

Faculty of Medicine, The Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN)

PhD Scholarships in Intellectual and Developmental Disability Health: Expressions of Interest Invited

Background: People with developmental or intellectual disability experience high rates of mental and physical health conditions. They are disproportionately represented in mental health services and particularly in the costs of mental health service delivery. They have higher rates of morbidity and avoidable deaths, alongside poor access to health services and preventative healthcare. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has found people with cognitive disability “continue to be subject to systematic neglect in our health system”.

Information about 3DN’s activities: Our department works to improve health policy, practice and support for people with an intellectual or developmental disability. 3DN builds capacity through teaching, training, health promotion, development of educational resources and the conduct of other professional activities. We conduct research with high translational benefit to the disability and health sectors.

The department leads numerous initiatives that improve access to and capability of Australian healthcare and disability support providers to meet the needs of people with intellectual disability. Of particular interest are projects including the MySigns app to facilitate mental health assessment for people with intellectual disability, the Intellectual Disability Mental Health Service Pathways Tool, as well as specialist intellectual disability health service evaluations. Several projects have shown valuable preliminary outcomes, with the need to evaluate and scale up to national initiatives.

The department has also curated a multi-agency population-capture of all people with ID in NSW linked to relevant NSW and Commonwealth health and human services datasets, with population-based age- and sex-matched controls. The cohort comprises 574,630 individuals (116,999 with ID), of whom 19,618 died during the period of data capture with cause of death data available (7,356 with ID). Commonwealth datasets that form the linkage include the Medicare Benefits Schedule, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, National Death Index, Australian Immunisation Registry and National Bowel Cancer Screening. State-based (NSW) datasets include various disability, education, health and mental health datasets including hospital admissions, cancer and cancer screening, notifiable conditions and cause of death.

Opportunities for PhD Projects: The successful candidates will have exemplary track records and will work with 3DN academic staff to propose an inclusive, highly translational and innovative body of work in areas aligned with 3DN’s research programs. Current opportunities include preventative health care, mental health care, interactions between mental health and physical health outcomes, medicines use and associated benefits and harms, special populations including those with multiple or complex needs, ageing and frailty and lifestyle interventions in people with intellectual disability.

Eligibility: Students with honours, masters or equivalent degrees in medicine, allied health or related disciplines would be well suited. Applicants may be Australian citizens, permanent residents or international. Applicants must meet the UNSW PhD entry requirements and be able to enrol as a full-time domestic PhD scholar.

Value: \$30,000 per annum for 3 years for full scholarship; if applicant attracts their own scholarship (eg RTP) a top-up of scholarship of \$5,000 per annum for 3 years.

More information: Various projects conducted at 3DN are funded by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). More information about specific projects can be found here: <https://www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects-publications/projects>

How to apply: To commence the EOI process please contact the 3DN Student Coordinators Dr Rachael Cvejic (r.cvejic@unsw.edu.au) and Dr Janelle Weise (j.weise@unsw.edu.au) with a 1 page EOI, your CV and academic transcripts.

Closing date: 31-1-22

