SPHERE Research Projects 2025









Why undertake research with SPHERE?

The key goal of SPHERE 2.0 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

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 (University of Queensland)
 - f. Professor Jane Fisher (Monash University)
 - g. Associate Professor Luke Grzeskowiak (Flinders University)
 - h. Associate Professor Kristina Edvardsson (LaTrobe University)
 - i. Associate 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. Mrs Janet Michelmore (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. Associate Professor Rebecca French (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- Participation in monthly working group meetings to progress research in each stream.
- Access to the SPHERE Early- and Mid-Career Researcher Network meetings, which provide an opportunity for all SPHERE research fellows and students to meet, discuss their current research, share their progress or any issues that they have encountered, and provide feedback or support when requested.
- Opportunities to present research findings at international and national conferences, including the SPHERE Annual Meeting.

The value for our students

- Supervision and mentorship from internationallyrecognised 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



Bronwyn McDonald 2023 honours student



Jenna Perkins 2023 honours student



Rhea Singh, SPHERE annual meeting presentation, 2023



Tara Dev, SPHERE annual meeting presentation, 2023

Student publications



Volume 52, Issue 8, August 2023

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

Rhea Singh Danielle Mazza Lauren Moloney Mridula Shankar Asvini K Subasinghe

RESEARCH ARTICLE (Open Access)

Previous Next >

Women's perspectives of direct pharmacy access to oral contraception

Tara Dev 🔟 ^A * , Pip Buckingham 🔟 ^A ^B and Danielle Mazza ^A *

+ Author Affiliations * Correspondence to: danielle.mazza@monash.edu

Australian Journal of Primary Health - https://doi.org/10.1071/PY22212 Submitted: 7 October 2022 Accepted: 6 June 2023 Published online: 3 July 2023



SAPC Distinguished Paper Award



Former SPHERE BMedSc(Hons) student, Rhea Singh, received the prestigious 2022 SAPC Distinguished Paper Award at the 2022 Australasian Association for Academic Primary Care (AAAPC) Conference. Rhea has been invited to present her paper, "General practitioner perspectives and experiences in delivering early medical abortion services to women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia", at the 2023 Society for Academic Primary Care Conference in Brighton, England.

Student Testimonials

Meet Jarrod Cross

I have a passion for women's health and as such, I chose to do my honours at SPHERE CRE. The projects that were on offer at SPHERE all intrigued me however, projects that focused on patients/consumers appealed to me the most. In addition to having projects that interested me, SPHERE had a workplace culture that I was hoping to find. The workplace was very supportive and welcoming, which, in my opinion helped me to do the best I could.

My research was supervised by Dr Anisa Assifi and Professor Danielle Mazza, and had a focus on women's views on accessing medical abortion services through general practice. Throughout my honours project, I encountered difficulties with research which I believe has assisted me with growing both professionally and personally in overcoming challenges. Although there were some challenges throughout the project, there were many highlights some of which, including presenting at the AAAPC conference and attending the SPHERE Annual Meeting. At these events I was not only able to share some of my work but I was also able to hear about other work SPHERE, and other researchers across the country have done.

The SPHERE team and the Monash Department of General Practice helped me develop my researching capacity to limits I never thought possible and allowed me to meet some wonderful people that I am privileged to call not only call colleagues but more so a friends.



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I found doing my honours project through SPHERE extremely rewarding and would recommend anyone to do a project with SPHERE!



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Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my year with SPHERE and would recommend others to consider completing their honours with SPHERE!

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Meet Tara Dev

I chose to complete my Honours year with SPHERE as I have a strong interest in both general practice and women's health. Additionally, the SPHERE projects available all really interested me. I also read through previous SPHERE Honours students' theses and I felt inspired to complete a project in this area. I was also drawn to the incredibly supportive environment provided by not only the SPHERE team, but also the entire Department of General Practice at Monash.

My research focused on women's opinions on whether or not the contraceptive pill should be available over-the-counter. This involved interviewing 20 women and developing themes around access to the contraceptive pill over-the-counter based on our discussions. The highlight from my year working with SPHERE was being able to present at the SPHERE annual meeting where I received valuable feedback from researchers in the field of women's health from all over Australia and from many different disciplines.

There were many benefits to being a SPHERE student. The team was very supportive and encouraging. The team is full of very experienced researchers and so I could seek advice from many different people. Additionally, there were many opportunities to present my work to the team to gain feedback. There were also other Honours students within the SPHERE team so it was great to work alongside each other. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my year with SPHERE and would recommend others to consider completing their Honours with SPHERE!

What are Australian obstetricians' and gynaecologists' perceptions of women's interconception care needs?

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 seeks to research a key providers of maternity and women's health care, obstetricians and gynaecologists, about their perceptions of women's lifestyle risk reduction needs between pregnancies.

Keywords

primary care, women's health, reproductive health, interconception, postpartum, specialist, general practice, qualitative

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza



What are individual's experiences accessing medical abortion medicines (MS-2 Step) in community pharmacy?

Once a registered medical practitioner has prescribed medical abortion medicines, also known as MS-2 Step, an individual must access a community pharmacy to be dispensed the medications by a registered community pharmacist. In Australia, in 2021 approximately 25% of community pharmacists were registered to dispense MS-2 Step. To ensure individuals are receiving high-quality person-centered abortion care it is essential to understand an individual's experience of accessing medical abortion medicines from community pharmacists. We will use qualitative methods to elicit individuals' experiences to ascertain how we can improve the delivery and provision of medical abortion in primary care.

Keywords

abortion, pharmacy, women's health, primary care

Available options

Masters by research Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza



Understanding pharmacist perspective and needs to provide adolescent-centred care

Community pharmacist have the potential to provide accessible health services to adolescents and the potential to improve adolescent's access to sexual and reproductive health care. To ensure that pharmacists are supported and have the appropriate skills to provide adolescent-centred care, this study will seek to understand pharmacists' perspective and needs to deliver adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. We will conduct a qualitative study with pharmacists to explore their views and needs.

Keywords

sexual and reproductive health, SRH, pharmacy, women's health, adolescent, primary care, qualitative

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza



Pharmacists' experiences and thoughts on dispensing medical abortion medications in community pharmacy

Registered community pharmacists have been able to dispense medical abortion medicines (MS-2 Step) to individuals with a prescription in Australia since 2015. It is essential to understand pharmacist's current knowledge, practice, and delivery of MS-2 Step to identify gaps in knowledge and additional support that the pharmacist may require to provide high-quality person-centered abortion care. We will use qualitative methods to elicit pharmacists' experiences to ascertain how we can improve the knowledge and service delivery of MS-2 Step.

Keywords

abortion, pharmacy, women's health, primary care

Available options

Masters by research Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

- Supervisor
- Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza



Self administration of injectable contraception: What are the views of Australian women?

Depo Provera is a highly effective long acting reversible contraception administered by a three monthly injection. Internationally, in an attempt to increase accessibility, improve continuation and reduce costs, there have been studies on the feasibility and acceptability of self injection of contraceptive products such as depo provera by women. This study will utilise Facebook recruiting to survey women about the acceptability of self-administration of injectable contraception in the Australian context.

This study would be suitable for BMedSci, BBiomed Sci and Pharmacy or other honours students or as a Masters of Public Health research project.

Keywords

contraception, pharmacy, general practice, women's health, primary care

Available options

Masters by research Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza

Dr Jessica Botfield



Exploring the use of online contraceptive providers: who are these services catering?

There has been an increase in online prescription services offering access to contraception methods without having to physically meet with a medical provider or pharmacist. Understanding the perspectives of individuals accessing contraception through online contraception providers is important to determine who these online services are catering to and what the gaps that these services are potentially filling in the healthcare system. We will use qualitative methods to explore these questions.

Keywords

contraception, pharmacy, online contraceptive providers, women's health, primary care

Available options

Masters by research Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors



A/Prof Luke Grzeskowiak (External)

Contraception provided over the counter by pharmacists: What do pharmacists think?

Internationally, in an attempt to increase accessibility, improve continuation, and reduce costs, there is a move to provide a wider range of contraceptive products over the counter by pharmacists. This qualitative study will explore the views of pharmacists regarding the provision of over-the-counter contraception in the Australian context.

This study would be suitable for BMedSci, BBiomed Sci and Pharmacy or other honours students or as a Masters of Public Health research project.

Keywords

Contraception, Pharmacy, Women's health, General Practice, Primary Care

Available options

Masters by research Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza



What is the sexual and reproductive health care content in Australian preregistration nursing and midwifery curricula?

There is a growing need and opportunity for nurses and midwives to be involved in sexual and reproductive health care. Nurses and midwives can be involved in this care following Bachelors qualification. To support understanding of undergraduate preparation in clinical care in areas such as antenatal assessments, family planning, and sexual health advice, this project seeks to undertake a qualitative interview study of academics about pre-registration nursing and midwifery curriculum in Australia. This study aims to support educational providers and policymakers wanting to attract more nurses and midwives in sexual and reproductive care.

Keywords

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

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

Co-Supervisors

A/Prof Judith Dean

Dr Ensieh Fooladi



Acceptability of adolescents undertaking contraceptive counselling with pharmacist

For adolescents, pharmacists have the potential to be an entry point to sexual and reproductive health services in the primary care system. Understanding the acceptability of pharmacists delivering contraceptive counseling is important to ensure that delivery of service by pharmacists meets the needs of adolescents. We will use qualitative methods to elicit the experiences of adolescents to ascertain how we can improve the service delivery and experience of adolescents accessing sexual and reproductive health care in the pharmacy setting.

Keywords

adolescent, contraception, pharmacy, women's health, primary care

Available options

Masters by research Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Anisa Assifi

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza



What are Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Models of Intrauterine Device Care?

Nurse Practitioners 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 and treatment their role aims to improve access to services for at-risk populations, and, rural and remote communities. This 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 IUD models are implemented. Through a literature review and interviews with Nurse Practitioners, this research seeks to understand how Nurse Practitioners implement IUD models of care in the primary healthcare 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

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza

Dr Cathy Watson (External)



The development of an audit tool to understand the role of general practice nurses in women's sexual and reproductive health care

General practice nurses (GPNs) are pivotal in the management of care for patients across the lifespan. Their role includes health education, health promotion, and the management of episodic and chronic conditions. General practice represents an ideal setting where opportunistic and planned care about sexual and reproductive health can occur. However, little is known about ways GPNs' are currently providing this care and ways GPNs could be further utilised in supporting women's sexual and reproductive health. This project will involve a literature review and the development of an audit tool to analyse GPN consultations in women's sexual and reproductive health. Findings will inform current GPN 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

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Sharon James

Co-Supervisors Prof Danielle Mazza



How can telehealth provision of early medical abortion be improved?

Since the pandemic telehealth abortion has become more widespread in many countries. In Australia Medicare item numbers were introduced in July 2021 which for the first time enable women to access medical abortion remotely through telehealth supported by Medicare. Little is known however about which women are accessing this service and what their experiences in the Australian context have been. This project aims to describe which women have utilised Telehealth abortion in Australia and determine their views about how the service can be improved. The study will use a mixed methods approach analysing available data and using interviews to elicit patient perspectives The results of this study will help inform improvements in telehealth service provision of medical termination of pregnancy

Keywords

abortion, women's health, general practice, quantitative, survey

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time Part-time

Physical location 553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza

Co-Supervisors

Dr Jessica Botfield



Menstrual patterns, quality of life and contraceptive choice among Australian women

Women experience menstrual cycles that vary in length, number of days menstruating, amount of bleeding and accompanying symptoms. Different contraceptive methods have differing effects on a woman's menstrual pattern. It would be of interest to note if a woman's menstrual pattern is associated with her contraceptive choice and quality of life, and if her choice of contraception changes due to menstrual pattern changes. This project will assess the menstrual patterns of Australian women and their contraceptive method of choice using data already collected as part of the Australian Contraceptive Choice project (ACCORd).

Keywords

Menstrual patterns, contraception, women's health, reproductive health, sexual health

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time Part-time

Physical location 553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza



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, to better understand commonalities and differences and to determine potential gaps and opportunities. Qualitative interviews with GPs will also be undertaken to explore their views and experiences of using HealthPathways for contraceptive care.

Keywords

HealthPathways, contraception, sexual and reproductive health, abortion, general practice

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Jessica Botfield

Co-Supervisors Prof Danielle Mazza



Mapping access to women's reproductive health services

Comprehensive women's health service delivery includes the provision of essential services such as preconception care, contraception (including Intrauterine device and implant insertion) and abortion services. However access to such services can be a "postcode lottery". This quantitative project will survey general practices nationally to better understand gaps in essential women's health service provision in general practice. The project will inform current policy in relation to better supporting general practice to meet women's needs. The project will also inform general practice training and curriculum to ensure a sustainable workforce in the years to come.

Keywords

abortion, women's health, general practice, quantitative, survey

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

Physical location 553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza

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 in the postpartum period can help to avoid a rapid repeat pregnancy. In Australia, postpartum contraception can potentially be accessed in several ways, however there is a lack of consistent and cohesive guidance for maternal postpartum community care and no postpartum contraception clinical guidelines. Through a literature review and key informant interviews, this project will identify and document existing programs and models of care for provision of postpartum contraception in Australia and internationally, to inform consideration of how these might be implemented or refined in the Australian context.

Keywords

Women's health, contraception, sexual and reproductive health, postnatal, postpartum, general practice, primary care

Available options

Honours BMedSc(Hons)

Time commitment

Full-time

- **Physical location**
- 553 St Kilda Rd
- Supervisor
- Dr Jessica Botfield
- **Co-Supervisors**

Prof Danielle Mazza



PhD Research Projects

Costing contraception: Evaluating the economic benefits of free contraception

The recent Senate inquiry into universal access to reproductive health recommended that that the Australian Government reviews, considers and implements options to make contraception more affordable for all people. One option is to make contraception available at "no cost" as currently occurs in the NHS, France and Canada. However it is unclear how to make this happen in the Australian context. In addition there is an absence of economic evidence to support investment in increased access to contraception. We have some evidence around specific initiatives in the UK and US and Aus from RCTs that increase contraceptive uptake but greater clarity is required regarding how making contraception totally free can be justified as cost saving from a "treasury" perspective demonstrating immediate benefits rather than long term benefits in reduced expenditure.

This PhD would suit a domestic student interested in primary care, women's health and health economics with experience undertaking economic evaluations. The PhD student will be part of the SPHERE Centre of Research Excellence in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Primary Care co-supervised by Prof Danielle Mazza AM (the SPHERE director) and Prof Cathy Mihalopoulos, Professor of Health Economics and Head, Monash University Health Economics Group.

Keywords

contraception, health economics, equity

Available options PhD/Doctorate

Time commitment

Full-time

Top-up scholarship funding available

No

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Prof Danielle Mazza

Co-Supervisors

Prof Cathy Mihalopoulos (Professor of health economics head, Monash University health economics group)

Endometriosis management in primary care

An exciting opportunity exists for an exceptional candidate to undertake a PhD project in women's sexual and reproductive health at the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)-funded SPHERE Centre of Research Excellence. Located within the Department of General Practice, SPHERE focuses on addressing evidence-practice gaps in the delivery of preconception care, contraception, medical abortion services and endometriosis and pelvic pain diagnosis and management in primary care and increasing access to these services.

The Australian Government is committed to fund initiatives aimed at improving endometriosis and pelvic pain diagnosis, primary care support and helping more individuals to find appropriate care and better manage the impact of endometriosis and pelvic pain. As part of this package, the Government has funded the development of an Endometriosis Management Plan (EMP). The need for an EMP was identified as part of the National Action Plan for Endometriosis and broad stakeholder advocacy. This Action Plan describes the need for greater understanding, awareness and diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis. The EMP will support the navigation and management of endometriosis and pelvic pain through primary care settings.

The PhD will focus on elements of the development, piloting and evaluation of the EMP and include qualitative and quantitative components.

Keywords

contraception, health economics, equity Available options PhD/Doctorate Time commitment Full-time Top-up scholarship funding available Yes (\$33,000 per annum) Physical location 553 St Kilda Rd Supervisor Prof Danielle Mazza Co-Supervisors Dr Sharinne Crawford

Identifying the information and support needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with endometriosis and/or chronic pelvic pain

This mixed methods research will focus on exploring the experiences of diagnosis and management of endometriosis and/or chronic pelvic pain in primary care of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and identifying their information and support needs. It is anticipated that this research will inform the Endometriosis Management Plan (Endo-MP) project, to support the diagnosis, navigation and management of endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain for patients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and GPs. This project is not currently funded.

Keywords

endometriosis, pelvic pain, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), primary care, women's health

Available options

PhD/Doctorate

Time commitment

Full-time Part-time

Top-up scholarship funding available

No

Physical location

553 St Kilda Rd

Supervisor

Dr Sharinne Crawford

Co-Supervisors

Prof Danielle Mazza

For more information

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