

WA Health Translation Network
COVID-19 Research Collaboration
Minutes
Monday 6 April 2020, 3.00pm – 4.00pm
Via Zoom

<https://www.wahtn.org/wa-covid-19-research-coordination/>

1. Welcome and Update

- Minutes
The Minutes from this meeting and all previous meetings are circulated as quickly as possible and uploaded to the WAHTN COVID-19 website.
- Guiding document
The current document was provided to members and Gary Geelhoed reiterated that this document is draft and requested that members continue to give feedback. The document outlines details of the agreed three primary work streams: Stream 1 – Supporting platforms; Stream 2 – Community; and Stream 3 – Clinical Trials.
- Governance
Gary Geelhoed advised members that the Governance structure is still fluid given time pressures but will be formalised as soon as feasible. Confirmation on how the projects will be coordinated and how funding dissemination will be advised to members in due course.
It was noted that further funding rounds could be considered if we receive additional funding.

2. Funding

The WA Department of Health has made available \$3million for infrastructure and clinical trials.

Additional funding from Lotterywest is being sought.

WAHTN are currently working with the Telethon Kids Institute to put together a comprehensive wish list for philanthropic opportunities. While there is an overall priority list there will be siloed funding when appropriate. Research Foundations for example can only spend in their area but in line with the master plan. Philanthropists may elect to pick “winners” as they see it but that will free up funding for other projects and infrastructure.

3. Updates from Key Area

Consumer and Community (Ben Horgan)

In addition to working closely with Pip Brennan, the Consumer and Community Health Research Network (CCHRN) team have been involved with over 20 research projects to date, linking consumers whom are happy to contribute and be involved in the research applications.

Ben Horgan noted that the team are still available to assist at this late stage, if researchers require consumer involvement within their grant proposals.

South Metro Health Service (SMHS) (Merrilee Needham)

Governance has been finalised for the CRR platform and the first patient has been recruited.

SMHS, EMHS and NMHS have met to ensure processes are consistent across all sites.

North Metro Health Service (NMHS) (Aron Chakera)

Aron Chakera noted that there has been multiple conversations amongst the Area Health Service Research Directors relating to the grant applications. It has been strongly encouraged to researchers that they collaborate and submit unified research grant applications.

Biobanking (Aron Chakera)

The team are investigating what infrastructure requirements are required across the various sites. Clarity required around how samples arriving through OpenSpecimen will be processed and stored by PathWest.

WA Department of Health (Darren Gibson)

Darren Gibson re-iterated that applications for the Research Grants closes on 8 April. The panel will be meeting next week to review.

The WA Department of Health are ensuring that all Area Health Services Governance Officers have up to date information.

Gary Geelhoed advised that the revision for the Guardianship Act was decided upon in the Upper House of Parliament last Friday. Subsequently, it allows unconscious patients diagnosed with COVID-19 to be enrolled into possibly lifesaving clinical trials.

Telethon Kids Institute (Stephen Stick)

The Telethon Kids Institute is currently involved in a number of studies.

The BRACE study commenced in Melbourne last week and will start in Perth this week.

It was noted that the BCG trial aims to recruit 2000 patients (750 at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital; 750 at Fiona Stanley Hospital; and 500 at Perth Children's Hospital).

Currently setting up an adaptive trial platform for the IFN trial. There is a need to test whether therapy can reduce infection in contacts of positive patients. This would lead to an effective way to reduce COVID-19 spread in the community.

University of Western Australia (Tim Colmer)

Confirmed that the Funding Agreement and invoice for funding from the WA Department of Health has been processed by Vice Chancellor.

The integration of the REDcap capabilities is progressing.

University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) (Bahareh Badrian)

UNDA have been assisting researchers to coordinate grant applications.

Curtin University (Chris Reid)

Chris Reid confirmed that Curtin has been working with numerous researchers across the university sector in the areas of mental health and observational cohort development. It was noted that the following are leads for each group:

Sean Hood (UWA) – mental health

Graham Hall (Telethon Kids Institute) – respiratory group

Suzanne Robinson (Curtin) – economic implications

Sean Hood will coordinate mental health projects from all WA institutions interested in this area. Working groups will be formed within to coordinate the measures used in mental health.

Edith Cowan University (Rob Newton)

ECU developed a spreadsheet which includes assets, equipment and personnel currently available. This has been distributed and will be available on the website to promote collaboration and practical help.

New partnership with Allied Health care have been entered into with various institutes around Western Australia. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, 6 ECU allied health clinics across Perth had to shut down, and have subsequently transitioned to telehealth platforms.

Australian National Phenome Centre (ANPC) (Jeremy Nicholson)

The ANPC can we develop new biomarkers that may predict the severity of COVID-19 infection.

The potential for increased involvement in clinical trials via monitoring patients in real time and providing direct data fed back to clinical trials.

Jeremy Nicholson noted that there was missing information in the document and would forward to Gary Geelhoed for inclusion.

Pathwest

Ed Raby has been instrumental to processes relating to coordinating PathWest data within NMHS. Tom Gilbert has been assisting with EMHS.

The initial focus for the coordinated research response was for adults, however there is now a need to have discussion within the Child and Adolescent Health Service space. Gary Geelhoed noted that these conversations are occurring with CAHS. The ethics approval has extended to incorporate all neonates, children and pregnant women.

Jeff Keelan advised that he has been providing advice and scientific input to researchers for their grant applications. In addition, he has been assisting with RED-Cap integration.

COVID Research Response – Toby Richards

Toby Richards noted that they have purchased freezers and employed a Biobank Manager and after the initial CRR set up phase, the Biobank Manager could potentially help develop the regional state-wide biobank.

EMRIA (Emergency Medicine) (Daniel Fatovich, Glenn Arendts, Tony Celenza)

The Emergency Medicine Research and Innovation Alliance (EMRIA) has recently formed and is across various sites. They expressed their desire to help with all research as best they can as well as manage their own.

4. Trials Update

ASCOT (Owen Robinson)

Ethics approval granted and ASCOT will now be rolled out across sites within Australia and New Zealand. Owen Robinson advised the first Western Australian patient should be admitted in 2 weeks.

REMAP-CAP (Steve Webb, an apology, provided an update to the meeting)

Globally 97 patients in COVID component.

Ethics approval in Australia for the 2 new domains (antiviral with keletra and immune modulation with interferon B and anakinra).

5. Media and Website

Gary Geelhoed advised the following media releases and appearances are occurring:

- ABC interview:
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-06/coronavirus-mystery-why-does-it-affect-people-so-differently/12120842>
- Channel 7 Flashpoint – Filming conducted for a section within this health and medical series aired Monday 6 April: <https://7plus.com.au/flashpoint?episode-id=FLAS02-005>
- Medical Forum – interview conducted
- Business News – interview conducted
- The West Australian Health + Medical magazine supplement

WAHTN's website dedicated to the COVID-19 response is evolving and is continuing to be updated. Gary Geelhoed asked members to provide him with information they wish to have included.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled on or Monday 20 April, 3pm