

WA Health Translation Network

Research Collaboration to COVID-19

Advisory Group

Minutes

Friday 3 March 2020, 3.30pm – 4.30pm

Via Zoom: <https://uwa.zoom.us/j/865794235>

Attendees: Gary Geelhoed, Toby Richards, Graham Hillis, Aron Chakera, Chris Reid, Darren Gibson, Merrilee Needham, Jon Watson, David Morrison, Jonathan Carapetis, Debbie Turner.

Apologies: Stephen Stick, Jeremy Nicholson, Steve Webb

1. Welcome and update

- Roles and logos
A revised logo is currently in development to indicate “WAHTN COVID-19 Research Collaboration”.

The Research Response Contracts Grid Spreadsheet is constantly being refined and outlines who is responsible across the various streams. Gary Geelhoed asked members to provide relevant information accordingly.

- Guiding document
Gary Geelhoed advised that WAHTN is refining the document outlining the Research Collaboration which was presented at the last meeting. The final draft will be circulated for comments from the Advisory Group.
- Governance
The Governance structure and details on how funding will be allocated needs further discussion and decision.

The meeting of the WAHTN Advisory Group will continue to meet on a weekly basis, as well as the WAHTN COVID-19 Research Collaboration meetings (also on a weekly basis). Sub-groups forming around work flows will be established.

An Independent Review Panel has already been established to review grant applications with Peter Klinken (Chair), Peter Richmond, Fiona Wood, Pip Brennan, David Preen and Darren Gibson.

2. Funding

- WA Department of Health
The WA Department of Health \$3million funding will be utilised for infrastructure (including staffing requirements) and funding towards competitive research proposals (with applications closing on 8 April 2020). Information on the call for applications can be found here: <https://www.wahtn.org/wa-covid-19-research-coordination/>

Darren Gibson confirmed that a message clarifying the shortened application process for applicants was circulated via the Research Directors. He will re-circulate it to the Advisory Group to ensure it is circulated as widely as possible.

There is clearly a need to allocated funding immediately to priority areas due to the impact of COVID-19. As such, these particular trials will be actioned accordingly.

It was noted that it is critical to allocate funding to new ideas due to the ever evolving and emerging opportunities in this rapidly moving environment. The focus should be on original, unique ideas that will have a lasting impact.

- **Lotterywest**
Additional funding has been sought from Lotterywest. WAHTN is expecting that the Lotterywest Board will endorse this over the coming days.
- **Foundations**
Gary Geelhoed is in discussions with various foundations to secure additional funding sources.

Philanthropic avenues are being progressed. The Executive Board Chair of WAHTN is assisting with this process to ensure a Team WA approach.

3. Updates from Key Areas

- **Telethon Kids Institute (Jonathan Carapetis)**
Working closely with the Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS). The Telethon Kids Institute is focusing on health worker prevention through the BRACE trial and IFN2 β study. In addition, they are investigating the impact and transmission within families; kids in social isolation; and Aboriginal health.
- **South Metro Health Service Australian National Phenome Centre (Toby Richards)**
On behalf of Jeremy Nicholson, Toby Richards advised that the protocol for accurate sample collection should be implemented in the NMHS and EMHS within the next 2 weeks (parallel to the ISARIC data collection). Agreements have been finalised and OpenSpecimen is aligned.

An investment in biobanking equipment will be purchased.

Enrolments of patients have begun, which means the team are hopeful that within a few weeks, all data can be accessed by WA researchers.

Toby Richards queried if organisations had spare space and equipment that could be utilised specifically for the COVID-19 response. He will circulate everything required to this group for wider circulation.

- **University of Western Australia (UWA).**
The UWA IT have servers up and running for REDcap capacity.

A number of other groups are working across the university. Including the UWA Faculty of Science whom are currently investigating sequencing opportunities. Jon Watson confirmed that he will bring the various ideas of collaboration opportunities currently coming out of UWA to the larger group for more in-depth discussion.

- Murdoch University (David Morrison)
David Morrison noted that ANPC are leading the COVID-19 situation from Murdoch's perspective. However, confirmed that there are a number of discussions occurring with innovative diagnostic and instrument companies. Including Bruker, whom are supporting and linking Murdoch University and the ANPC with international Universities.

- Curtin University (Chris Reid)
Chris Reid confirmed that the CIVIC baseline questionnaires have progressed through ethics and have subsequently been approved.

There is a close alignment with community care. Currently interacting with Sean Hood from UWA, Graham Hall from Telethon Kids Institute to bring appropriate expertise from the mental health sector.

- East Metro Health Service (Graham Hillis)
EMHS are currently utilising ISARIC protocol and the governance for this is being fast tracked. They have scheduled various meetings with health care staff (including clinicians and Heads of Departments) to inform them of what is occurring.
- North Metro Health Service (Aron Chakera)
Aron Chakera confirming the NMHS is currently aligned with EMHS and SMHS with regards to the trials being supported across the adult hospital system.
- Pathwest and Biobanking
Currently ensuring there is uniform collection and storage of samples across the metropolitan health services, and the purchase of open access biobanking software along with -80C freezers.

4. Media release and appearances

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

- Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) will be issuing a media statement shortly.
- Medical Forum – interview conducted
- Channel 7 Flashpoint – Filming conducted for a section within this health and medical series, to be aired on Monday 6 April.
- Business News – interview conducted
- The West Australian Health + Medical magazine supplement
Initially, the magazine was going to be general in nature but given the COVID-19 crisis, Gary Geelhoed has asked the journalists to focus on the WA COVID-19 Research Collaboration with 10 articles on what each partner organisation is doing in this area. This will be to showcase and

illustrate the unified response that the WA research community has taken. To be published on 22 May.

Gary has asked various key players within the COVID-19 research space to participate. Further information on this will be confirmed at the next meeting.

5. Next Meeting

A meeting of the Advisory Group will be scheduled in the later part of next week.