



PROJECT SUMMARY FORM

Project Title	SpeakEasy: Working with patients with communication challenges during hospitalisation
Supervisor name	Karen Dell
CHS/ACTHD position	Director Social Work and Psychology
Address	North Canberra Hospital
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Lead discipline (please select one)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing and Midwifery | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Economics |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allied Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Biostatistics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Epidemiology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-clinical | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Does this project involve research led by, or relating to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
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Outline of the project (250 words max)

Patient partnerships are a pillar of person centred care; that is, care that focuses on the relationship between a patient and a clinician. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Standards includes 'Partnering with Consumers' as Standard 2. While clinicians accept and value this principal, there are particular challenges for patients who require additional support to communicate effectively with their care team. These include patients from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders), those with a cognitive impairment, those with a disability (including communication disabilities such as aphasia), neuro-diverse people and those who are hearing or vision impaired.

Evidence in the literature demonstrates that suboptimal communication seriously compromises patient quality of care and health outcomes. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests existing resources such as interpreters, communication boards and personal amplifiers are not being used.

The aim of this project is to understand current practices used by clinicians to support patients with increased communication challenges and identify barriers to these practices being utilised more broadly. When this is understood, recommendations can be made to optimise the safe and quality care of vulnerable patients in our care.

Proposed research methods

Participants will include medical, nursing and allied health professionals working in the General Medical and Surgical wards at the North Canberra Hospital.

Methods will include:

- Literature review
- a retrospective electronic medical record audit of interpreter and Aboriginal Liaison Officer use
- An analysis of interpreter booking data over the previous 6 months
- A point in time review of inpatient documented communication needs compared to utilisation of resources to support communication at the bedside.
- Focus groups involving medical, nursing and allied health staff

Preferred study discipline being undertaken by the student

Medical, Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Social Work or Psychology

Benefits to the student and to the department

The student will have the opportunity to develop a nuanced understanding of the needs of patients who require support to communicate effectively with their care team and to increase their capacity to deliver effective patient centred care. The project will also provide the opportunity to increase understanding of various Allied Health disciplines and the ability to work inter-professionally. There may be an opportunity to share information as a poster or conference presentation or to submit for publication.

The project will assist the Department to understand the needs of patients who require support to communicate effectively with their care team and to increase their capacity to deliver safe and effective patient centred care. Recommendations will also be used to inform decisions around the purchase of equipment, ongoing education and training.

In addition, the Director of the Social Work Department is a member of the Standard 2 Partnering with Consumers Committee for NCH and the project will provide important information to guide the work of the committee across the wider hospital.

How does this project align with any or all of the three strategic objectives of *Better Together: A strategic plan for research in the ACT health system* (100w max)

[Better together - A strategic plan for research in the ACT health system 2022–2030](#)

Objective 1: The ACT health system becomes a learning health system

The project employs a continuous improvement approach to health care delivery. In addition it specifically aims to build effective partnerships between clinicians and consumers who face additional communication challenges.

Objective 2: ACT people have capacity to undertake high value research in the health system

To ensure diversity to meet the future healthcare needs of the ACT there must be an understanding of the difference between the principles of equity and equality. Without this there cannot be a respect for and commitment to meeting the needs of patients in our care, or indeed our colleagues, who require additional support to communicate effectively. The project shines a light on the experience of this group of people and will provide a sound evidence base to inform decisions about future resourcing, education and training needs.

Australian research by White et al *International Journal for Equity in Health* (2018) 17:151 concluded that there was a need for “systemic and transformative change” in relation to interpreter use. This project aims to build on this information and expand the cohort beyond the use of interpreters and to make clear recommendations for change given the risk to the quality of care and health outcomes for a vulnerable cohort of patients.

ACTHD/CHS Department where the student will be based

Department of Social. Work and Psychology North Canberra Hospital

Will the student be in a patient facing role at any time during the project?

No

Will the student require access to CHS and/or ACTHD network / DHR / applications / database? If yes, please identify

Yes – DHR and CPF. Network and shared file access

Will the student require CHS / ACT Health building access? If yes, please identify

Yes, North Canberra Hospital

Supervisor availability across key dates

Friday 10 Nov – Preplacement presentation session, Canberra Hospital Auditorium <i>Approximate duration 9am-12pm – supervisors are not required for full session. Possible Webex option.</i>	Yes
Placement period 10 Nov – 9 Feb Please indicate availability across this time. <i>E.g. leave over Christmas/New Year</i>	<i>Full availability except on leave December 20 to January 3rd</i>
At least two face-to-face sessions with the student each week during their 6-week placement.	Yes
Friday 9 Feb – Final presentation session, Canberra Hospital Auditorium <i>Approximate duration 9am-1pm – supervisors are not required for full session. Possible Webex option.</i>	Yes

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Please submit form to health.research@act.gov.au