Department of Psychiatry

Summer Scholarships at Southern Synergy

If you are interested in a Summer Scholarship position at Southern Synergy, then please follow these steps:

- Read the possible task list (below). Note that this list does NOT guarantee work on those particular tasks, it is provided to inform you about the type of work you will be required to do at Synergy.
- Check the requirements for obtaining a Summer Scholarship (Synergy cannot over-ride these, so if you are ineligible, then unfortunately we cannot consider you).
- Apply online at: https://www.monash.edu/students/scholarships/current/research-projects
- Contact frances.shawyer@monash.edu by sending your resume and a cover letter. In your cover letter, please explain why you would like to work at Synergy during the summer of 2020-21.
- We will review the resumes, trying to match student’s interests with our needs. We will then contact a short-list of students for interview.

Summer Scholarship at Synergy, summer of 2020-21

Synergy is offering a summer scholarship to one student. The student is required to work 4 days/week between Monday 30 November 2020 and Friday 26 February 2021 (except for University Christmas/New Year closedown period from Wednesday 23 December - Friday 1 January).

Students will be considered as a full member of the research team during the Summer Scholarship period and will be welcome to participate in research and staff meetings, staff mindfulness sessions, and social activities.

Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, students need to be prepared to work flexibly, including at our Dandenong site and/or from home. Our purpose-built offices at Dandenong Hospital are designed to optimise translational opportunities for work in mental health care, the facility has close co-location with the key leadership team of Monash Mental Health.

Students may assist our researchers with research tasks that are generally performed across the centre, allowing for a more diverse experience and greater insight into conducting research in an academic setting. The type of work students may be involved in will include:

1. Undertake small, focused literature reviews on a given topic.
2. Assist with project grant and ethics applications.
3. Assist with project implementation activities.
4. Assist with data entry and data coding.
5. Assist with quantitative data entry and/or management.
6. Assist with the production of newsletters and research presentation slides.
7. Assist with writing, editing and proof reading draft study reports and manuscripts.

Also students may have the opportunity to be involved in one or more of the many research projects in mental health care. Project work at Synergy may relate to one or more of the following areas:
Mental Health Services Research

PULSAR

PULSAR stands for ‘Principles Unite Local Services Assisting Recovery’. Recovery-oriented practice (ROP) involves supporting a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. The PULSAR intervention was staff training with the aim to embed ROP in participating primary care and specialist mental health care settings. Several evaluations are underway to evaluate the effectiveness of the PULSAR intervention on adult consumers of mental health services including, for example, an examination of findings in important subgroups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Medicare services for mental health care

High quality population-level research should guide mental health care policy. Yet, in Australia, billions of government dollars are spent each year on services that are not informed by rigorous research evidence. Funding policies for mental health services do not have a strong evidence base in terms of need, leading to scenarios whereby some high need areas (or groups) have inadequate services. This project is examining National Medicare and survey data over a 4-year period.

Place-based suicide prevention trial

The Victorian government is committed to halving the rate of suicide deaths by 2025. The Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework 2016-25 (VSPF) outlines their approach for achieving this. The Place-Based Suicide Prevention Trials (PBSPT) forms a cornerstone of the VSPF and is based on evidence that the many tested and proven suicide prevention interventions are best done together, in a whole-of-population and systems approach to suicide, tailored to local populations. The Victorian Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) is partnering with Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to trial the PBSPT in twelve communities across six PHN regions from January 2017 to June 2022. The DHHS has commissioned the Sax Institute and Southern Synergy to evaluate the PBSPT.

Other possible projects

Further projects are under funding body review or in development including impact of COVID-19 on consumers of public mental health services and evaluation of the Monash Health Forensic Mental Health in Community Health (FMHiCH) Program.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is a group based intervention designed to reduce rates of relapse of major depressive disorder. It integrates aspects of cognitive therapy with components of a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. It teaches clients to become more aware of, and to relate differently to, thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations; in particular, to view thoughts and feelings as passing events in the mind rather than as necessarily reflecting reality. We have collected data from nearly 200 people evaluating the effect of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on depressive relapse over a two year follow up period (the DARE project).

For a more detailed overview of our projects, please visit our website: https://www.monash.edu/medicine/scs/southern-synergy/student-projects

The successful applicant(s) will be notified by the scholarship office mid-November.