Our members include over 110 academics from 8 faculties, 28 departments and 2 institutes making it one of the largest addiction research centres in the world.

Our members published 173 peer-reviewed journal articles in the field of addiction. 71% were published in Q1 journals.

Our members received over $17 million in funding to complete addiction-based research.

MARC funded 7 seed grants (3 collaborative grants and 4 post-doctoral grants) and 3 PhD scholarship top-ups.

The Monash Addiction Research Centre was mentioned more than 106 times in radio, television, online and print media, potentially reaching over 4 million viewers.

Visit us at: monash.edu/medicine/ehcs/marc
ABOUT US

The Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC) brings together world-leading expertise from across Monash University and the sector to provide solutions to the challenges of addiction.

We have over 110 academic members across eight faculties (28 departments) and two institutes, making us one of the largest addiction centres in the world. The work conducted by our membership encompasses three key themes of addiction research activity:

- Science
- Culture & Policy
- Prevention & Treatment

Our focus is on building interdisciplinary collaboration and addiction research capacity to:

- Position MARC to conduct innovative research that transforms addiction science, practice and policy
- Leverage our clinical-academic partnerships, including with Peninsula Health, to test local solutions with the potential for national upscaling and impact.

OUR AIM

MARC is dedicated to finding solutions that transform the way we think about and respond to addiction.
We are pleased to present the Monash Addiction Research Centre’s Annual Report for 2019–2020

It has been another successful year for MARC and we are very pleased with the progress we have made towards our objectives. We have continued to build on our reputation as a leading national and international centre for addiction research and leadership. This year we have focused on strengthening our partnerships, expanding our membership base and facilitating interdisciplinary research and collaboration through a range of initiatives and activities.

We launched the MARC Interdisciplinary Research Support Funding Scheme (IRSFS), aimed at stimulating new collaborative multidisciplinary research across different academic career levels through targeted seed funding and PhD top-up scholarships. We also hosted the inaugural MARC Symposium – a one-day event showcasing current MARC research to more than 100 attendees, including funders, policymakers and practitioners.

Our members have been successful in securing more than $17M in research funding and have published over 170 peer-reviewed articles, demonstrating the breadth and strength of interdisciplinary collaboration established through the Centre.

In the second half of 2019, we established our external Advisory Board comprising of representatives from a broad range of key stakeholder groups and partners. The board provides independent advice to support MARC’s goal of transforming the way society understands and responds to addiction.

Of course, this year has not been without its challenges and the impact of the global pandemic has required us to adapt to the way we work and how we engage with our members and stakeholders. As a result, we commenced planning for the MARC interdisciplinary webinar series. The virtual events will be held monthly, commencing in the second half of 2020, and aim to bring together addiction researchers, clinicians and other experts from the sector to discuss emerging research and challenges.

As we move towards the end of 2020, some challenges will remain, but we are confident that our world-class researchers will use the insights gained as a result of the pandemic to adapt and positively impact the way we approach, understand and respond to addiction.

On behalf of MARC, we would like to thank our advisory board, our members, research partners and the community for their contribution to the Centre’s success.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

PROFESSOR DAN LUBMAN
Director

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SUZANNE NIELSEN
Deputy Director
Centre Director, Professor Dan Lubman oversees the Centre’s research and operations while playing a key role in the development of industry engagement activities.

Deputy Director, Associate Professor Suzanne Nielsen is instrumental in the development of research collaborations and plays a critical role in the strategic development of key initiatives in the Frankston Mornington Peninsula region. Other core staff include members of the strategy and business operations team.
MARC Theme Leaders

MARC’s theme leader group takes on the collective responsibility for informing the strategic direction of the Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC) and sharing information relating to MARC activities and opportunities. Theme leaders represent each of the three research themes within MARC, acting as a conduit for information between MARC and the departments and faculties in which they are based.

Science

PROFESSOR ANTONIO VERDEJO-GARCIA
Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health

DR JENNIFER SCHUMANN (PILGRIM)
Forensic Medicine

DR JENNI ILOMAKI
Centre for Medicine Use Safety

DR NAOMI KAKOSCHKE
Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health

Prevention and Treatment

PROFESSOR PAUL DIETZE
Burnet Institute

PROFESSOR ARON SHLONSKY
Social Work

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR VICTORIA MANNING
Turning Point

DR SHALINI ARUNOGIRI
Turning Point

DR TINA LAM
Monash Addiction Research Centre

Culture and Policy

DR DEBBIE SCOTT
Turning Point

DR LE STURGISS
General Practice

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PHILIP MENDES
Social Work

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR KATE SEEAR
Law

DR SONJA KASSENBOEHMER
Centre for Health Economics

DR ROWAN OGEIL
Turning Point

DR CAMERON ROSE
Arts

DR MICHAEL SAVIC
Turning Point

DR FRASER TULL
BehaviourWorks
Early to Mid-Career Researcher Committee

The Centre formed an Early to Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) sub-committee to support EMCR’s, including PhD students, by offering professional support and developmental opportunities. The EMCR committee organise and attend quarterly networking events, grant writing workshops and other professional development opportunities.

In 2019/2020 the EMCR committee representatives are:

A/PROF SUZANNE NIELSEN  
Monash Addiction Research Centre

DR TINA LAM  
Monash Addiction Research Centre

DR ROWAN OGEIL  
Turning Point

DR NAOMI KAKOSCHKE  
Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health

DR LIZ STURGIS  
General Practice

DR KATHARINA VOIGT  
Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health

DR JENNI ILOMAKI  
Centre for Medicine Use & Safety
In 2019, MARC established its external Advisory Board. The board comprises of representatives from a broad range of key stakeholders and partners who bring together a wealth of leadership and expertise.

The board assists MARC in its mission to provide national solutions to the problems of addiction by increasing the visibility of the Centre across the community and supporting the work of our members.

Chair, MARC Advisory Board

Mietta Gibson has a Commerce degree from Deakin University and has had a successful career in Human Resources for companies such as Daimler, Fiat Chrysler, World Vision and MYOB. In recent years, Mietta has been working as a consultant along with leaders and teams at a variety of organisations to create positive and inspiring workplaces.

Ms Gibson has been fortunate to have recently been involved with the Gibson Family foundation, a small foundation interested in creating impact in areas such as mental health. She coordinated support from the foundation to Turning Point and MARC to create video stories documenting the lived experience of people with addiction.

She is excited to be the chair of the MARC Advisory Board and sees it as a great opportunity to combine her professional experience, her lived experience of having a family member with addiction and mental health issues, and to represent her Mornington Peninsula community.

Board Members

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>BETH ALLEN</td>
<td>Acting Director, Children &amp; Families Policy Branch, Children and Families Division, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAM BIONDO</td>
<td>Executive Officer, Victorian Alcohol and Drugs Association</td>
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<td>ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER CARTER</td>
<td>CEO, North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN)</td>
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<td>PROFESSOR DAVID COPOLOV AO</td>
<td>Pro Vice-Chancellor (Major Campuses and Student Engagement), Monash University</td>
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<td>PROFESSOR KIM CORNISH</td>
<td>Director, Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELIZABETH DEVENY</td>
<td>CEO, South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DR ALISON DAWNER</td>
<td>Executive Director, Research (Chief Medical Officer), Eastern Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>DICK GROSS</td>
<td>Councillor, City of Port Phillip</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEATHER PICKARD</td>
<td>CEO, Self Help Addiction Resource Centre</td>
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<td>FELICITY TOPP</td>
<td>CEO, Peninsula Health</td>
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<td>ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TONY WALKER</td>
<td>CEO, Ambulance Victoria</td>
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<td>AC GLENN WEIR</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner, Eastern Region, Victoria Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>MICHAEL WEST</td>
<td>Acting Assistant Director, Drug Policy and Reform, Health and Wellbeing Division, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELISSA ARDUCA</td>
<td>Director, Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services</td>
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FUNDING SUCCESS

MARC researchers have been awarded more than $17 million in research funding to conduct research relating to addiction, substance use and related behaviours. The below examples of funding success demonstrate the strength of the emerging interdisciplinary collaboration being established through MARC.

‘Working with practitioners to reduce alcohol related harm — embedding brief interventions in Victorian general practices’

**Investigators:** Dr Liz Sturgiss, Prof Grant Russel, Prof Danielle Mazza, Lauren Ball, Renee O’Donnell, Helen Skouteris, A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Dr Tina Lam & David Jacka (2019-2021).

This research is supporting General Practitioners in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas to implement brief interventions for risky drinking. Drinking at risky levels has ramifications for the health and wellbeing of Victorians and affects families and the wider community through absenteeism, family violence, assaults, and motor vehicle collisions. Brief interventions in primary care can lead to meaningful reductions in alcohol consumption. There are clear primary care guidelines on how to assess and advise people about their alcohol use, but few primary care practitioners routinely screen and help their patient with alcohol use despite the effectiveness of brief interventions.

Alcohol-related harm is disproportionally higher among low-income groups who are almost twice as likely to experience alcohol-related harm compared to high-income groups. For this reason, the focus of this project will be on developing a clinical approach tailored for people from low-income groups.

MARC member Dr Liz Sturgiss leads the project, with other MARC members on the research team including Prof Grant Russell, A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen and Dr Tina Lam. Collaborating with patients and practitioners, the research team will co-design a new approach to increase the capacity of primary care practitioners to use brief interventions for alcohol. They will seek feedback from low-income patients and clinicians working in low-income communities to develop screening tools for use in the waiting room, clinician prompts within the consultation room, and clinical resources tailored to patient needs.

A collaboration between Department of General Practice, MARC, Monash Health and Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation.

*Project funded by Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)*
‘Understanding heavy alcohol consumption cultures among nurses and lawyers’

**Investigators:** Dr Robyn Dwyer, Dr Amy Pennay, Dr Michael Savic, A/Prof Sarah MacLean, Dr Rowan Ogeil, Prof Dan Lubman, Prof Robin Room, Mr Jarryd Bartle (2019 -2023)

Led by Dr Dwyer, this team of researchers from LaTrobe University and Monash University including MARC members Dr Michael Savic, Dr Rowan Ogeil, and Prof Dan Lubman have received an ARC Linkage Grant to investigate drinking culture in the legal and nursing professions. This project aims to investigate drinking cultures among nurses and lawyers – two sizeable Australian workforces where heavy drinking is common. Addressing drinking cultures among social groups is an emerging strategy to complement population and individual level efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm. Alcohol use among workers has implications for health, safety and performance, yet researchers have paid little attention to occupational drinking cultures. Using rigorously collected qualitative and quantitative data, this project expects to generate new knowledge on sociocultural practices and meanings of drinking in the groups, illuminate relations between drinking cultures and harms, and enable innovative intervention opportunities.

A collaboration between the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR), Turning Point, MARC, Eastern Health, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria and Jarryd Bartle Consulting (JBC).

*Project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC)*

‘Impacts of Banned Drinkers Register Re-introduction in Northern Territory’

**Investigators:** Prof Peter Miller, Prof James Smith, Dr Michael Livingston, Prof Steven Guthridge, Dr Caroline Whyte, A/Prof John Boffa, Prof Yin Paradies, Prof Tanya Chikritzhs, Prof Robin Room, Dr Richelle Mayshak, Ms Le Smith, Dr Matt Stevens, Mr John Paterson, A/Prof James Ward, Meredythe Crane, Michael Thorn, Dr Debbie Scott (2019-2022)

Deakin University and MARC member Dr Debbie Scott have received an ARC linkage grant to study the impacts of the Banned Drinkers Register Re-introduction in Northern Territory. Rates of alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory are more than twenty times greater than seen in other Australian jurisdictions. Using qualitative and quantitative methods across urban and remote regions this interdisciplinary team seeks to answer complex questions about the impact of the banned drinkers register policy. The study aims to inform future policy introduction and refinement, as well as enhancing Aboriginal research capacity for investigating alcohol policy.

A collaboration between Deakin University, Turning Point, MARC, NT Government, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory, NT Primary Health Network and Central Australian Aboriginal Corporation (CAAC).

*Project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC)*
‘Enhancing primary healthcare for adults on low incomes with obesity – an intervention development study’

Investigators: Dr Liz Sturgiss (2020 - 2024)

Obesity is a national health priority that disproportionately affects adults on low incomes. Obesity can be effectively managed in primary healthcare (PHC), yet adults on low incomes are more likely to report that the time general practitioners spend with them is inadequate, and they feel less respected and listened to compared to the general population.

Currently, not enough is known about why adults on low incomes have worse PHC experiences or how PHC can be orientated to get better health outcomes for adults on low incomes living with obesity. MARC member Dr Liz Sturgiss will identify best models of PHC practice and uncover priorities for obesity management in PHC. This will then lead to the development and testing of an intervention to make PHC more effective and acceptable for adults on low incomes with obesity.

Project funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

‘Microeconometric Analysis of Socioeconomic Inequity in Mental Healthcare’

Investigators: Prof David Johnston, Prof Michael Shields, Dr Nicole Black, Prof Anthony Harris, Prof Dan Lubman, and Prof Martin Knapp (2020-2022)

MARC members Prof David Johnston, Dr Nicole Black and Prof Dan Lubman are part of this research team that aims to describe the extent of socioeconomic inequity in Australian mental healthcare use, identify the causal pathways that drive inequities, and conduct economic evaluations of programs aimed at improving healthcare access. Microeconometric methods will be used to analyse large, longitudinal datasets that have not previously used for this purpose. The project expects to provide a greater understanding of the barriers that people face in accessing treatment and how to overcome them. Such understanding is currently missing from academic literature and policy inquiries. Ultimately, the research should aid in the design of cost-effective policies that improve health outcomes and that reduce inequities in treatment access.

Project funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

‘Addressing Hepatitis C-related discrimination in a post-cure world’

Investigators: A/Prof Kate Seear, Prof Suzanne Fraser, A/Prof Kylie Valentine, Dr Adrian Farrugia, Dr Michael Edwards, Mr Daniel Jeffcote (2020 – 2023)

MARC member A/Prof Kate Seear leads this project, which aims to address the legal and policy dimensions of hepatitis C discrimination. Hepatitis C is a major public health challenge linked to profound discrimination, including in law and policy. Treatments introduced in 2016 improved cure rates; optimism about disease elimination is high, but questions remain about discrimination faced by those who are cured. This interdisciplinary project’s goal is to generate new knowledge about hepatitis C discrimination in a post-cure context and identify opportunities for legal and policy reform. Expected outcomes of the project include better legal, social and policy outcomes for Australians cured of hepatitis C, significantly benefiting these individuals directly and society more broadly.

Project funded by the Australian Research Council.

‘Determining the feasibility and efficacy of Goal Management Training for improving treatment retention and outcomes during residential treatment for methamphetamine dependence’

Investigators: Prof Antonio Verdejo-Garcia, Eric Allan, Prof Dan Lubman (2020-2021)

This project brings together a team of experts in addiction neuroscience, MARC members Prof Verdejo-Garcia and Prof Lubman, and frontline clinician, Eric Allan, to examine whether Goal Management Training (GMT) is feasible and well accepted by methamphetamine users in Australian public treatment and rehabilitation centres, and if it reduces relapse rates after treatment discharge. They will conduct an exploratory randomised controlled trial to test the feasibility/acceptability and preliminary efficacy of a 4-week GMT protocol versus a control psychoeducation intervention. They have developed the 4-week GMT protocol (which is shorter and contains more tailored materials than standard GMT) to cater the specific needs of methamphetamine users (e.g. making long-term [vs reward] based decisions). The primary outcomes will be proportion of GMT completions; participants’ assessments of acceptability, engagement and benefit; and rates of abstinence four weeks post-discharge measured with hair toxicology. The findings of this study will be readily translated into standard practice.

A collaboration between Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health, Turning Point and MARC.

Project funded by National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)
‘Understanding emerging opioid-related harms through improved surveillance, drug checking and information sharing systems’

**Investigators:** A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Sarah Hiley, Julie Latimer, Dr Nico Clark, Dr Marianne Jauncey, Dr Monica Barratt, A/Prof Dimitri Gerostamoulos, Linda Glowacki, Prof Claude Roux, Dr Marie Morelato, Elodie Lefrancois, Dr Tina Lam, Michael Gilbert (2020 – 2021)

Currently there are no rapid-monitoring systems to gather timely information on changing opioid overdose patterns and risk factors including emerging drugs. This project led by MARC member A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen along with MARC members A/Prof Dimitri Gerostamoulos and Dr Tina Lam will examine fixed-site drug checking and data monitoring to form a rapid overdose warning system that can feed into the emerging Prompt Response Network, and local communication networks.

A collaboration between MARC, Epidemiology & Preventative Medicine, the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (Uniting) in Sydney and the Medically Supervised Injecting Room (North Richmond Community Health) in Melbourne.

*Project funded by National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)*

‘An open label pilot study of intranasal oxytocin for methamphetamine withdrawal in women’

**Investigators:** Dr Shalini Arunogiri, Prof Dan Lubman, A/Prof Victoria Manning, Dr Gill Bedi, A/Prof Rebecca McKein, Professor Iain McGregor and A/Prof Femke Buisman-Pijlman (2020 – 2021)

This study, led by Dr Shalini Arunogiri, is a novel pilot study aiming to trial a world-first approach to improving treatment outcomes for individuals experiencing methamphetamine withdrawal. The research team will investigate the effectiveness of an investigational medication, oxytocin, in improving a range of addiction treatment outcomes during a one-week residential withdrawal admission (detox), as well as the early recovery period. They aim to identify whether oxytocin will help treat withdrawal symptoms and craving, and whether it will assist in improving the likelihood of completion of detox. The study has a specific focus on women as the literature suggests that responses to oxytocin may be sex-specific. Women have also been identified as an under-researched group experiencing significant methamphetamine-related burden with no sex-specific treatment approaches currently available. The study is currently in preparation and we will be aiming to recruit participants in late 2020.

A collaboration between Turning Point & Monash Addiction Research Centre

*Project funded by National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED)*

‘Transforming access to addiction treatment: overcoming system barriers and developing effective early intervention approaches’

**Investigators:** Prof Dan Lubman (2021-2025)

Addiction is one of the most highly stigmatised disorders in our community, resulting in a near two-decade delay before people seek treatment. Although individuals with alcohol and drug problems present many times to health services, there are multiple missed opportunities for intervention. Professor Lubman has been awarded a 5-year prestigious NHMRC Investigator Grant to identify opportunities to facilitate early help-seeking and treatment via insights through data linkage and machine learning, as well as testing novel telephone-based models of care.

*Project funded by the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC)*
RESEARCH

‘Identifying and understanding men’s risky drinking subcultures and settings’

Investigators: A/Prof Steven Roberts, Dr Karla Elliott, Prof Kerry O’Brien, Prof Jo Lindsay, Dr Brady Robards, Dr Michael Savic & Prof Dan Lubman.

This innovative study explored factors influencing risky drinking behaviours among four male social worlds; sports players (rural and urban), rural sports supporters, hospitality workers and corporate workers. The research found that risky drinking was highly prevalent across the sample groups. Metropolitan-based hospitality workers reported themselves to have the highest proportion of risky drinkers, and indicated risky drinking activity on a more regular basis. This was due to a combination of occupational practices (including access to free drinks) and a perceived necessity for post-work ‘wind down’.

Participants variously suggested that risk, for them, started at 10, 15, 20 or 30 standard drinks. However, men did not routinely perceive their drinking to be ‘risky’. Men’s understanding of what constitutes risk and risky amounts of alcohol differed considerably from the national guidelines. A minority of men from all social worlds suggested that there is no level of alcohol consumption that ought to be considered risky.

Participants also demonstrated a general distaste for ‘government’ definitions of risk and were cynical of paternalistic, government-funded health advice. Alcohol is considered central to social interaction and connection. Alcohol consumption was considered a central element of most of the participants’ social interactions with other men, with participants viewing alcohol as a way of facilitating and reinforcing connections. Alcohol was often described as an icebreaker, and as a means of lowering men’s inhibitions to help them ‘open up’.

Full report here

A collaboration between the Faculty of Arts, Turning Point, MARC and Eastern Health Clinical School. Project funded by Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

Media: Monash Lens ‘Risky drinking among men: alcohol’s role in social interaction’

Awards: Winner of ‘2019 VicHealth Awards Research into Action Category’
The final report of the Crossover Kids study entitled ‘Crossover Kids: Effective responses to children and young people in the youth justice and statutory Child Protection systems’ was published in March 2020. The report authored by Professor Rosemary Sheeham and MARC member Dr Susan Baidawi explores the outcomes faced by children who experience involvement with both child protection and youth justice systems in Victoria.

Project funded by the Australian Research Council, the Australian Institute of Criminology, and the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Media: Monash Lens From care to custody: the tragic trajectory of crossover kids

Featured publications:

‘Driving Health: Developing evidence-based strategies to improve the health and safety of transport workers’

Investigators: Dr Ross Iles, Prof Alex Collie, Prof Dan Lubman, Prof Shantha Rajaratnam, A/Prof Sharon Newnam.

Truck driving is the most common occupation for Australian men, and truck drivers are at a much higher risk of death and injury at work than other workers. The research team have forged a partnership that represents truck drivers (Transport Workers Union), employers (Linfox) and government (Centre for Work Health and Safety) working together to find out what leads to poor health in Australian truck drivers. Most importantly, they will develop new ways to help truck drivers be healthy and stay healthy at work.

A collaboration between School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Turning Point, MARC, Turner Institute, MUARC and Industry. Project funded by National Health & Medical Research Council.


Authors: Dr Jane Hayman, A/Prof Janneke Berecki-Gisolf, A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Dr Tina Lam

The Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) in collaboration with the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU) and the Monash Addiction Research Centre (MARC) have authored the September 2019 edition of Hazard. The report focuses on pharmaceutical opioid-related harm in Victoria over a ten-year period using patterns in hospital admissions and Emergency Department attendances. In addition, the Hazard report provides insight into intentional self-harm versus unintentional opioid poisoning, and harms by type of pharmaceutical poisoning.

Full report here

“HOSPITAL TREATMENT COSTS (DIRECT AND INDIRECT) FOR PHARMACEUTICAL OPIOID-RELATED ADMISSIONS TOTALLED $16.35 MILLION.”

Hospital admissions by intent

- Intentional self-harm: 61%
- Unintentional: 27%
- Other and undetermined intent: 12%

15-19 Year olds:
- Intentional self-harm hospital admissions were highest among 15-19 year olds for both females (67%) and males (71%)

8%↑
The opioid ED presentation trend is most pronounced in young females, but the rate increase is steepest in men aged 45-54 years (average annual increase of 8%)

3.1%↑
Opioid emergency department presentations increased by an annual average rate of 3.1% during the 10-year period (2008/09-2017/18)

71%
Intentional self-harm ED presentations were highest among females aged 15-19 years (71%)
‘The impacts of increased gambling opportunities on gambling behaviour and related harms among older Victorians’

**Investigators:** Prof David Johnston, A/Prof Nicole Black (2018-2020).

This project conducted by MARC members Prof David Johnston and A/Prof Nicole Black from the Centre for Health Economics (CHE) investigated the health, social and economic consequences of increased gambling opportunities for older Victorians. Specifically, the project estimated the causal effects of increasing the residential proximity and density of electronic gambling machines (EGM) on gambling behaviour and gambling-related harms among older Victorians. It also identified the groups of older Victorians whose gambling behaviour and wellbeing are most affected.


‘Routine Opioid Outcome Monitoring (ROOM) in Community Pharmacy’

**Investigators:** A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen, Pene Wood, A/Prof Raimondo Bruno and Prof Alison Ritter

In Australia over the past decade, increasing harms have been attributed to prescription opioid use. This research study led by A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen aimed to develop and pilot the implementation of the Routine Opioid Outcome Monitoring (ROOM) in community pharmacies across NSW and Victoria, with the aim of improving identification of opioid-related problems as they emerge. The ROOM tool measures outcomes with opioids using a validated framework and includes domains such as pain, mood, opioid use disorder, alcohol use and constipation. The initial stage of the project developed and validated these tools for computer-based self-administered use. Next, ROOM was implemented with 64 pharmacists across 23 pharmacies who were recruited and trained to conduct ROOM. The screening processes were embedded into pharmacy dispensing software. Pharmacists also completed baseline and follow up surveys to measure changes in knowledge and confidence, following training and implementation.

Findings revealed significant improvements in confidence identifying and responding to unmanaged pain, depression and opioid dependence, from baseline to follow up. Pharmacists and patients also indicated the ROOM tool was acceptable in relation to ease of use, relevance and usefulness of the information provided.

Pharmacist characteristics were associated with the degree of implementation of the ROOM, where fewer years of practice was associated with a greater number of screenings being conducted. Lower knowledge of naloxone and lower confidence in identifying unmanaged pain as baseline predicted with reduced engagement in screening with the ROOM tool in the study.

**Project funded by the following sources:** Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network (CESPHN), Western Sydney Primary Health Network (WSPHN), NHMRC Translating Research Into Practice Fellowship and a Mindgardens Seed Funding Grant.


Similar to other high-income countries, Australian opioid-related mortality has almost doubled in the past decade, and the majority of the deaths are pharmaceutical opioid-related. Despite common extramedical use, few studies examine the relative harms associated with different pharmaceutical opioids.

This study aimed to describe rates and characteristics of harms related to commonly prescribed pharmaceutical opioids such as buprenorphine, codeine, fentanyl, oxycodone, oxycodone-naloxone, morphine, pethidine, tramadol, and tapentadol.

We examined ambulance attendance cases where recent extramedical (i.e. over- or inappropriate) use of a pharmaceutical opioid significantly contributed to the reason for the ambulance attendance.

This study represents one of the most detailed population level examinations of pharmaceutical opioid-related harm in Australia. Distinct patterns of harms were observed for different opioids. These highlight the need to consider factors such as the formulation and the context of use to develop nuanced responses to reduce pharmaceutical opioid-related harm.

This work has also been presented at various conferences such as Addictions in Lisbon, the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) in Hobart, Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) Gold Coast, the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM), and John Hopkins University.

We are currently conducting similar work on comparing pharmaceutical opioid related overdoses that present to emergency departments.

This project was funded by an untied educational grant from Seqirus Pty Ltd.


‘Overdose prevention information for people prescribed opioids for chronic pain - Enhancing community pharmacists capacity to respond’

Investigators: Isabelle Volpe, A/Prof Victoria Manning, Dr Michael Savic, A/Prof Suzanne Nielsen and Jarrod McMaugh.

Over the past two decades, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of deaths worldwide from prescription opioid use, and in Australia, opioid-related deaths have almost doubled in the decade since 2007. Turning Point and MARC researchers reviewed existing pharmacist training materials and found a lack of resources were available to support them in talking to patients who are prescribed opioids for chronic pain about overdose prevention.

Many patients prescribed opioids were unaware of the role of naloxone – a drug used to reverse the effects of opioids, and most pharmacists never offered naloxone to patients citing overdose as a low priority and a lack of tools available to support their conversations with patients.

This has led to the development of a range of resources to encourage conversations on opioid safety. The resources include a poster and five-minute animation for pharmacists, and an easy to use quick-reference leaflet and three-minute animation for patients. The new materials are an important tool in educating pharmacists and patients on the use of naloxone for pharmaceutical opioids, and as part of a broader solution to reduce opioid-related deaths.

Full report here

A collaboration between Turning Point, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and MARC.

Project funded by the Victorian Government, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
On Friday, 1 November 2019, MARC hosted its annual EMCR grant writing workshop. The event focused on the then upcoming round of NHMRC Investigator Grants and included grant writing tips and a chance for EMCR’s to ask questions to Dr Liz Sturgiss, a successful investigator grant applicant in the 2019 round. Dr Shalini Arunogiri provided advice from the perspective of an Investigator Grant Panel Member. The event concluded with an informal MARC EMCR social catch up, which provided a great networking opportunity for EMCR’s from five different departments.

Building Interdisciplinary collaboration

• Engagement with researchers across Peninsula campus, within the faculty, and across faculties
• Establishment of an Interdisciplinary Leadership Network, comprised of 15 senior and early to mid-career academics, representing 3 research themes

Inaugural MARC 2019 Symposium

We were delighted to host the inaugural MARC Symposium on Thursday 22 August. More than 100 people attended the event and heard from over 30 speakers from 5 Faculties and 15 Departments across Monash. It was a fantastic event highlighting the diverse range of research currently being conducted at the University by academics, and the truly collaborative spirit of our researchers.

Here is some of the feedback we received:

“Congratulations on running one of the most thought provoking and truly impactful and interdisciplinary symposia that it has been my pleasure to attend.”

“It was a fantastic event - really blown away not just by the breadth but also by the quality of the work that is being conducted across the university.”

“Congratulations on such a really well organised and run day. I’m a big fan of short punchy presentations and so the format was great.”

Prize Winners

Best Poster Award: Dr Pallavi Prathavadi for her poster presentation titled “The opioid prescribing practices of Australian GP’s”

Best Early to Mid-Career Research Rapid Communication Presentation Award – Dr John Gardner for his talk titled “Psychedelic-assisted therapies: Cultural barriers to responsible research”
We introduced our first interdisciplinary funding round to advance addiction-related research. There were three types of competitive funding opportunities: (1) Collaborative Seed Funding Project Grants for large-scale projects, (2) Post-doctoral Seed Funding Project Grants, and (3) PhD Top-up Scholarships.

**Collaborative Seed Funding Project Grant Awardees**

**Dr Debbie Scott and Dr Ben Beck**

‘Linking Victorian State Trauma Registry and Ambulance Data to explore the relationships between trauma, alcohol and drug use, self-harm and mental health’

This study aims to improve the understanding of the role of alcohol, drug and mental health issues in serious injury and trauma.

**Dr Simon Bell and Dr Nadine Andrew**

‘Generating evidence for action: The incidence, prevalence and trajectories of benzodiazepine use in Australia 2013-2019’

The overall aim of the project is to generate new, high quality national data on the incidence, prevalence and trajectories of benzodiazepine use in Australia from 2013 to 2019.

**Prof Antonio Verdejo-Garcia**

‘Goal Management Training for Methamphetamine Addiction’

This project aims to develop an abbreviated/focused version of GMT using innovative, patient-centred behavioural design methods, and to provide proof of concept evidence of its benefits.

**Post-doctoral Seed Funding Grant Awardees**

**Dr Dhanya Nambir**

‘One size does not fit all: Targeting factors that influence overdose and other drug-related harms in high risk regions of Melbourne’

The overarching aim of this project is to examine the use of ambulance services in a cohort of people who inject drugs clustered by high-risk areas of urban Melbourne, and identify risk factors for acute harms such as injury, violence and overdose.

**Dr Rowan Ogeil**

‘Hot spots of alcohol-related harm in adolescent risky drinkers: How can they be used to understand harms and inform policy?’

This project will investigate alcohol-related consumption and harms amongst young Australians, and engage directly with them through interviews.

**Dr Shalini Arunogiri**

‘Sex hormones, mood and alcohol use in women: Towards a novel treatment target’

This project aims to inform the development of moderation guidelines to enhance individuals’ experiences of online recovery communities, and to build a program of work around online support communities.

**Dr Ting Xia**

‘Opioid prescriptions among Victorian workers’ compensation claimants: Prescription patterns and risk factors with longer-term opioid prescribing’

The overarching aim of this study is to determine whether Victorian workers with an accepted workers compensation claim receive evidence-based opioid treatment.
PhD Top-up Scholarships Awardees

Dr Pallavi Prathivadi
‘Improving opioid prescribing in Australian general practice’

This study aims to determine the self-reported opioid prescribing practices and concerns of Australian GPs and GP registrars.

Michael Curtis
‘Understanding the impact of opioid substitution therapy programs on drug use, health service utilisation, morbidity and mortality among young people who inject drugs following release from prison’

The primary objective of this research program is to inform policy and practice to optimise opioid substitution therapy (OST) program delivery by determining the role of OST provided in prison and post-prison release in reducing harm associated with injecting drug users (IDU).

Louisa Picco
‘Implementation of prescription drug monitoring programs: Measuring the intended and unintended outcomes of identifying high-risk opioid use’

The proposed objectives of this mixed-methods PhD are to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of prescription drug monitoring program implementation has on the identification and treatment of prescription opioid use disorders. To generate insights into the clinical processes and pathways for, and identify a range of intended and unintended outcomes of prescription drug monitoring program implementation.

Workforce Development

- Contributing content to Monash’s Master of Addictive Behaviours course
- Developing core materials for undergraduate addiction education
- Providing workforce development workshops to clinical providers such as the ‘Promoting Medication Safety & Responding to Overdose Risk workshop’ for Pharmacists.

Facilitating Connections

- Expansion of the MARC website profiling MARC members, partner organisations, research projects and news & events
- Continued development of a monthly newsletter showcasing events, members, research and collaborative opportunities
- Building MARC’s social media profile through Twitter (@MonashAddiction), Workplace and LinkedIn
- Leveraging our social media presence to promote our members research and successes

Community Engagement

- Engagement with Peninsula Health and key local groups within the Frankston Mornington Peninsula (FMP) region
- Establishment of External Advisory Board
In our second year, MARC established a strong media presence across various media platforms. Our members regularly act as thought leaders and provide expert public commentary to mainstream media outlets including ABC News, ABC Radio, The Guardian & The Age as well as featuring regularly in The Conversation.

Print and online media

- **Monash Lens – 11 July 2019**
  Aged care royal commission: medication management and pill regimes in the spotlight

- **AusDoc – 26 July 2019**
  Overdose risk triples when relatives prescribed opioids

- **Monash Lens – 11 September 2019**
  Prescription opioids both a blessing and a curse

- **The Conversation – 7 October 2019**
  New research shows pokie operators are not nearly as charitable as they claim

- **AusDoc – 14 October 2019**
  Are we tackling obesity the wrong way?

- **The Age – 1 November 2019**
  ‘Just spin’: Gamblers, experts say pokie self-exclusion is not working

- **The Conversation – 4 November 2019**
  Opioid dependence treatment save lives. So why don’t more people use it?

- **The Guardian – 9 November 2019**
  Liberal MP misused research to support Newstart drug-test trial, academic alleges

- **Monash Lens – 3 December 2019**
  Stimulus package: brain stimulation holds huge promise, but is critically under-regulated

- **The Age – 4 December 2019**
  Australia’s young drinkers report unwanted sexual attention, violence

- **UNSW Newsroom – 10 December 2019**
  ‘Alcohol tax only punishes the poor’ argument doesn’t hold water

- **Monash News – 12 December 2019**
  Monash research reveals extent of strong and high-doses opioid pain medication use

- **Monash Lens – 13 December 2019**
  From care to custody: the tragic trajectory of crossover kids

- **Monash Lens – 17 December 2019**
  Can social media overuse lead to poor decision making?

- **A Different Lens – 20 January 2020**
  The state of our mental health: Addressing quality of care in mental health

- **ABC News – 17 February 2020**
  Lyrica, a drug linked to depression and anxiety, now the top pain medication on the PBS

- **ABC News – 2 March 2020**
  City of Casey to get 100 new poker machines in one hotel as operators target outer fringe demographic

- **Medical Forum – 16 March 2020**
  The problem with opioids

- **MedicalXpess – 30 March 2020**
  Life saving overdose-reversing drug still not being accessed

- **Monash Lens – 23 April 2020**
  By the double: COVID 19, opioids, and the threat of a syndemic
The Guardian – 27 April 2020
‘On top of everything’: coronavirus is making Australia’s drug crisis a whole lot worse

AJPcom.au – 18 May 2020
Pharmacists well-placed to help tackle non-adherence

AusDoc – 22 May 2020
A GP guide to managing benzodiazepines

The Conversation – 1 June 2020
Smaller pack sizes from today. Could new opioid restrictions stop leftover medicines causing harm

Monash Lens – 9 June 2020
An avalanche of alcohol ads is coming and there’s little protection for children

Monash Lens – 9 June 2020
Supervised injecting facilities work but is Melbourne ready for a second one

The Age – 17 June 2020
 Illegal online casinos boom during COVID-19 lockdown

Radio National ‘Breakfast’ – 23 April 2020
Reductions in gambling related harm since coronavirus closures

ABC Radio’s ‘Mornings’ – 1 May 2020
Road safety experts welcome potential review of Victorian drug driving laws.

ABC Radio’s ‘The Conversation Hour’ – 4 May 2020
With casinos shut, some pokies addicts are kicking the habit

Radio National’s ‘The Law Report’ - 5 May 2020
Prisoners, drug users, the homeless and COVID-19

ABC Radio’s ‘The Conversation Hour’ – 2 June 2020
“I can’t wait until 5pm”: people are drinking more alcohol during COVID-19 lockdowns

ABC Newcastle – 18 June 2020
Discusses the difficulty trying to shut down illegal online casinos

Monash Lens – 24 June 2020
Black lives won’t matter without major drug law reform

Radio

ABC Radio – 20 November 2019
Study: Half of opioid overdoses aren’t an accident

ABC Radio’s The Conversation Hour – 18 February 2020
Opioid addiction in Victoria

ABC Radio Sydney – 24 March 2020
Covid-19 and casino closures

Television

3AW – 2 April 2020
Will COVID-19 stop gambling

Channel 10’s The Project
Corona isolation is the perfect storm for corona vices
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<th>MARC PARTNER ORGANISATIONS</th>
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49. Ferreira, GM, Lee, RSC, Piquet-Pessôa, M, de Menezes, GB, Moreira-de-Oliveira, ME. **Albertella, L, Yücel, M,** dos Santos Cruz, M, Dos Santos-Ribeiro, S & Fonteneille, LF. 2020. Habitual versus affective motivations in obsessive-compulsive disorder and alcohol use disorder. *CNS Spectrums.* 10.1017//1052862919001706


87. Livingstone, C & Rintoul, A. 2020. Moving on from responsible gambling: a new discourse is needed to prevent and minimise harm from gambling. Public Health. 10.1016/j.puhe.2020.03.018


FURTHER INFORMATION

Any enquiries or comments regarding this publication including requests regarding use or reproduction should be directed to the Monash Addiction Research Centre

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