



Now that summer is upon us, it's time to reflect on the NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability's (PCHSS) very productive spring.

Welcome to the latest edition of the PCHSS newsletter

The Partnership Centre is a \$10.75M, five-year collaboration involving 17 lead investigators, 20 expert advisors and over 40 system implementation partners from around Australia. Our vision is that our research findings significantly influence the development of a resilient health care system that is affordable, cost-effective and delivers improved health outcomes for all Australians.

New publications

PCHSS researchers published over 35 papers this quarter on health system sustainability. All of our publications can be accessed through the [Our Publications](#) page on our [website](#).

Some of the highlights include:

Musculoskeletal healthcare: Have we over-egged the pudding?

Over eight million Australians suffer from musculoskeletal conditions, such as arthritis and back pain. Collectively, these conditions account for 12% of the total disease burden in Australia. While it is important to treat these conditions, it is also possible to overtreat people, leading to healthcare waste and potential harms. Getting this balance right is a challenge.

[\[Read more\]](#)

Is the risk of cancer in Australia overstated? The importance of competing mortality for estimating lifetime risk

New research published in the *[Medical Journal of Australia](#)* indicates that the likelihood of developing a variety of common cancers is lower than is typically estimated.

[\[Read more\]](#)

Challenges of developing a digital scribe to reduce clinical documentation burden

From electronic health records to more advanced forms of testing and beyond, new technologies are increasingly reshaping the practice of medicine. Among the tools on the horizon are “digital scribes”, which will have the capacity to automatically generate medical notes based on a patient-clinician conversation.

[\[Read more\]](#)

Quality of care for acute abdominal pain in children

A child suffering from acute abdominal pain may receive notably different care based on where they receive medical attention. New research using quality indicators derived from clinical practice guidelines shows guidelines are not consistently applied.

[\[Read more\]](#)

Media contributions and opinion pieces

Since the last edition of our newsletter, PCHSS researchers have been featured in more than 70 popular press stories.

Here are just a few recent news stories:

- [Making hospitals safer](#) (Westbrook, J. *The Australian*, 18 November 2019)
 - [Why I'm not buying healthcare's AI hype...yet](#) (Coiera, E. *WTF Health*, 27 September 2019. Watch the interview online)
 - [Successes and failures in telehealth on the Gold Coast](#) (Gray, L. *Pulse+IT*, 30 September 2019)
 - [Lifetime risk of cancer has been overstated, research claims](#) (Glasziou, P. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 2019)
 - [Victoria's elective surgery waiting lists are long and getting longer](#) (Scott, A. *ABC News*, 16 November 2019. Watch the interview online)
 - [Sustainable health systems need climate sustainability](#) (Zurynski, Y. *Croakey News*, 13 November 2019)
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New monthly segment: “60 seconds with...”

In November, we started a new segment on our webpage to showcase the research of PCHSS postdocs. These short interviews provide a new perspective on the breadth of the PCHSS' work.

Our first three interviews were with [Dr Liam Caffrey](#), [Dr Centaine Snowsell](#) and [Dr Emma Gearon](#).

- [Liam](#) explained what telehealth is (and isn't) and how working with other investigators from the PCHSS has helped to build his research network.
- In her interview, [Centaine](#), a health economist, told us about her work on telehealth and why it's important to health system sustainability.
- [Emma](#), who is working on alternative models of healthcare, said the question she gets asked most often is, "What's the evidence for that?" Fortunately, she has an answer.

Check out the newest interviews on the PCHSS' [News and Media](#) page.

Event outcomes

Treatment overload: Lifting the burden of too much healthcare, 13 November 2019

"It's March 2020. The Prime Minister has received a report from the Health Minister stating that 30% of Australian healthcare is low value, 10% is harm and 60% is evidence based. 'This,' he says to the Health Minister, 'is a problem. We must do more, with less. We need the whole system to accept the 60:30:10 challenge'."

That was the simulated scenario that Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite of the PCHSS put to the over 80 health system experts and stakeholders at the Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel on 13 November 2019.

[[Read more about the event](#) on our [Event Outcomes](#) page.]

Coming soon on our YouTube channel: We have produced a short video of the day to show how the participants approached the 60:30:10 challenge.

Available now on our YouTube channel are the 15-minute interview of Professor Paul Glasziou by Professor Ray Moynihan about low-value care ([The challenge too much healthcare](#)) that premiered at the event, and the presentation by [health consumer advocate, Tim Benson](#), about his experiences seeking the appropriate level of treatment for prostate cancer.

The latest news from PCHSS' research themes and the Centre Coordination and Research Unit

Using Analytics, Technology and Shared Data

This Research Theme tackles the big questions in informatics and healthcare: including shared health information; big data; quality, effectiveness and cost of care; and the impact of telehealth. Professors [Johanna Westbrook](#), [Enrico Coiera](#) and [Len Gray](#) lead this research.

Highlights of our activities include:

- Research by Professor Westbrook's group revealed that over 10% of Australian aged care facility residents have

- gout. Since gout is often associated with other conditions, the researchers recommend greater assessment of potential medication interactions. ([Nguyen et al. 2019](#))
- A new paper by Professor Enrico Coiera argues that the creation and implementation of artificial intelligence in the health field should be driven by human needs rather than simply by what is technologically achievable. ([Coiera, E. 2019](#))
 - GPs spend almost 50% of their time on documentation. A new study by Professor Coiera's team examined the flow of doctor-patient communication to help inform better-designed automated system for capturing clinical information to reduce this burden. ([Kocaballi et al. 2019](#))
 - The cost of providing specialist diabetes services using telehealth in Queensland has been analysed in a new paper from Professor Len Gray's group. They found a cost savings in providing telediabetes services. ([Snoswell et al. 2019](#))

Reducing Waste and Low-value Care

Approximately, 30% of healthcare is not beneficial to patients and not delivered within best practice guidelines. Worse yet, 10% of care is actually harmful to the patient. The teams led by [Professors Paul Glasziou](#) and [Rachelle Buchbinder](#) are undertaking research into reducing waste from unnecessary or inappropriate care and delivering effective and appropriate services at a lower cost.

Examples of our work:

- Recent research by Professor Glasziou's team examined the causes and challenges associated with overdiagnosis in respiratory medicine. ([Dobler CC, Glasziou P. 2019](#))
- Professor Buchbinder's group has just completed a scoping review of systematic reviews of alternative service models

to achieve lower cost delivery of healthcare services in high-income countries. The paper is currently under review.

Promoting Better Value for the Health Dollar

This Research Theme, led by Professors [Tony Scott](#) and [Jon Karnon](#) and Dr Delia Hendrie, covers four major areas: 1) using financial incentives to promote value-based healthcare, 2) priority setting and decision-making in healthcare organisations, 3) the impact of markets, competition and choice in healthcare, and 4) the impact of a collaborative research program on cost savings and efficiencies in healthcare settings.

Highlights include:

- Professor Scott's work on competition and market forces in healthcare has been receiving media coverage. ([Victoria's elective surgery waiting lists are long and getting longer. Here's why, ABC News](#))
- Professor Karnon's group is working with two Primary Health Networks (PHN) in Victoria trialling the Evidence-informed, co-creation framework for the **Design, Evaluation and Procurement of Health services** ([in-DEPth](#)). They are also working with two Local Health Districts (LHD) in South Australia to identify evaluated models of care to inform business cases for implementation at scale. Dr Kenneth Lo has been travelling extensively to meet with the people involved, including health consumers, LHDs and PHNs, in their upcoming Delphi study.
- A new PhD student has been embedded in the work to analyse the Western Australian Department of Health Research Translation Program (RTP) grants. She will work with Dr Hendrie's team to assess the translational and economic impacts and outcomes of the RTP.

Centre-wide Activities

The Partnership Centre Team has also been actively promoting health system sustainability research through meetings, workshops and conferences as well as published papers.

Here are a few highlights of what's been happening:

Outreach

In addition to the highly successful *Treatment overload: Lifting the burden of too much healthcare* event, PCHSS outreach included the following activities:

- **Professor Braithwaite** continued to engage with state health secretaries and key leaders in the health system. He presented on behalf of the PCHSS at 13 national and international conferences in the past year.
- **Associate Professor Yvonne Zurynski** gave a keynote address at the Asia Pacific Integrated Care Conference (APIC2). She continues to work with the integrated care strategy for the Rare Voices Australia, National Strategy for Rare Diseases.
- **The PCHSS, Consumer Health Forum of Australia (CHF) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)** convened a [roundtable on social prescribing in Australia](#). Social prescribing is when health professionals link patients with social services to address social determinants of poor health. Associate Professor Zurynski contributed to the development of surveys on attitudes and knowledge about social prescribing for GPs, allied health professionals and health consumers. A publication based on survey data is in preparation.
- **Dr Centaine Snoswell** presented on behalf of the PCHSS at the Asia-Pacific World Health Congress on 8 October

where she also provided a report on the state of telehealth in Australia.

New Funding

Centre researchers secured two new grants recently:

- *A National Fund for Health Research and Development (Chile) grant for a project entitled, “Degree of compliance with the essential attributes of primary care and population health results in National Health Service Family Health Centres (CESFAM).” (Martínez Gutiérrez MS, Barros X, Fuentes A, Fuentes M, Huidobro DG, Alarcón CG, Bertossi C, **Zurynski Y**).*
- *A NHMRC Partnership Grant (APP1179176) for a project entitled, “Strengthening Care for Children: A stepped-wedge translational trial to reduce hospital burden.” (Hiscock H, Lingam R, Sanci L, Woolfenden S, **Zurynski Y**, Dalziel K, Liaw ST, Lee K, Boyle D, Freed G).*

Research

Evaluation of the implementation of the LifeSpan suicide prevention program continues in partnership with the Black Dog Institute. A successful feedback session on preliminary results was held on 3 December.

PCHSS Team members changes

The Centre welcomed Mr Alex Vedovi. Alex joined the team in September as the new Research and Administration Officer.

Contact

If you would like to partner with a stream of health system sustainability research, or you have an interest in any of the above areas of research, please [contact us](#).

Warm regards,

The Partnership Centre Team on behalf of:

Chief Investigator Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite

Founding Director, [Australian Institute of Health Innovation](#),
Macquarie University



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