

The development of Allied Health research excellence in Australian tertiary hospitals: an initiative of St Vincent's Health Network, Sydney

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In 2013 a Professorial and a post-doctoral research associate in Allied Health were created as conjoint positions between the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney and St Vincent's Health Network, Sydney.

The vision for the AHRU is to create a supportive environment for multidisciplinary research excellence among Allied Health at St Vincent's Health Network Sydney, in order to provide better health and integrated care for people and communities, in particular among poor and vulnerable people. The aims include: building a governance structure to build Allied Health research; increase particularly multi-disciplinary grant submissions; and to build support for Higher Degree Research students.

Over the past 18 months Allied Health at St Vincent's have published more than sixty journal articles and presented at 16 national conferences. The AHRU jointly conducts monthly seminars on issues related to research, recently supported the submission of several Allied Health grant applications in an internal St Vincent's grant round, and a number of ethics applications. The AHRU is actively involved in the wider activities of the St Vincent's research network.

An exciting range of research is underway including investigating: the impact of enteral nutrition on nutritional status, mortality and hospitalisation in patients with cancer of the head and neck; and dysphagia among people who have undergone heart lung transplants.

This presentation will describe: the process of establishment of the Allied Health Research Unit (AHRU); the development of a governance structure to support more research active Allied Health professionals; and ways in which Allied Health can be supported to deliver a significant program of research. Allied Health professionals are often working in unique areas of practices of major significance to health care and can support translation of research into practice, given suitable opportunities and support for workforce development.