distribute outside of CAH). Passcode: S^bBnGL1

Showcasing CAH at National Rural Health Conference

CAH research will be well represented at the 16th National Rural Health Conference later this year. Dr Laura Alston will be presenting on the achievements of the research unit at Colac Area Health and Alison Buccheri will be presenting on 'Changing work duties in rural and regional Victorian health services during COVID-19'.



Call for research abstracts for Western Alliance Annual Symposium

The Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre is holding its Annual Symposium in Dunkeld on 18-19 July – the first since 2019 due to COVID-19 restrictions! A call for research abstracts is open until Monday 6th June and all CAH researchers are encouraged to consider submitting an abstract. Further information and symposium registration link is available on the Western Alliance website [here](#) and Research Translation Coordinator Michael Field (mfield@cah.vic.gov.au) can assist with any queries.

The CAH Research Unit was formed in 2020 and is led by the Health Service Executive and Director of Research Dr Laura Alston. The Research Unit aims to contribute to ongoing improvements in the care and health of our community through research, translation and implementation, and has partnerships with Deakin University (including departments Deakin Rural Health, Institute for Health Transformation and the Global Obesity Centre) and the Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre.

Recently published: Research on Family Violence in a rural community



Peter Kelly (former Regional Liaison Officer with the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence Initiative at CAH) has recently had his research on family violence published. The research involved an online survey of the Colac community to explore knowledge and help-seeking behaviour for family violence, and the role of the local public sector health service. The research has been accepted for publication by *The Australian Journal of Rural Health* and will be available soon at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14401584>

Research grant application

Alison Buccheri has submitted an expression of interest for the Western Alliance Mental Health Research grant funding round, her first grant application as lead researcher. The proposed project seeks to expand on the highly successful CReW study (CCOVID-19 and Regional & Rural Health Staff Wellbeing) and is being developed in partnership with health services across Victoria.

Research Unit Staff Profile – Nikita Wheaton

Please tell us about your background and current role in the CAH Research Unit

I completed a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) at Deakin University in 2013. I worked as a Health Promotion Officer in Camperdown for 8 years whilst starting our family. I have 3 children – Axel (4), Van (2) and Kalani (1). When returning to the workforce this year I knew I wanted a challenge and decided to apply for a role with the CARE study. I was lucky enough to be appointed as an Associate Research Fellow. We are researching how we can collaborate with rural health services and local food providers to improve the food environment for all Victorians. We are currently running a trial in Colac Otway Shire.



What drew you to research?

I am particularly interested in health research, specifically in rural locations. I enjoy the challenge and excitement that research brings, especially finding innovative ways to create positive and long-lasting change.

Do you have any pets?

I have a 12-year-old Labrador, Jet. He has always been by my side; he even flew to QLD to live with us for a year.

What is your favourite holiday destination?

Anywhere in Australia with beautiful weather, that I can enjoy with my loved ones.

Research Unit Staff

Dr Laura Alston
Director of Research
lalston@cah.vic.gov.au

Dr Michael Field
Western Alliance Research Translation Co-ordinator
mfield@cah.vic.gov.au

Research Assistants

Alison Buccheri
abuccheri@cah.vic.gov.au

Charli Ford
cford@cah.vic.gov.au

Nikita Wheaton
nikita.wheaton@deakin.edu.au