It is hard to believe that our inaugural year has come to an end! The support and enthusiasm we have received from the substance use and mental health fields both nationally and internationally has been incredible. Our membership has grown significantly around the world. Our web resources have been well received with a rapidly increasing reach. Most exciting are the number of postdoctoral researchers and postgraduate students who have been attracted to the CREMS, who will be trained to become the leading substance use and mental health researchers of the future.

We have had the privilege of collaboration with world class clinicians, services providers, and educators in our research and translation activities. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all CREMS members for their contributions during the year, our affiliated organisations and associate members for building collaborations with us, and the funding bodies who have invested in this important area of research.

Most importantly, our sincere thanks go to all who have participated in our research and translation. We currently have over 10,000 individuals engaged in prevention and treatment research. It is through your generosity and willingness to share your experiences with us that we are able to gain an improved understanding of how to best prevent and treat substance use and mental health disorders.

We hope you have all had a wonderful festive season and look forward to continuing our exciting research and translation in 2014.

Maree Teesson, Amanda Baker, Katherine Mills, Frances Kay-Lambkin, Paul Haber, Andrew Baillie, Max Birchwood, Bonnie Spring, Kathleen Brady.
The Hunter Institute of Mental Health is a Newcastle based organisation who works in the field of mental health promotion, the prevention of mental illness and the prevention of suicide on a national as well as a local level. Our programs and projects are devoted to promoting mental health and well-being in Australia, improving outcomes for people who experience mental illness, and those who are affected by the mental illness of someone they know, love, live with or care for.

The work we do is often national, translational in scope and based in partnerships, and we frequently work with non-mental health-based sectors. It is evidence-informed and where possible, we look to contribute back to the evidence-base about mental health promotion, and prevention and recovery from mental illness and suicide. One exciting aspect of our work is in translating the development of ideas into concepts and interventions, supporting them through piloting, feasibility and testing stages, and then working to make them available to the general public. One example of this is the Partners in Depression program.

Partners in Depression is a Hunter Institute initiative that focuses specifically on those who love, live with, care for or support a person with depression. Realistically, most Australians will at some stage in their life have someone close to them experience depression, and while there is more community discussion about depression, it can still be confronting when someone you know find themselves lost in the darkness of depression.

With partnership funding from beyondblue and support from Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin, the Hunter Institute developed the Partners in Depression program specifically to address the information and support needs of people who support a person with depression. It was designed as a six-week group education program covering issues like depression and its treatments, communication, the carer experience and the importance of looking after yourself. A local pilot of Partners in Depression identified that the program effectively addressed participants’ information and support needs, that it did not duplicate existing supports and that participants reported significantly reduced symptoms of mental ill-health (as measured by DASS) after program attendance. Furthermore, participant outcomes were not dependent on whether the program was delivered by Institute staff (i.e. the program developers) or facilitators who had been trained in the program.

In 2009, with funding from the NIB Foundation, the Hunter Institute began a national dissemination of the Partners in Depression program. Over three years, more than 400 facilitators from health and community services...
were trained in the program and committed to deliver it in their local community. Now, over 250 programs have been delivered and nearly 2000 people have attended *Partners in Depression* across the country. The quality assurance measures that support this program give us a solid foundation to understand its dissemination strategy.

A review of the characteristics of program participants at baseline indicates that nearly three quarters of people who attend are supporting a parent or child with depression; that the majority of participants are in multiple care roles (providing support to more than one person); and that program participants as a group are more than twice as likely to report psychological distress (as measured by the K10) than the general population.

After attending *Partners in Depression*, participants have continued to report strong satisfaction with the program content and delivery, and 97% have indicated that they would recommend the program to other people supporting a person with depression. Furthermore, people who attend the program have continued to report significantly lower levels of psychological distress at the conclusion of the program compared to baseline. Encouragingly, the participants who were reporting the most psychological distress reported the largest improvement. With regard to dissemination, of the 412 facilitators trained during the national dissemination, 144 facilitators continue to deliver the program two years on, indicating at least some level of sustainability and integration of *Partners in Depression* into routine practice.

With funding from the Coal Services Health and Safety Trust, and in partnership with Coal services Health, the Hunter Institute of Mental Health is now working to adapt the program to communities. This project is an opportunity to trial delivery of *Partners in Depression* specifically with an EAP provider and with consideration for benefits not just to the individual and their families, but also the wider community. The Hunter Institute also remains committed to building the evidence base about the program’s efficacy and continues to consider delivery options to engage community members not well represented in the program.

For more information about *Partners in Depression*, go to the website or contact Katie McGill.
Many adults struggle with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Individuals with PTSD sometimes use alcohol or other drugs in an attempt to manage the discomfort of their symptoms, such as nightmares and memories of the traumatic event. Therefore, substance use disorders (SUD) commonly co-occur with PTSD. Without treatment, these disorders serve to sustain and magnify one another, leading to high healthcare costs and substantial challenges in achieving successful treatment outcomes. Within the U.S., co-occurring PTSD and SUD are particularly problematic. Approximately one third of U.S. Veterans seeking treatment have a PTSD diagnosis, and half of those Veterans with PTSD also suffer from a co-occurring SUD. Until recently, the prevailing treatment model, referred to as the sequential model, suggests that individuals should receive SUD treatment and achieve abstinence from alcohol and drugs prior to initiating PTSD treatment. However, more recent evidence from work being conducted in Australia (A/Prof Katherine Mills, Prof Maree Teesson, Prof Amanda Baker, Dr Emma Barrett and others from the CREMS) as well as the U.S. suggests that treating PTSD and SUD in an integrated fashion (at the same time) is not only possible, but that it may result in improved treatment outcomes compared to treating these disorders sequentially.

At the Medical University of South Carolina in the U.S., Drs Sudie Back, Julianne Hellmuth and colleagues (Drs Kathleen Brady and Therese Killeen) are conducting the “COPE” study. This study is a randomised controlled trial among US Veterans with PTSD and co-occurring SUD. The trial is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and is currently in year three of five. Male and female veterans receive
The COPE study is ongoing and is listed on ClinicalTrials.gov. 12, 90-minute, manualised sessions of an integrated treatment (called “COPE”) or treatment-as-usual (Relapse Prevention for SUD). In addition, participants who are randomised to the COPE treatment are eligible to participate in a neuroimaging sub-study, which assesses pre to post changes in the brain in responses to trauma and SUD-related cues.

The COPE study is progressing nicely. To date, 98 participants have completed baseline assessments and 45 participants have been randomised to receive either COPE or Relapse Prevention. Several sets of preliminary analyses have been conducted by members of our team. Dr Back recently led the publication of a case study of one of the first study completers, a male Veteran with combat-related trauma and alcohol dependence. This Veteran demonstrated substantial treatment gains in relation to PTSD symptom severity, alcohol use, and depression severity. Mr Andrew Teer, also a member of the study team, will present findings indicating a high prevalence of physical and sexual abuse victimisation among male Veterans at the upcoming 2014 meeting of the America Psychiatric Association (APA) in New York City. Dr Back will present preliminary neuroimaging data at the APA meeting. The study team also has a manuscript under review led by Dr Hellmuth, which examines the associations between the use of violence and mental health, substance use, interpersonal violence victimisation, and deployment experiences among Veterans in the COPE study. Dr Back has also submitted findings regarding baseline gender differences among COPE participants for presentation at the 2014 meeting of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence.

Finally, in January of 2014, Drs Back and Killeen will be visiting clinicians and scientists at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden where they are conducting a small study of the COPE treatment. Thus far, the preliminary findings are very positive and show significant improvement in patients receiving the integrated treatment.

**SPOTLIGHT ON...**

**Ms Erin Kelly**

*Every member of CREMS provides a unique contribution to improving our understanding of mental health and substance use. Each issue we will highlight the research achievements of particular members of CREMS. In this issue, the spotlight is on Ms Erin Kelly and her work developing an intervention for school bullying and adolescents.*

I am a doctoral candidate, supervised by Prof Maree Teesson and Dr Nicola Newton. My thesis is examining school bullying, focusing on its associations with substance use and mental health, and assessing the effectiveness of a targeted intervention on bullying involvement. Specifically, my research is looking at the Preventure component of the Climate and Preventure (CAP) study.

The CAP study is a comprehensive substance use prevention intervention for adolescents combining the universal Climate Schools program and the targeted Preventure program. Preventure is a brief manualised personality-targeted substance use preventive intervention for high-risk adolescents aged 13-15 years. This program addresses four personality risk-factors for early onset substance misuse and other risk behaviours:

- Sensation Seeking
- Impulsivity
- Anxiety Sensitivity
- Negative Thinking

It includes two 90-minute group sessions, specific to the four personality types, which are carried out by a trained facilitator and co-facilitator. The interventions are conducted using manuals which incorporate psycho-educational and cognitive behavioural components, and include real life scenarios shared by high-risk youth in specifically-organised focus groups.
I first developed an interest in comorbid substance use and mental health problems during my Honours year at the University of Wollongong. My Honours thesis examined alcohol use and self-concept among University students. I also completed an internship at Kedesh Drug and Alcohol Services during this year. The internship involved conducting therapeutic and educational group counselling for adolescents with substance use problems. I thoroughly enjoyed working with this population, and it inspired me to not only work in drug and alcohol research, but to undertake a Masters of Clinical Psychology (which I completed at Macquarie University). I continued my research in substance use in my Masters dissertation, examining readiness to change and treatment seeking among methamphetamine users. The internship at Kedesh also piqued my interest in adolescent populations, which is now the focus of my PhD research.

My work at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and CREMS has provided me with the opportunity to present at both national and international conferences, publish journal articles and reports, and to work directly with both adolescents and adults either at risk of, or currently experiencing, substance use and mental health problems. I recently relocated to Ireland, meaning that I am now an external student of UNSW. I am based at Trinity College Dublin, with Professor Catherine Comiskey. Professor Comiskey has a particular interest in substance misuse and children, which has facilitated a collaboration with her team. While external enrolment has its difficulties, I am excited for the possibility of creating links with researchers internationally.

Prior to my work with CAP, I have been involved with a range of projects at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. These projects included studies on drug driving, the methamphetamine market in Sydney, treatment for methamphetamine dependence, suicide risk assessment in drug and alcohol treatment services, and the impact of parental substance use on infant development and family functioning. I have also worked at Macquarie University as a Clinical Psychologist on a study examining the effectiveness of treatment for people with comorbid social anxiety and drinking problems.

In addition to my experience in the research arena, I have also worked in private practise as a Clinical Psychologist. I have enjoyed the opportunity to work clinically with people with a range of presenting problems, such as substance use disorders, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. This experience has solidified my interest in the comorbidity between substance use and other mental disorders, which was common among my clients. I also noted the prevalence of bullying in the histories of my clients, and became curious about its role in their current concerns.
Congratulations!

In this issue we are fortunate to have many people to congratulate on recent achievements.

Congratulations to **Prof Maree Teesson** and **Mr Mark Deady** who were both honoured at the UNSW Faculty of Medicine Dean's Awards ceremony. **Prof Teesson** received the Award for Outstanding Achievement, the highest award presented by the Faculty of Medicine, UNSW. **Mr Deady** was acknowledged on the UNSW Dean's List for 2013 for his outstanding contribution to drug and alcohol research. Acknowledgement on the Dean's List is the highest award made by the Faculty to a student.

Congratulations to **Prof Paul Haber** who received the Australian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) Senior Scientist Award. The Senior Scientist Award is bestowed upon a scientists who has made outstanding, long-term contributions to the field of substance use and misuse.

Congratulations to **Prof Helen Christensen** on being awarded the prestigious Australasian Society for Psychiatric Research Founders Medal at the 2013 Conference in Melbourne. The Founders Medal is awarded to an individual who has made an ongoing and significant contribution to the field of psychiatric research.
Welcome!

We welcome two new members to CREMS. Dr Erica Crome has joined CREMS as a Postdoctoral Researcher and Registered Psychologist based at Macquarie University. Her research interests are maximising research investments by using existing clinical research and epidemiological datasets to further understanding about the prevention and treatment of disorders such as anxiety, depression and substance use. She also has a strong interest in the novel ways to translate research into clinical outcomes.

Also welcome to Dr Julianne Hellmuth, a new associate member with CREMS. Dr Hellmuth is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences, Division of Clinical Neurosciences, at the Medical University of South Carolina. Her program of research focuses on examining the associations between posttraumatic stress, substance use disorders, and interpersonal violence, and developing interventions to ameliorate these problems among individuals and couples.

Louise Birrell has been awarded both an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) and an Australian Rotary Health David Henning Memorial Scholarship. Louise’s PhD will investigate the comorbidity of mental health problems and substance use in young Australians.

Katrina Prior has been awarded both an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) and an Australian Rotary Health Ian Scott Scholarship to examine the relationship between social phobia, depression and substance use disorders.

Zoe Tonks has been awarded an Australian Rotary Health Ian Scott Scholarship. As part of her PhD, Zoe will develop and evaluate a combined parent and student internet-delivered substance use prevention program for Australian adolescents.

Congratulations to Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin who has been elected to the International Society for Research on Internet Interventions Board of Directors (ISRII). ISRII is a non-profit interdisciplinary organisation committed to advancing the scientific approach to studying eHealth interventions and information and communication technologies targeting behavioural and mental health.

Lastly, congratulations to CREMS members Dr Lucy Burns and Dr Katherine Mills on their promotions to Associate Professor at UNSW.
**New Projects**


Lunn, J., Mills, K., Kelly, P., Rowe, R. Evaluating outcomes for clients in AOD treatment attending trauma symptom management group-work facilitated by existing AOD treatment staff. New South Wales Health Drug and Alcohol Research Grant. 2013/14: $25,000.

**THE INAUGURAL CREMS GRANT DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP**

On the 12th and 13th of December the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use held its inaugural grant development workshop at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). This workshop brought together a team of researchers from UNSW, Macquarie University, the University of Newcastle and Sydney University in a fun and collaborative environment to discuss future grant applications and strategies for submission.

The first day of the workshop was modelled after a NHMRC grant review panel, with each grant being assigned two spokespersons to provide comprehensive feedback to the authors and guide group discussions. The attending members reviewed seven grant applications in total that showcased the full range of research conducted at CREMS. The second day involved less formal group discussions of four new and emerging grant ideas as well as grant submission strategies and presentations from the UNSW Grants Management Office and Research Strategy Office.

Overall, the two day grant development workshop was highly successful and provided a valuable opportunity to receive comprehensive feedback and learn from the team’s collective experiences with obtaining competitive research funding. Good luck to all CREMS members who are submitting a grant in the next application round!


RECENT PUBLICATIONS

UPCOMING SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS/EVENTS

12-14 February 2014
AUSTRALASIAN SOCIETY FOR BEHAVIOURAL HEALTH AND MEDICINE, AUCKLAND

20-21 February 2014
TheMHS SUMMER FORUM 2014: TRAUMA AND THE MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE, SYDNEY
## Chief Investigators
- Prof Maree Teesson
- Prof Amanda Baker
- A/Prof Katherine Mills
- Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin
- Prof Paul Haber
- A/Prof Andrew Baillie
- Prof Helen Christensen
- Prof Max Birchwood
- Prof Bonnie Spring
- Prof Kathleen Brady

## Associate Investigators
- Ms Leonie Manns
- Mr Trevor Hazell
- Prof Robyn Richmond
- Dr Cath Chapman
- A/Prof Tim Slade
- Prof Brian Kelly
- Dr Brian Hitsman
- Dr Leanne Hides
- Dr Pete Kelly
- Ms Marion Downey
- Prof Michael Farrell
- Dr Glenys Dore

## Administrative Staff
- Ms Jasmin Bartlett
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- Dr Kerry Inder
- Dr Sharlene Kaye
- Dr Nickie Newton
- Dr Joanne Ross
- Dr Wendy Swift

## Research Fellows
- Dr Emma Barrett
- Dr Ali Beck
- Dr Natacha Carragher
- Dr Matthew Sunderland

## Postdoctoral Research Fellows
- Dr Heather Buchan
- Dr Erica Chrome
- Dr Christina Marel
- Dr Kirsten Morley
- Dr Louise Thornton

## Research Psychologists
- Ms Phillipa Ewer
- Ms Jenny Gedes
- Ms Joanne Gilsenan
- Ms Sally Hunt
- Ms Julia Rosenfeld
- Dr Alyna Turner

## Research Officers
- Ms Louise Birrell
- Ms Xanthe Larkin
- Ms Natasha Nair
- Ms Katrina Prior
- Mr Daniel Rodriguez
- Ms Zoe Tonks
- Ms Joanne White

## PhD Candidates
- Ms Katrina Champion
- Mr Mark Deady
- Ms Miriam Forbes
- Ms Katrina Hammall
- Ms Erin Kelly
- Mr Warren Logge
- Ms Sonja Memdovic
- Ms Mikki Subotic
- Ms Kris Tulloch

## Masters Candidates
- Dr Danielle Florida

## Associate Members
- A/Prof Sudie Back
- Dr Lucy Burns
- Dr Julianne Hellmuth
- Prof Michelle Moulds
- Ms Jaelea Skehan