

# SPHERE Research Projects 2027



**MONASH**  
University

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# Why undertake research with SPHERE?

The key goal of SPHERE is to improve the capacity, safety, and quality of primary health care services to achieve better outcomes in women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH). This will be achieved through a research program that is focused on three key pillars.

## Our research program is focused on:

- **Building system and workforce capacity** – We innovate strategies to ensure the Australian primary care workforce adequately addresses women's sexual and reproductive health needs, including trialling alternative service delivery methods to enhance accessibility, particularly in rural and regional areas.
  - **Addressing consumer needs** – Understanding consumer needs and preferences is also important in helping women achieve optimal sexual and reproductive health
  - **Using data to advance knowledge** – Health data sets are useful in gaining insights into the state of women's sexual and reproductive health in Australia and identifying gaps in service provision
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# Benefits of conducting research with SPHERE

One of SPHERE's strengths is its focus on continuing and fostering existing national and international multidisciplinary collaborations.

## Chief Investigators

- a. Professor Danielle Mazza AM (Monash University)
- b. Professor Kirsten Black (University of Sydney)
- c. Professor Deborah Bateson AM (University of Sydney)
- d. Professor Wendy Norman (University of British Columbia)
- e. Professor Gita Mishra AO (University of Queensland)
- f. Professor Jane Fisher AO (Monash University)
- g. Associate Professor Luke Grzeskowiak (Flinders University)
- h. Professor Kristina Edvardsson (LaTrobe University)
- i. Professor Laura Tarzia (University of Melbourne)

## Associate Investigators

- a. Professor Faye McMillan (National Rural Health Commission)
- b. Ms Sarah Parker (National Rural Women's Coalition)
- c. Dr Sarah White (Jean Hailes for Women's Health)
- d. Ms Renee Carr (Fair Agenda)
- e. Professor Karen Price (Royal Australian College of General Practitioners)
- f. Professor Angela Taft (LaTrobe University)
- g. Professor Kristina Gemzell-Danielsson (Karolinska University Hospital)
- h. Professor Daniel Grossman (University of California, San Francisco)
- i. Professor Judith Stephenson (University College London)
- j. Professor Rebecca French (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)

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# The value for our students

- Supervision and mentorship from internationally-recognised leaders in women's sexual and reproductive health, primary care and health services research
- Work and study within a buzzing, supportive and collaborative research environment
- Participate in our primary care research education program with our large cohort of early career researchers
- Shape your own project within the SPHERE research program
- Opportunity to be involved in large funded projects or smaller projects
- Great support and camaraderie with regular research team meetings, weekly academic seminars, research student workshops
- Financial support to publish and present at national and international conferences



Kajol Babu  
2025 Honours Student



Sanish Rajbhandari  
2026 Honours Student

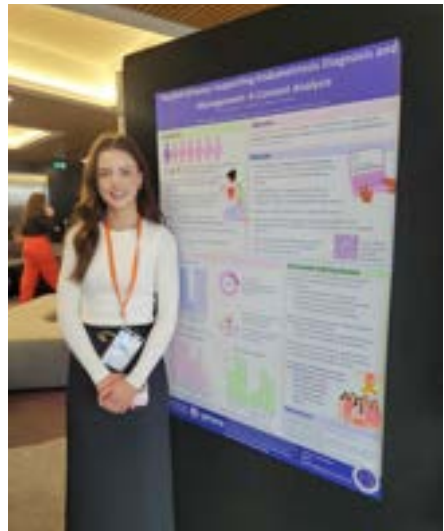
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Monash University Department of General Practice Students attending the 2025 AAAPC Conference



Kimberley Moss  
2024 Honours Student



Kira Percival-Cobb  
2024 Honours Student

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# Student publications

BMJ Journals  
BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health

Original research

**Australian women's experiences and perceptions of interconception care: a qualitative descriptive study**

Sarmitha Kodavallur, Isara Appathany Mudyamselage, Daniela Mazza, Sharon James

Correspondence to: Sarmitha Kodavallur; sarmithakod@icloud.com

THE MEDICAL JOURNAL OF AUSTRALIA

**MJA**

**General practitioners' views and experiences of postpartum contraception counselling and provision: a qualitative–descriptive study**

Janice K Perkins, Sharon James, Daniela Mazza and Jessica R Borfield

Issue 1 June 2024; 2024; 386–393; 4 doi: 10.5694/mja24004

Publication online 17 October 2024

CSIRO Publishing

Journal of Primary Health

FORUM PAPER  
<https://doi.org/10.1071/PH23030>

**Postpartum contraception in Australia: opportunities for increasing access in the primary care setting**

Rhea Singh<sup>1,2,3</sup> and Jessica R. Borfield<sup>1,2,3</sup>

RAOGP

**AJGP** Australian Journal of General Practice

Volume 52, Issue 8, August 2022

**General practitioner experiences in delivering early medical abortion services to women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds: A qualitative–descriptive study**

Rhea Singh, Daniela Mazza, Lauren Maloney, Winifred Shankar, Anam K Sahaengle

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# Student testimonials

## Meet Sophie Armstrong

I was eager to complete my Honours year with SPHERE due to my growing interest in women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Additionally, the range of projects available, opportunity to undertake qualitative, interview-based research, pursue publication, collaborate with other students, and the commitment to improving women's SRH outcomes drew me to SPHERE.

My research was supervised by Dr Anisa Assifi, Ms Joanne Gross, and Professor Danielle Mazza. My qualitative study explored community pharmacists' perspective and needs regarding the provision of injectable contraception (DMPA) to adolescents. Throughout the year, I received support from a diverse network of people, including fellow Honours students, PhD students, and teaching and administration staff. Many aspects of the research were new to me, but with the support of my supervisors and Associate Professor Chris Barton, I was able to successfully develop my skills and confidently progress with the project.

Prior to completion of my project, I was unfamiliar with the scope and complexity involved in planning, conducting, and writing a thesis. However, after completing my study with SPHERE, I have been provided with a strong foundation in research, critical thinking, and academic writing - skills that are highly transferable to other areas of academic and professional practice.



***“ Prior to completion of my project, I was unfamiliar with the scope and complexity involved in writing a thesis. However, after completing my study with SPHERE, I have been provided with skills that are highly transferable to other areas of academic and professional practice. ”***

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# Student testimonials

## Meet Sanish Rajbhandari

As someone who was initially unsure what a career in research would entail, I am very glad I chose to complete my Honours year within the SPHERE research group. I found the project opportunities both interesting and novel, which first piqued my interest. The group's focus on improving sexual and reproductive health for women is both important and admirable, and an area I have long been passionate about.

Throughout the year, I had numerous opportunities to engage with researchers and their work through meetings and seminars, as well as present my own research at conferences. The environment was always welcoming, with everyone being friendly and supportive, which made completing work and asking for help far easier than I had anticipated. Working alongside such experienced and dedicated researchers has given me valuable insight into how research is conducted and how its findings can be used to create meaningful changes.

Overall, my time at SPHERE, and within the wider Department of General Practice, allowed me to develop strong research skills while connecting with experienced researchers and fellow Honours students, whom I have formed long lasting friendships that made my Honours year unforgettable and fun.



***“ Overall, my time at SPHERE allowed me to develop strong research skills while connecting with experienced researchers and fellow Honours students, whom I have formed long lasting friendships that made my Honours year unforgettable and fun. ”***

# **2027 Honours Projects**

# Australian and international models of care for postpartum contraception provision

Many pregnancies in the first year after a birth are unintended, and can place significant physical, social and financial strain on women and their families. Early access to contraception information and services in the postpartum period can help to avoid closely spaced and unintended pregnancies. However, in Australia, there is limited guidance for maternity care providers and a lack of consistent models of postpartum contraceptive care. Through a literature review and national and international key informant interviews, this project will undertake a cross-country comparison to identify and document innovative programs and models of care for provision of postpartum contraception nationally and internationally (including, for example, nurse- and midwife-led models of care, home-based provision, co-locating services such as community nurse visits), to inform consideration of how these might be implemented or refined in the Australian context.

## Keywords

Women's health, contraception, postpartum contraception, sexual and reproductive health, general practitioner, nurse, midwife

## Available options

Masters by research  
Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# Child and family health nurse provision of postpartum contraceptive care: What do women think?

To support pregnancy planning, all women should receive information and resources regarding fertility return and available contraceptive options as part of their routine postpartum care. Child and family health nurses are well-placed to provide this information and support, as they often have regular contact with mothers and can support maternal health and wellbeing, including in relation to postpartum contraception information and services – yet this is not part of routine practice. A qualitative study will be undertaken with women to explore their views, experiences and preferences regarding provision of postpartum contraception information and support by child and family health nurses, to better understand the role they could play in increasing access to postpartum contraception in Australia.

## Keywords

Women's health, contraception, postpartum contraception, sexual and reproductive health, nurse, community nurse

## Available options

Masters by research  
Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# Equity in clinical practice guidelines: a systematic review

Clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) are essential tools that help clinicians make evidence-based decisions. However, guidelines often fail to address how recommendations apply across diverse populations, including people who are socially or economically disadvantaged, culturally diverse communities, rural and remote populations, and groups experiencing discrimination.

This project examines how well sexual and reproductive health clinical practice guidelines incorporate equity considerations for culturally diverse populations and whether guidelines consider differences in access, acceptability, relevance, and outcomes. Students will learn how to critically appraise guidelines, identify gaps, synthesise findings, and contribute to improving how guidelines support equitable healthcare.

## Keywords

health equity, sexual and reproductive health, clinical practice guidelines, cultural diversity

## Available options

Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)  
Graduate Diploma

## Time commitment

Full-time  
Part-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Natasha Davidson

## Co-supervisor

Prof Karin Stanzel



# Nurse provision of postpartum contraception information and support in general practice

Women are recommended to have a 6-8 postnatal check after having a baby, usually with their general practitioner (GP). Whilst there is an expectation that GPs will discuss contraception at this appointment, there are no consistent guidelines in relation to this in Australia and contraception counselling/provision does not commonly occur at that visit. General practice nurses may be well-placed to fill this gap and provide support and services in relation to postpartum contraceptive care. A qualitative study will be undertaken with general practice nurses to better understand whether and how they are currently contributing in this area; identify their training, resource and other needs; and determine opportunities to support them and optimise provision of postpartum contraceptive care in general practice.

## Keywords

Women's health, contraception, postpartum contraception, sexual and reproductive health, general practitioner, practice nurse

## Available options

Masters by research  
Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# Exploring the Role of Community Pharmacists in the Provision of Preconception Care

Preconception care is essential for optimising reproductive and pregnancy outcomes, yet many people of reproductive age do not access or receive timely preconception health advice through traditional healthcare pathways. Community pharmacists are highly accessible primary healthcare providers and are well positioned to support preconception care through health promotion, medication review, and referral. However, little is known about the scope, confidence, and feasibility of preconception care provision within the community pharmacy setting. This honours project aims to explore current practices, beliefs, and perceived barriers and facilitators to pharmacist-led preconception care, to inform future service development and workforce support. The project will involve a literature review and qualitative interviews.

## Keywords

women's health, pharmacy, preconception care, pregnancy, pharmacist

## Available options

Masters by research  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

## Co-supervisor

Dr Sharon James



# HealthPathways for contraception information and support

HealthPathways is a free, online portal that has been established in different regions in each state and territory in Australia to provide evidence-based information and resources for health practitioners on the assessment and management of common clinical conditions and guidance on local referral options. An online review of HealthPathways will be undertaken for this project to determine what information is currently provided in relation to contraception, particularly long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), to better understand commonalities and differences and to determine potential gaps and opportunities for improvement. Qualitative interviews with general practitioners (GPs) will also be undertaken to explore their views and experiences of using HealthPathways for contraceptive care in their practice.

## Keywords

healthpathways, contraception, sexual and reproductive health, women's health, general practice

## Available options

Masters by research  
Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

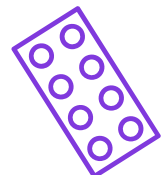
509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# How does a virtual community of practice support professional development of regional, rural and remote practitioners as providers of LARC and EMA?

Uptake of reliable and cost-effective long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), such as intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants, is lower in Australia compared to similarly developed countries, and medical abortion can be difficult to access, in particular in rural and remote areas.

Through a literature review and key informant interviews, this research seeks to understand how the AusCAPPS Network, a virtual community of practice for primary care practitioners, can support education and continuing professional development in this area of practice for regional, rural and remote practitioners.

## Keywords

women's health, sexual and reproductive health, contraception, abortion, primary care, general practice, general practitioner, GP, nurse practitioner, endorsed midwife, virtual community of practice, online education, AusCAPPS Network

## Available options

Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Nadia Lusic



# Innovative multidisciplinary models of intrauterine device provision in primary care

Primary care clinicians including general practitioners, nurse practitioners and practice nurses have a key role in meeting the needs of women's reproductive care including pregnancy, termination, contraception, and sexual health. They have expertise in patient diagnosis, treatment and improving access for those most at risk of an unintended pregnancy e.g. priority populations such as rural and remote communities. This care includes the provision of efficacious forms of contraception such as intrauterine devices (IUDs). In practice, there are barriers to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services, and little is known about how innovative multidisciplinary models are enacted in practice to meet patient needs. Through a literature review and interviews with primary care clinicians, this research seeks to understand how to implement innovative multidisciplinary IUD models of care in the primary care setting.

## Keywords

general practice, primary care, women's health, sexual health, reproductive health, nursing, workforce, nurse practitioner, contraception

## Available options

Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

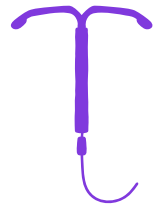
509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# The development of an audit tool to understand the provision of women's sexual and reproductive healthcare in general practice

General practice is pivotal in the management of care for patients across the lifespan. General practice represents an ideal setting where opportunistic and planned care about sexual and reproductive health can occur. However, little is known about ways clinicians are currently providing this care and ways the general practice team could be optimised to support women's sexual and reproductive healthcare. This project will involve a literature review and the development of an audit tool to analyse consultations in women's sexual and reproductive health. Findings will inform current clinician involvement and potential future directions in women's sexual and reproductive health care.

## Keywords

general practice, primary care, women's health, sexual health, reproductive health, nursing, workforce

## Available options

Masters by research  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# What Australian and international guidelines support women's interconception health?

This project seeks to explore what Australian and international guidelines support women's interconception care. Reducing adverse outcomes on mother and child are key priority areas. However, antenatal engagement with women about lifestyle risk reduction can be too late to prevent some outcomes such as low birth weight associated with smoking, and, fetal alcohol syndrome associated with alcohol intake. Additionally, increases in chronic conditions associated with lifestyle risk can increase adverse maternal and infant outcomes. These risks increase with subsequent pregnancies at a time when there can be challenges for women juggling work and family commitments. This project will involve a literature review and interviews with clinicians about what guidelines they use to support women in their interconception health.

## Keywords

general practice, primary care, women' health, sexual health, reproductive health, interconception, models of care, service delivery

## Available options

Masters by research  
Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

## Co-supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# What can Australian service providers do about reproductive coercion driven by son preference?

This qualitative study will involve in-depth interviews and/or focus groups with providers such as general practitioners, nurses, midwives, social workers, interpreters, and domestic violence workers. It will examine how providers perceive the influence of son preference and extended-family dynamics on women's reproductive autonomy, how they navigate cultural norms when addressing such cases, and what practical or ethical challenges arise in their roles. The project will identify key themes around recognition, response, and service preparedness, offering insights that can inform future workforce education and research.

## Keywords

son preference, reproductive coercion, family violence, qualitative research

## Available options

Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)

## Time commitment

Full-time  
Part-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Susan Saldanha

## Co-supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield  
Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# Women's experiences of reproductive coercion and abuse due to son preference

This project will involve in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women who have experienced gendered pressure around pregnancy, abortion, or contraception. It will examine how son preference operates as a mechanism of coercion and control, how women interpret and resist these pressures, and what consequences arise for health, relationships, and autonomy. Findings will contribute to a nuanced understanding of RCA and inform service responses to RCA.

## Keywords

son preference, reproductive coercion, family violence, qualitative research

## Available options

Masters by coursework  
Honours  
BMedSc(Hons)  
Short projects  
Medical Education

## Time commitment

Full-time  
Part-time

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Susan Saldanha

## Co-supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield  
Prof Danielle Mazza AM



# **2027 PhD Projects**

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# Opportunities to enhance postpartum contraception care in Australia

In Australia, 20% of pregnancies occur within the first year of a birth and most are unintended. Unintended pregnancies and short interpregnancy intervals (<12-18months) can have adverse effects and increased risk of complications. Women are often unaware of fertility return after pregnancy, optimal pregnancy spacing, or the safety of contraception postnatally. Whilst contraception enables women to attain the number and spacing of births they desire, there is no routine provision of postpartum contraception information or services during pregnancy or after birth in Australia and access can be challenging. This PhD will investigate key policy opportunities to enhance postpartum contraception care in Australia through exploring models of care, and legislative, regulatory and professional requirements, from key informant and stakeholder perspectives.

This project sits within a program of research being undertaken by Professor Mazza in SPHERE, a NHMRC-funded Centre of Research Excellence in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care. This is the first dedicated Centre to lead research that is aimed at improving the quality, safety, and capacity of primary health care services to achieve better outcomes in women's sexual and reproductive health. Students working within SPHERE will be supported by Professor Mazza's research team, which consists of Post-docs, PhD students, academic registrars and Honours students. Students will be part of a large, multidisciplinary, collaborative team of investigators, which includes prominent national and international researchers and experts working in women's health, general practice, pharmacy, nursing, epidemiology, knowledge translation, health economics, and policy development.

## Keywords

women's health, contraception, postpartum contraception, sexual and reproductive health, policy, models of care

## School

School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine  
School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine » General Practice

## Available options

PhD/Doctorate

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Top-up scholarship funding available

No

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield



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# Postpartum contraception information, support and service needs of priority populations

Women require access to postpartum contraception information to enable them to plan for and access contraception after having a baby. Early access to contraception in the postpartum period is associated with a high continuity rate and efficacy for reducing unintended pregnancies and short interpregnancy intervals. Minimal research has been conducted with priority populations in Australia in relation to postpartum contraception (including, but not limited to, young people, and people from migrant and refugee communities), and little is known regarding their information needs and preferences in relation to this. This PhD will explore the postpartum contraception information, support and service needs of priority population(s) in Australia, through a scoping review, interviews with priority population (s), and key informant interviews.

This project sits within a program of research being undertaken by Professor Mazza in SPHERE, a NHMRC-funded Centre of Research Excellence in Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Primary Care. This is the first dedicated Centre to lead research that is aimed at improving the quality, safety, and capacity of primary health care services to achieve better outcomes in women's sexual and reproductive health. Students working within SPHERE will be supported by Professor Mazza's research team, which consists of Post-docs, PhD students, academic registrars and Honours students. Students will be part of a large, multidisciplinary, collaborative team of investigators, which includes prominent national and international researchers and experts working in women's health, general practice, pharmacy, nursing, epidemiology, knowledge translation, health economics, and policy development.

## Keywords

Women's health, contraception, postpartum contraception, sexual and reproductive health, priority populations, marginalised populations, resources

## School

School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine  
School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine » General Practice

## Available options

PhD/Doctorate

## Time commitment

Full-time

## Top-up scholarship funding available

No

## Physical location

509 St Kilda Road

## Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield





# For more information

Supervisor connect: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/research/supervisorconnect>

If you are passionate about women's sexual and reproductive health but don't see a topic that interests you in this booklet, or you have a topic idea of your own, please reach out to us to discuss this further.

## Contact us



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