

WA Health Translation Network Activity Report For Partner Members January – December 2017

WAHTN is a consortium that brings together all 5 of WA's Universities, its 6 medical research institutes, 5 hospital Boards, 2 major private health care providers and the WA Department of Health. Each sector is represented by a Chief Executive Officer at the Executive Board, which is led by the independent Chair, the Hon Malcolm McCusker AC. Further representation at the level of the Executive Board includes the WA Aboriginal Health Council, the Health Consumer's Council, the Chief Medical Officer of WA and the WA Chief Scientist.

On 12 June 2017, The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, formally announced the accreditation of WAHTN as an Advanced Health Research Translation Centre (AHRTC) of NHMRC. Accreditation implies national recognition that WAHTN is performing health research and translation at an international standard and is prepared to embrace and accelerate research translation. It enables WAHTN to access streams of research funding available through the Commonwealth Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) exclusively to accredited centres; brings membership of the Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA), that is restricted to accredited AHRTC and CIRH entities and hence brings profile for recruitment of faculty and trainees, and enhanced opportunity for international funding, support and collaboration.

The approach taken by WAHTN has been to enable a research agenda for WA. It serves as an honest broker across partners and can provide a common voice to levels of government, funders and other stakeholders. It has developed a series of core platforms to "catalyse, facilitate and unify" the State health research enterprise. This strategy was designed to help utilise more efficiently the precious resources available for health and medical research, and to foster collaboration by bringing together colleagues from the different Partner organisations to interact and co-operate with each other. A more proactive, more recent approach is to identify funding streams that will be available through the MRFF and other funds, and to help drive success in those areas.

Funding for the operation of WAHTN has been provided by the partners; the WA government, (primarily the WA Department of Health), the 5 WA Universities, Medical Research Institutes and the hospitals, or with restructuring, the 5 WA Health Service Boards. Further funding has been provided generously by Lotterywest for the core programs that promote collaboration between players.

This report summarises the substantial progress made by WAHTN during 2017. More details and statistics are provided on the WAHTN website.

Enabling Platforms

The following progress has been achieved with WAHTN's Enabling Platforms: these activities are available to members of all WAHTN partner institutions.

- ***WAHTN Consumer Community and Health Research Network (CCHRN)***

The CCHRN is funded through a 3 year \$2million grant from Lotterywest and directed by Ms Anne McKenzie AM. The first 6 months of funding allowed expansion of CCHRN from being a joint program between The University of Western Australia, School of Population Health and the Telethon Kids

Institute, to all partner organisations of the WAHTN. Expansion allowed development of the CCHRN strategic framework, an online consumer advocate manual, a web portal for recording activity and a staff induction program. Negotiations were undertaken with partner organisations regarding the joint appointment of consumer advocate positions, placed across the network and co-ordinated through a core development unit of the program.

CCHRN facilitates and develops events, presentations, workshops, meetings, training program and resources for researchers, consumers and community members. It provides a platform that is recognised nationally and internationally as good practice model and exemplar for the Country. It has developed a unique model of a core development unit and a dispersed delivery component using consumer advocates into each of the partner organisations.

The programs of the CCHRN are accessible to all members of WAHTN without charge. Demonstration of consumer involvement in research programs is an essential component of research grant submissions to several major funding agencies in Australia and internationally.

The interest in consumer and community involvement in health research and the demand for services and support has increased substantially in 2017. High levels of activity, increased attendance at training workshops, requests for resources and growing involvement of consumer and community members, provide a positive outlook for future endeavours and to meet the goals of the CCHRN. WAHTN has been invited to co-chair, with Sydney Health Partners (SHP) AHRTC a national initiative to document consumer and community involvement in research across Australia and to advise on the formation of new models of consumer engagement.

- **WAHTN Research Education and Training Program (RETP)**

The RETP is supported directly by funding from the WA Department of Health. Led by Dr Rashmi Watson, RETP supports researchers and health practitioners by providing high quality, up to date and relevant on-line seminars, workshops and training modules developed by individuals with relevant expertise and reputation. The RETP released its first suite of modules on September 2016 including five modules on the topic 'Good Clinical Practice (version 1). The modules are accredited via *TransCelerate BioPharma Inc.* (international mutual agreement for GCP training). There are currently over 1000 registered users across all WAHTN partners, including all the major hospitals. The Royal Perth Hospital is top of the hospital user list followed closely by Sir Charles Gardner Hospital and PMH but nearly 100 national health and medical institutions across Australia are also registered users.

RETP programs are available without charge to any investigator or trainee of a WAHTN partner or Associate.

- **WAHTN Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre**

The WAHTN Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre is a platform collaboration supported by Curtin University, the Centre of Research Excellence headed by Professor Christopher Reid, the Centre Director, and the WA Department of Health.

The platform serves to enhance activities related to the conduct of clinical trials and related data management in Western Australia. It is a collaborative activity linking with other platforms including RETP, CCHRN, Economics and Phenomics. By late 2017, the governance had been finalised and staff

hired to meet need and capacity. The resources of the Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre, including bimonthly discussion workshops (see below), are available to all WAHTN partners.

A major activity in 2017 has been sponsorship of bimonthly clinical trial discussion meetings, led by Profs Steve Webb, Christopher Reid and others, at which investigators have presented trials in development, and received critical and helpful feedback in respect of design, statistics, analysis and feasibility. Access to the resources of the centre is facilitated through an advisory committee headed by Prof Peter Thompson AM. The Centre provides the means to manage clinical trials within WA and hence to build expertise in clinical trial design and oversight. Several new trials that will be administered through the Centre have been submitted to NHMRC for funding consideration in the current round of competition.

- **Cohorts, Registries and Biobanking**

WAHTN has brought together the leadership of established WA Cohorts to explore sharing common strategies, biospecimens and data governance processes. The major WA population and clinical cohorts are tightly curated and monitored and cover the entire lifecourse from early pregnancy through to old age. These cohorts are internationally well known and the major 5 cohorts have published more than 1000 papers in the last 5 years.

Increasing access to cohort material, facilitating the ability to utilize appropriate linked data and harmonising specimen collection and biobanking across cohorts is a key objective of this platform. An audit of key cohorts and registries has been compiled and is available through the WAHTN web site. An ongoing initiative, funded through the MRFF will assess biobanking needs and models of operation, with the intent of harmonising ethical considerations, sample collection, curation and storage across the network.

WAHTN has used support awarded through the AHRA from the MRFF to develop an audit of Cohort and biobanking facilities in WA and advise on creation of a harmonised biobanking facility for WA, modelled after the resources in Sendai, Japan and the University of Iowa partners in the USA.

- ***Australian National Phenome Centre (ANPC)***

This ANPC forms the (Western) Australia link in an international research network dedicated to developing and delivering harmonised metabolic phenotyping services to benefit the global population. It will provide the entry point to development of a personalised or precision medicine approach (right patient, right place, right time) to clinical trials and ultimately clinical practice in WA. This collaborative activity involving WAHTN partners is based at Murdoch University, Fiona Stanley Hospital and the Harry Perkins Institute (South). The ANPC was beneficiary of a starter grant (seed funding) from the WA Department of Health, an ARC strategic LIEF grant in which all WA Universities and TKI came together with matching funding, an award from Lotterywest towards purchase of a mass spectrometer and a Premier's Fellowship Award in Phenomics aimed at a senior scientist and an associated junior researcher. Negotiations are currently underway with preferred candidates for these positions. The platform is led by A/Prof Rob Trengove at Murdoch University. It will serve not only health but also agriculture, food security, drug discovery and biodiversity across WA.

The ANPC illustrates the ability of WAHTN to promote collaboration across partners. Its development is associated with purchase of an NMR by Murdoch University, but based at UWA and international recruitment of co-operating investigators across partner organisations.

- ***Imaging and Infrastructure***

WAHTN is currently compiling an up-to-date inventory of major equipment including for animal and human research imaging. The information is being made available to investigators across the network to facilitate usage and promote collaboration. This exercise will inform the current availability of imaging and other equipment, allow assessment of needs for new imaging equipment, and associated costs. The intent is to develop a state-wide inventory of imaging and other major items of equipment, that will maintain currency and be available on-line and through the WAHTN App (see below).

- ***Health Economics and Evaluation***

This is a newly initiated platform addressing the need for health economics as a crucial component of research translation into clinical practice. Led by Professors Elizabeth Geelhoed and Suzanne Robinson, the platform has developed teaching modules within the RETP, and has begun to integrate health economics into the Clinical Trials and Data platform. The intent is to produce parallel training programs that will be free across the network and to enhance recruitment of a core cadre of young health economists.

- ***Allied Health and Health Science Professionals***

With leadership provided by Professor Catherine Elliott and colleagues, particularly within WA Health, WAHTN has promoted development of a platform to enhance the profile of Allied health professionals within the health research and translation ecosystem. Activities within this platform will be to develop an inventory of allied health research activity, and evaluate ways of integrating allied health professional into key research areas within WA.

- ***Commercialisation and Innovation***

A critical component of health research translation is the ability to protect new IP and develop new products with commercialisation potential. WAHTN works closely with organisations such as CERl and Linear (both recently made Associates of WAHTN) and the MTP Connect program to enable commercialisation initiatives. Working between the Allied health and commercialisation platforms, a common knowledge translation template is being developed that will likely operate across the partners in a manner similar to the model applied successfully to the consumer and community platform.

- ***Going forward***

WAHTN Platforms have been developed in response to perceived need and opportunity. Going forward, new platforms may develop and existing platforms may be regarded as redundant or usefully combined with each other. It will be desirable to provide resources (salary support and equipment) to enable the different platforms to remain effective and self sustaining.

Other Successful Initiatives

WAHTN has had a number of successful initiatives, through various enabling platforms, grant applications, collaborative activities and facilities. Key examples of successful initiatives have been alluded to above; others are included the following:

- ***Science on the Swan***

The annual high profile international medical research conference, Science on the Swan, was held first in 2015. The conference is characterised by a co-Chair arrangement between different WAHTN partners in

successive years, presentations by international scientific leaders as well as local trainees over 3 days of intense discussion.

Science on the Swan 2017 “One Health” was rated externally as a “highly successful” event. WAHTN sponsored Simon Denegri’s (NIHR, UK) visit to Perth for his presentation on consumer involvement in health research translation. Planning for the 2018 event has commenced Co-chaired by TKI and UNDA, and the overall theme will be around Health and Ageing.

- ***AICC(WA) and WAHTN Annual Event***

The 2017 annual address was delivered by The Hon Roger Cook MLA, followed by an informal discussion led by the Chief Scientist of WA, Professor Peter Klinken AC.

Almost 300 colleagues attended this year’s breakfast. The Minister’s outstanding presentation was preceded by a beautiful example of negotiating the translation pipeline by Professor Steve Wilton, Murdoch University.

- ***Cutting Edge of Translation***

WAHTN has used core funding to support its “cutting edge of translation” series, which has included support for international guest speakers Prof John Frank, (University of Edinburgh), Professor Iona Novak (University of Sydney), Dr Michael Winlo (Linear Clinical Trials) and Associate Professor Melanie Barwick (Hospital for Sick Kids, University of Toronto).

- ***WAHTN App***

The WAHTN App has been developed and was displayed at Ausbiotech in Adelaide, November 2017 and will be launched officially in 2018. It includes a database of more than 500 WA health and medical investigators with areas of interest and up to date events (including seminars, clinical rounds and workshops) information. Video streaming options will be available for certain events that have this capability.

- ***WAHTN Website***

Updating the WAHTN website is an ongoing and continuous activity. We are in the process of moving to a new website provider that will allow WAHTN to communicate more successfully with the research community. The website will be officially launched in 2018.

- ***Knowledge Translation / Scientist Knowledge Translation Training Course***

The two-day Scientific Knowledge Translation Training workshop presented by Dr Tamika Heiden was held in September 2017. This was a very practice-oriented course covering: the utility of Knowledge Translation, for researchers, educators, clinician-scientists and others; Knowledge Translation strategies and their evidence base; developing a Knowledge Translation plan (practical, hands-on approach using tools); plain language communication; and communicating with different audiences.

WAHTN will develop Knowledge Translation in conjunction with MTPConnect to establish a multipurpose KT platform in Western Australia. The KT platform will be development with active engagement from consumers, the community and other key stakeholders. It is envisaged that a similar model to the successful CCHRN program will be utilised. WAHTN has demonstrated that this arrangement can effectively be utilised in research, clinical and academic settings with significant impact for all stakeholders, especially consumers and end users.

WAHTN has hosted several workshops and partnered in several State and national meetings during the year. These are listed on the WAHTN website, and include major events such as the Indigenous Allied Health Australia Conference, 28 – 29 November 2017.

Governance

- ***Changing the philosophy***

A key outcome measure of the success of WAHTN in promoting co-operation and collaboration between partners is the extent to which philosophy and approaches to health research have changed in WA. These outcomes are not directly ascribable to WAHTN, but do illustrate aspects of changed approach and thinking. For example, the WA Cancer Council in 2017 ran a collaborative research competition for young investigators that required participants from at least 3 WA institutions to work together on a new area of research. The Cancer Research Trust announced a 5+4 year research program of up to \$1million per annum, plus matching money for innovative research programs that linked WAHTN partners.

- ***Management Committee***

Meetings are held 6 times per year, the committee is responsible for the management and discussion of priorities and opportunities across the partner network.

Partner representatives are given opportunities to bring considerations and ideas for discussion at management committee meetings or at any other opportune time.

- ***Executive Board***

The Executive Board has overarching responsibility for WAHTN's strategic goals and responsibilities.

Key Performance Indicators were developed by the Executive Director and approved for implementation by the Executive Board. The KPI's included a number of key strategies to develop cross collaborations between all partner institutions concerned with health care research and translation in WA; and the development of a Strategic Framework and Discussion Paper for WAHTN.

- ***Associate Members***

The WA Aboriginal Health Council, the Health Consumers Council and the WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) were original Associate Members of WAHTN. The Executive Board, at its meeting in December 2017 approved amending the definition of Associate membership to include other groups with keen interest in promoting translation of health research.

- ***Strategic Framework and Discussion Paper***

In September 2016, the WAHTN Executive Director developed a Strategic Framework and Discussion Paper for WAHTN. This plan outlined WAHTN's vision; mission; and four major goals. WAHTN has commenced implementation of these via a number of key objectives.

AHRA

Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA)

WAHTN's successful accreditation as an AHRTC is the first such recognition for WA. The network now joins the alliance of the other accredited AHRTC's and CIRH's across Australia forming the "Australian

Health Research Alliance (AHRA)". AHRA is the Australian alliance of leading Centres for improving health outcomes and cutting across systems level challenges nationally through integration of research, education and health care.

AHRA members have met face to face on 17 May 2017 and continue to meet via video conference on a biweekly basis. The annual meeting of AHRA was held in Brisbane 15 – 16 November 2017. Invited attendees from WAHTN were Profs, John Challis, Steve Webb, Peter Thompson and Gary Geelhoed.

Key outcomes for AHRA include creating an overarching principle of public and patient involvement within all AHRA activities. As exemplar in this area, WAHTN is taking the joint-lead on consumer and involvement activities. The Executive Director is working directly with Professor Garry Jennings from the Sydney Health Partners on this initiative.

AHRA has 3 high level key activities; data driven health care improvement; Indigenous health; and health services research in its broadest definition.

Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)

WAHTN has received Commonwealth funding from the Department of Health - Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), *Rapid Applied Research Translation (RART)* grant. The grant provides \$222K for individual AHRTCs to collaborate on national platforms with AHRA counterparts.

The grant will be used by WAHTN for the following 3 projects:

1. Consumer and Community Initiatives (CCI) Project
2. Raine Secure Data Project
3. Biobanks Project

A Proactive Role

With time, accreditation and formation of the Commonwealth MRFF, the role of WAHTN has expanded from being predominately an enabling entity to becoming the honest broker and collective voice on behalf of health and medical research in WA, with a more proactive role in seeking new and innovative sources of health research funding. These might include the MRFF, but should also include international agencies such as The Gates Foundation and the NIH. The rapid evolution of the Phenomics network to a collaborative global entity will open other new avenues of support in Europe and North America.