The NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS) is excited to announce our very first CREMS National Conference! This year, the conference will take place on the 20th August in Melbourne, in conjunction with The Mental Health Services (TheMHS) Annual Conference will feature an exciting full-day program designed to provide insight into ‘What’s new in the treatment of comorbidity’.

A fundamental goal of CREMS is to develop innovative responses to comorbidity and to break down barriers to prevention and treatment by ensuring effective transfer of our research findings. Importantly, the CREMS National Conference will assist in this by bringing together renowned clinical researchers, consumers and service providers. We hope this will be the first of many annual National Conferences and therefore aim to encourage many people to attend.

Prominent clinical researchers and members of CREMS will present on a range of topics related to comorbidity. These include trends in emerging drugs including synthetic cannabinoids and their implications for mental health services, trends in substance use among Australian women, innovative treatments for substance use disorders and comorbid mental health conditions, and online interventions for comorbidity. Access to our online programs and clinical resources will also be made available at the conference.

Registration is now available online. We look forward to seeing you there!
I am very pleased to be introducing the Treatment Stream in the third edition of the CREMS newsletter. Our mission is to work together with the Epidemiology and Prevention Streams of CREMS to move ideas from our important and exciting research programs into key clinical and public health settings. This is no mean task, and could not be done without a commitment on the part of all CREMS members to thinking about translation as an additional but integral stage in our research trials. We are lucky to have such forward thinking people within each CREMS Stream to identify and address significant gaps between our existing research evidence, healthy policy and practice.

The Treatment Stream is very pleased to be partnering with the Hunter Institute of Mental Health in ensuring high quality and relevant dissemination of our evidence across clinical, workplace, and other real-world settings. To that end, this month we welcome Dr Kerry Inder, a Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow, who will take up a position with the Treatment Stream of CREMS to further explore the relationship between mental and physical health; translating evidence-based clinical treatments developed by our team for depression, anxiety, and substance use into key health settings (e.g. cardiovascular disease, chronic illness).

A key strategy in our translational activities is facilitating access to the range of prevention, treatment and education programs, developed by CREMS members, via our new web portal: Clearing the Cloud. This portal provides direct access to our current online prevention and treatment programs, our evidence-based information booklets, and the opportunity to participate in our national intervention trials that are currently underway. One example of this is the iHelp program, which is providing clinician-assisted online support for people who are currently smoking 10 or more tobacco cigarettes per day to improve their physical activity, healthy eating options and tobacco use. We are accepting referrals from the general community, and would encourage people to consider whether this program might help those in your networks.
This work is closely aligned with a key strategic direction of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of Australia; with Dr Katherine Mills joining me in membership of the NHMRC Research Translation Faculty from 2012. One such initiative arising from the NHMRC Research Translation Faculty is the targeted call for research in areas representing the most significant gaps in key health areas.

Already, CREMS researchers have been highly successful in answering this call, securing almost $4 million in the recent NHMRC Mental Health Targeted Call for Research aimed at improving mental health care and provision of mental health services in young Australians. With work covering Internet-based universal prevention for anxiety, depression and substance use (Prof Maree Teesson, Dr Nicola Newton, A/Prof Timothy Slade, Dr Catherine Chapman), through to social networking and online treatment for binge drinking and depression (Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin, Prof Amanda Baker, Prof Maree Teesson, Prof Kathleen Brady, Prof Bonnie Spring, Mr Mark Deady and Dr Louise Thornton) and telephone-based well-being interventions for at-risk youth (Prof Amanda Baker), CREMS researchers are at the cutting edge of innovative methods of translating evidence-based prevention and treatment programs into settings where they are most needed. It will be exciting to watch these and other developments over the next few years.

The Treatment Stream is also proud to support a number of PhD students:

We would like to welcome Katrina Hamall to our team, a PhD student working on a support program to enhance the resilience of parents/families of children with chronic illnesses. Katrina is supported by an Australian Postgraduate Award through the University of Newcastle, and is co-sponsored by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health.

Kathryn Woodcock has also commenced her PhD, with the support of a National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre PhD scholarship, to develop and evaluate an online program for trauma and substance use comorbidity among Australian Defense Force Personnel, Australian Veterans, and their families.

Mark Deady, a second-year PhD student, is commencing the active recruitment phase for his trial of Internet-delivered treatment for young people with depression and binge drinking concerns. The DEAL trial is the first of its kind to target both mood and binge drinking behaviours in young people. Interested people are encouraged to visit the DEAL website for more information, including access to the online treatment program.

The Treatment Stream is also proud to support a number of PhD students:

We would like to welcome Katrina Hamall to our team, a PhD student working on a support program to enhance the resilience of parents/families of children with chronic illnesses. Katrina is supported by an Australian Postgraduate Award through the University of Newcastle, and is co-sponsored by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health.

Kathryn Woodcock has also commenced her PhD, with the support of a National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre PhD scholarship, to develop and evaluate an online program for trauma and substance use comorbidity among Australian Defense Force Personnel, Australian Veterans, and their families.

Mark Deady, a second-year PhD student, is commencing the active recruitment phase for his trial of Internet-delivered treatment for young people with depression and binge drinking concerns. The DEAL trial is the first of its kind to target both mood and binge drinking behaviours in young people. Interested people are encouraged to visit the DEAL website for more information, including access to the online treatment program.
The Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) was released in May 2013. This was the culmination of more than a decade’s work revising the criteria for the diagnosis and classification of mental disorders. A/Prof Tim Slade reports back from a recent meeting where the implications of the changes to DSM-5 were discussed.

At the beginning of June this year I had the pleasure of attending a two-day meeting which gathered together experts in the classification of mental disorders to discuss the latest incarnation of the DSM, the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) classification of mental disorders. Held at the Institute of Psychiatry at the Maudsley, King’s College London, this meeting was entitled “DSM-5 and the future of psychiatric diagnosis: where is the roadmap taking us?”. As stated in the program the aims of the conference were to have a rigorous and comprehensive discussion of the clinical, research, and public health implications of the DSM-5 from top scientists, key policy makers, patient representatives and front-line workers. The meeting certainly lived up to, and at times exceeded, these aims with lively debate around the difficulties, challenges and, for many, the ambivalence of working within the DSM-5 framework. The meeting was also not without controversy as we, the delegates, were ushered into and out of emergency exits to avoid verbal attacks by scientology protesters, proclaiming anti-psychiatry sentiments.

The content of the meeting spanned the full spectrum of psychiatric disorders, providing interesting perspectives on issues such as the removal of the bereavement exclusion from the diagnosis of major depressive disorder (most agreed this was not such a good idea); the combination of Asperger’s disorder with three other developmental disorders into a single autism spectrum disorder (most agreed this was a good idea); and the validity of an attenuated psychosis syndrome, suggested to be a pre-cursor to psychosis.

Many speakers touched on the political nature of the DSM-5 development process, some highly critical of the financial benefits the DSM sales bring to the American Psychiatric Association (one delegate asked the chair of the DSM-5 task force, Dr David Kupfer, whether recent criticism of the DSM-5 has been a “PR disaster” for the APA). Sociological perspectives were also provided with much discussion of the beneficial and detrimental impact that a psychiatric diagnosis can have on an individual’s life.

So, what implications does the new manual have for the science of comorbidity?

The organization of the DSM-5 manual itself has been restructured to better reflect a lifespan approach to diagnosis and classification. To this end the manual is now structured such that disorders more often experienced in childhood (i.e. neurodevelopmental disorders) coming at the beginning of the manual and disorders more often experienced in older age (i.e. neurocognitive disorders) coming later in the manual.
The broad category of anxiety disorders has been rearranged quite substantially with obsessive-compulsive and related disorders split into their own category and stress-related disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder also found in their own separate chapter. It is probably of more interest though to unpack what has been happening within these broad diagnostic groupings and here DSM-5 has somewhat reduced the number of individual diagnosable disorders to 157 (down from 297 in DSM-IV). This has been achieved largely through the removal of sub-type specifiers (e.g. schizophrenia is no longer divided into a paranoid, disorganised, catatonic, undifferentiated or residual type). However, with 157 distinct categorical diagnoses the importance of understanding the etiological underpinnings of, and treatment approaches to, comorbidity is still paramount.

A clear message from this meeting is that comorbidity remains a significant challenge to the field of psychiatry which puts the CRE in mental health and substance use in a fantastic position to make real progress in the conceptualisation, identification and treatment of psychiatric disorders.

I am a Research Fellow in the Discipline of Addiction Medicine, University of Sydney. I have a BPsy, MPH, PhD and coordinate the Sydney Alcohol Treatment Research Group based at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. My specific interest lies in treatment research, particularly the efficacy and biobehavioural mechanisms involved pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy for alcohol use disorders and psychological comorbidities.

Following my PhD, which involved pre-clinical investigations of the long-term effects of MDMA ('Ecstasy') on the brain and behaviour, I began an NHMRC Postdoctoral Clinical Training Fellowship in 2007. This fellowship was to examine novel strategies in the treatment of alcohol dependence at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Here I have played an integral role in the design, execution, analysis and reporting of several randomised controlled trials including the largest alcohol pharmacotherapy trial in Australia (with Prof's Maree Teesson and Paul Haber). This NHMRC-funded trial has been highly cited, contributed to directing treatment guidelines world-wide, and provided me with an interest in comorbidity given that a substantial proportion of our patients presented with clinically significant concurrent depression and/or anxiety. My further work revealed that self-reported depression in alcohol dependent patients was a significant clinical predictor of treatment response to the anti-craving agent naltrexone.
Our group also completed a randomised trial for an Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AERF) funded integrated stepped care approach for alcohol dependence and comorbid anxiety and/or depressive disorder and also an NHMRC-funded multi-site randomised controlled trial for a cognitive behavioural intervention for concurrent substance use and suicide risk. Results from this latter trial are to be published this year. This was the first treatment trial internationally that specifically targeted this comorbid group. We observed little benefit from this intervention compared to treatment as usual and engagement in the treatment was low, particularly for younger patients. Almost three-quarters of the sample (recruited through emergency and our Drug and Alcohol unit) used alcohol during their last suicide attempt and the use of drugs and/or alcohol during the last suicide attempt predicted higher severity of subsequent suicide ideation. This has stimulated my interest to further explore accessible interventions for this complex and difficult to engage comorbid group.

Currently I am coordinating an NHMRC-funded placebo-controlled randomised trial investigating the efficacy and the biobehavioural basis of the medication baclofen in the treatment of alcoholic liver disease (BacALD study with A/Prof Andrew Baillie and Prof Paul Haber). Baclofen is a promising medication for this group given that many pharmacological treatments are limited by potential for hepatotoxicity. There is a high a considerably higher rate of psychological comorbidity in patients with alcoholic liver disease relative to non-alcoholic liver disease. To this degree, I hope to explore the moderators and mediators of treatment response such as genetic polymorphisms, anxiety and sleep disturbances.

Baclofen has been found to reduce self-reported anxiety, possibly due to GABA-B receptor agonist action. An interesting side-arm of this study will include the BacALD’s PhD student, Warren Logge, investigating the relationship between craving and measures of anxiety while patients are exposed to an alcohol cue. We started recruitment for this trial in March 2013 and will extend to two more treatment sites across Sydney by the end of the year.

I have published 20 journal articles, chapters (a chapter in the most recent Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems) and educational materials that have resulted in almost 700 citations. Awards include The University Medal; National Drug & Alcohol Awards 2007: Excellence in Research; NHMRC Travel Award 2011.

As a Research Fellow within CREMS, I hope to continue my research into the efficacy and biobehavioural basis of treatments for substance use disorders and psychological comorbidities through the integration of neuropharmacological and psychosocial frameworks.
The GoodNight Study
Professor Helen Christensen and John Gosling and are now recruiting for a web-based insomnia treatment study. Did you know that insomnia increases your risk of becoming depressed and anxious? If you, like 1/3 of the population, have trouble sleeping, you may benefit from participation in the GoodNight Study.

Climate Schools Combined (CSC) Study
Ms Zoe Tonks and Ms Louise Birrell’s CSC Study will evaluate an internet-based, ‘universal’ prevention model for anxiety, depression and substance misuse in adolescents. The trial will run from 2014-16 in NSW, QLD and WA, with recruitment now underway.

Climate Schools Interactive (CSI) Study
The aim of the CSI Study is to evaluate the Climate Schools module which focuses on ecstasy and emerging psychoactive substances (also known as ‘legal highs’ and ‘synthetic drugs’). The module is a four lesson program delivered to students via the internet and aims to increase awareness of these drugs and prevent their use now and in the future. To determine the efficacy of the module, Ms Katrina Champion is seeking Independent Secondary Schools in the greater Sydney region to participate in the trial.

Provider Survey on Adolescent PTSD and Substance Use
A/Prof Sudie Back and the team at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) are conducting a study to better understand the attitudes and experiences of providers treating co-occurring problems (PTSD, substance use disorders) in adolescent patients. Interested providers can use this link to access a secure, anonymous web survey that takes less than 15 minutes to complete. The results of the study will be valuable in helping the researchers design training and resources for providers on treating co-occurring disorders in adolescents.

ATOS: 11-year follow up
Dr Christina Marel is coordinating the follow up of the Australian Treatment Outcome Study (ATOS), examining long-term treatment outcomes for heroin dependence amongst those who were recruited to the study between 2001 and 2002. Most people were reinterviewed again several times up until 2005. We have just reached 64% and will be continuing to interview the same ATOS participants until December 2013.

If you know or think you may know anyone who might have been part of ATOS, please call Ms Joanne White on 02 9385 0304 or 0477 426 503. Participants will be given $40 for their time.

For more information on any of these projects, please visit our website.
Congratulations!

Climate Schools: Alcohol and Cannabis course is now listed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP). The program has been independently assessed and rated for quality of research and readiness for dissemination. Designed to be implemented within the school health curriculum, Climate Schools is based on a social influence approach to prevention and uses cartoon storylines to engage and maintain student interest and involvement. The intervention can be viewed here.

Professor Helen Christensen, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute at UNSW and member of CREMS, has been announced as a finalist in the annual UNSW Innovation Awards. Professor Christensen is one of 28 finalists and has been nominated for designing a mobile app to help people deal with suicidal thoughts and psychological distress. The winners will be announced on 12th September 2013.

Dr Nicola Newton was awarded a travel award by the United States National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) International Program and Prevention Research Branch to attend the 21st Annual Society for Prevention Research (SPR) conference. The conference was held in San Francisco in May, 2013. Dr Newton presented her work examining the secondary effects (such as reducing truancy, moral disengagement and psychological distress) of the Climate Schools program.

Congratulations to CREMS member Dr Sharlene Kaye on her recent promotion to Senior Lecturer with UNSW. Dr Kaye’s research examines the comorbidity between DHD and substance use, having recently completed an investigation into the diversion and misuse of stimulant medication for ADHD among illicit psychostimulant users. She is about to embark on a study of the non-medical use of prescription stimulants among Australian university students.

Positions Available

Dr Nicola Newton, Prof Maree Teesson, Prof Steve Allsop and Dr Nyanda McBride have been awarded a $700,983 grant by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The funding is to develop a portal for teachers and parents on illicit drug prevention and will complement the National Drugs Campaign.

The team is seeking a full-time senior researcher to co-ordinate the development of the online portal. Please contact Dr Nicola Newton at n.newton@unsw.edu.au for further information.

A/Prof Andrew Baillie is seeking expressions of interest for a post-doctoral researcher within CREMS to be based at the Centre for Emotional Health, Macquarie University. Please see here for more details. The deadline for submissions is 12 August 2013.


**RECENT PUBLICATIONS**

**UPCOMING SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS/EVENTS**

20 AUGUST 2013

CREMS NATIONAL CONFERENCE, THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS, MELBOURNE

21-23 AUGUST 2013

THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES CONFERENCE, MELBOURNE

25-28 SEPTEMBER 2013

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIOURAL AND COGNATIVE THERAPIES ANNUAL CONGRESS, MOROCCO

23-26 OCTOBER 2013

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON DUAL DISORDER, BARCELONA
MEMBERS

CHIEF INVESTIGATORS
- Prof Maree Teesson
- Prof Amanda Baker
- Dr 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 Mans
- Mr Trevor Hazell
- Prof Robyn Richmond
- Dr Cath Chapman
- A/Prof Tim Slade
- Prof Brain Kelly
- Dr Brian Hitsman
- Dr Leanne Hides
- Dr Pete Kelly
- Ms Marion Downey
- Prof Michael Farrell
- Dr Glenys Dore

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
- Ms Jasmin Bartlett
- Ms Stephanie O’Donnell
- Ms Sandi Steep

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOWS
- 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 Christina Marel
- Dr Kirsten Morley
- Dr Louise Thornton

RESEARCH PSYCHOLOGISTS
- Ms Phillipa Ewer
- Ms Jenny Geddes
- 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 Memedovic
- Ms Mikki Subotic
- Ms Kathryn Woodcock

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
- A/Prof Sudie Back
- Dr Lucy Burns
- Prof Michelle Moulds
- Ms Jaelea Skehan