

MERQ newsletter

Issue 1: Autumn 2015



MERQ
Medical Education
Research & Quality Unit

Introducing MERQ

The Medical Education Research and Quality (MERQ) unit was developed in 2014, based on the need for an independent, evidence-based unit on medical education research and quality assurance.

MERQ is a medical education unit that has a specific focus on research in education and performance in medical and health sciences teaching. It aims to integrate research across medical education, competency, accreditation, quality and safety.



Photo: The Alfred Centre, Melbourne

Over 100 years ago the Flexner Report revolutionised medical education through changes in infrastructure, curricula and pedagogy. The 'information age', driven by innovative technologies, methodologies and academic, social and political factors is facilitating the complete re-structure of medical education for the first time since the Flexner Report.

Implementation science was born out of the need to 'plug' the evidence to practice gap, and provide an evidence-based approach to translating research findings to inform best clinical practice. The same evidence to practice gap exists in medical education.

The MERQ unit aims to develop and implement systems and methodologies that will translate evidence from pedagogy into practice, incorporating both medical education as well as clinical practice.

From MERQ

Welcome to the first edition of the MERQ newsletter. Each quarter MERQ will provide various updates on our activities including research, educational events, conferences, staff profiles and news in the field of medical and health sciences education. We will also provide commentaries on topical issues in the medical education field.

In our first issue we introduce MERQ and provide you with an insight into two of our flagship programs – the Teaching Associate Coaching Training and Summer Vacation programs. We're also happy to boast about the great success we've recently had in receiving funding across five projects from the Learning and Teaching funding scheme.

Thank you for your interest in MERQ and our newsletter, we look forward to sharing our activities with you.

A/Prof Dragan Ilic

Head, Medical Education Research and Quality (MERQ)



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Events

Teaching Associate Coaching Training Event

On the 17th of February the SPHPM team held a training event for tutors and unit coordinators involved in the school's teaching program. Approximately 50 attendees contributed to the discussion, which included tips for good teaching practice, dealing with challenging student scenarios and providing effective feedback to students. A central focus of the training was helping staff develop good communication, leadership, teamwork and organisational skills. Activities focused on providing new teaching staff with useful information for fulfilling their anticipated teaching roles, and giving experienced staff an opportunity to share their ideas and expertise. The training program is supplemented by an extensive online resource for teaching staff on Moodle, and a mentoring buddy system that will persist throughout the semester. A debrief session is scheduled for after the conclusion of semester one.



Photo: Dr Basia Diug leading discussion during the teaching associate coaching training event.



Photo: Interaction the key to successful engagement in training

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Photo: 2014 Summer Vacation students enjoying the program

Summer Vacation Program Final Seminar

In late February, SPHPM hosted the 2014 Summer Vacation Program Final Seminar, which signifies the end of another successful program for the school and co-coordinators Dr Basia Diug and Dr Jay Illesinghe. Twenty-three students spent a month with the school in December and four students were chosen to present on their time at SPHPM and the departments they worked with.

Congratulations to Bachelor of Health Science student Catherine Arnold for winning the top presentation for the 2014 Summer Vacation Program! Catherine's project was entitled: "Investigating sex differences in symptoms of acute coronary syndrome" and was supervised by Dr. Janet Bray.

We'd also like to congratulate the other top students chosen to present: Christie Allen: "My Summer Research Project: Working with MERQ," supervised by Associate Professor Dragan Ilic; Helen Huang: "The 6 Pack Project: Prevention of in-hospital falls," supervised by Associate Professor Anna Barker; and Grace Jeckel: "An insight into complementary medicine and the regulation of the supplement industry," supervised by Dr Kenneth Harvey.

All four presentations were the result of hard work, with students working tirelessly to present their findings. We thank all the students for the time they spent with us and hope they each received a valuable learning experience in return.



Photo: Christie Allen, A/Prof Dragan Ilic and Catherine Arnold

Research

A randomised controlled trial of a blended learning education intervention for teaching evidence-based medicine

Few studies have been performed to inform how best to teach evidence-based medicine (EBM) to medical trainees. Current evidence can only conclude that any form of teaching increases EBM competency, but cannot distinguish which form of teaching is most effective at increasing student competency in EBM. A/Prof Ilic recently completed a study that compared the effectiveness of a blended learning versus a didactic learning approach of teaching EBM to medical students with respect to competency, self-efficacy, attitudes and behaviour toward EBM. A total of 147 students completed the randomised controlled trial, and a further 29 students participated in six focus group discussions. Students who received the blended learning approach to teaching EBM

had significantly higher scores in 5 out of 6 behaviour domains, 3 out of 4 attitude domains and 10 out of 14 self-efficacy domains. Competency in EBM did not differ significantly between students receiving the blended learning approach versus those receiving the didactic learning approach.

The full-text of the article can be accessed via the BMC Medical Education link; <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6920/15/39>. Support for this publication has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

Grants

MERQ members were recently successful in being awarded five grants in the recent Learning and Teaching Research funding round. The projects build on existing and new collaborations with other departments within the FMNHS including medicine, radiation science, paramedic medicine, biological science, social work and physiotherapy. The projects include;

- Ascertaining student readiness and outcomes on inter-professional education in health professional programs.
- What happened on Grey's Anatomy last night? Teaching medicine and medical ethics using popular culture.
- Peer-assisted learning in paramedic education: A randomised control trial.

- Educators unite to develop and trial shared resources for teaching and learning research skills
- Knowledge Management Year 2/A Blended Learning Curriculum Development Project

Further Information:

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