ABOUT THE SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM

The CTC aims to improve healthcare and outcomes for Australians and the global community through high-quality research. Our education and training program aim to foster high-quality collaborative clinical trials research across our areas of expertise to improve outcomes for patients worldwide.

Successful students will undertake 8 weeks research internship (unpaid) with our leading academics, providing an opportunity to develop research skills, gain valuable experience and contribute to improving healthcare outcomes.

Projects are expected to be undertaken on a full-time bases (35 hours per week) over 8 weeks; however, how you achieve this is arrangement between the student and supervisor. This can be consecutive weeks or in blocks, so long as the total time commitment equates to 40 days or 280 hours. Students are expected to bring their own devices throughout the duration of the summer research program.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. The candidate must be currently enrolled at the University of Sydney as either an undergraduate student or postgraduate coursework student.
2. Have a strong academic record.
3. Intend to go on to Honours and/or postgraduate study in a related or equivalent field.
4. Australian or New Zealand citizen, holder of an Australian permanent resident or permanent humanitarian visa or an international student.
    a. Successful candidates who are not eligible for Medicare must have valid medical and hospital insurance for the period of the CTC Summer Research Scholarship. Proof of cover will be required upon commencement as a condition of eligibility for the project.
5. Have access to a personal device for the duration of the program.
6. Willingness to engage in hybrid, flexible work set up, with a combination of work from home and in the office located at the Medical Foundation Building on Parramatta Road, Camperdown.

Need further information?
Please contact:
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SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM PROJECTS

A REVIEW OF CLINICAL TRIAL CHARACTERISTICS RECORDED IN ANZCTR: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN 10 YEARS

Supervisors: Angela Webster, Lene Seidler, Melina Wilson

Synopsis:

Clinical trials are considered the gold standard for assessing the effectiveness of new treatments. However, for clinical trials to avoid research waste, it is crucial that trials are large enough (alone or in combination with other similar trials) to detect clinically important treatment effects, while ensuring that the minimum number of participants are recruited to reliably answer the research question. Clinical trial registries such as the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR) offer insight clinical trial characteristics. For example, from 2006 to 2015, there has been a trend towards smaller sample sizes for trials conducted in Australia.

The ANZCTR, hosted by the NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre, is an online register of clinical trials being undertaken in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. The ANZCTR collects information on trial characteristics such as the conditions studied, the trial design, intended and actual sample size, type of studied interventions, and funding source. This information can be used to explore clinical trial activity to help clinicians, industry, universities, and others in the health care sector to fund, plan, and conduct the most promising and needed trials.

The aim of this project is to assess the characteristics of clinical trials registered in the ANZCTR at two time points that are a decade apart. This will involve reviewing the trial design, eligibility criteria, sample size and outcomes of registered trials, and providing a detailed analysis of any changes over time.

The successful applicant will gain an insight to clinical trial registration, critical appraisal of clinical trials, and the field of evaluating and integrating evidence for decision-makers. The summer scholar will improve their data analysis and statistical programming skills. We expect to submit the results of this project for publication. This would reward the summer scholar's involvement with authorship in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE FOR THE PREVENTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Supervisors: Lene Seidler, Kylie Hunter, Angela Webster, Brittany Johnson (Flinders University, Adelaide)

Synopsis:

Obesity affects children even before they start school, with 1 in 5 Australian children having overweight or obesity at 5 years of age. Early childhood is a period when many behaviours that can contribute to the development of obesity – such as poor eating habits and physical inactivity – are established. A number of interventions to prevent childhood obesity have been tested around the world but the complexity of these interventions limits their translation into policy and practice. The TOPCHILD Collaboration (https://www.topchildcollaboration.org/) is bringing together researchers from around the world to transform the thinking and practices around early childhood obesity prevention.

The Behaviour Change Technique (BCT) taxonomy is a framework aimed at understanding different strategies to change behaviours, such as those leading to childhood obesity. The taxonomy has been cited over 3000 times, yet, little is known about how the taxonomy has been applied to the understanding of early obesity prevention interventions. This project seeks to explore how researchers have used the taxonomy including the types of qualitative and quantitative synthesis processes, whether they have undertaken training in how to code BCTs, what types of intervention descriptions have been used to identify BCTs and more. The findings will inform the work of the TOPCHILD collaboration in preventing early childhood obesity.

Main research question: How has the BCT taxonomy been applied to understanding early obesity prevention interventions (0-5years)?

Research methodology: Overview of systematic reviews of early childhood obesity prevention interventions.

The successful applicant will gain an insight to the field of early childhood obesity prevention, and the different approaches that are being applied to change behaviour in this area. They will learn about critical appraisal of clinical trials, and the evaluation and integration of evidence. The summer scholar will improve their literature search and appraisal skills. We aim to submit the results of this project for publication. This would reward the summer scholar's involvement with authorship in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

CTC SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM APPLICATION FORM AND INSTRUCTIONS

An online application form is managed through MS Forms. Applicants should prepare their application using the below template form prior to submitting online. All applications must be submitted no later than the advertised closing date and time. A confirmation receipt will be provided; however, it should be noted that this doesn't constitute a review of eligibility and/or completeness of the application.

KEY DATES:

Applications close	Wednesday 9 December
Students notified of outcome	Friday 11 December
Research projects commence by	Jan 2021
Research projects completed by	March 2021

The application includes:

- Part A – Student Details
- Part B – Project selected
- Part C – Addressing the Selection Criteria
- Part D – Supporting attachments
    - Evidence of health insurance if not covered by Medicare
    - Curriculum Vitae

APPLICATION TEMPLATE

PART A – STUDENT DETAILS

Student ID	
First name	
Surname	
Daytime phone number	
Email	
Degree	
Faculty	
Do you have access to your own device?	☐ Yes ☐ No

PART B – PROJECT DETAILS

Project Title/topic	*Dropdown of CTC topics*

PART C – ADDRESSING THE SELECTION CRITERIA

Reason for chosen topic and aptitude for research in that area (max 300 words)
How do you feel the project would enhance your student experience and develop your research skills? (max 300 words)
How this experience may apply to future study or career pathways? (max 300 words)