

WA Health Translation Network

COVID-19 Research Collaboration

Minutes

Monday 18 May 2020, 3.00pm – 4.00pm

Via Zoom

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

1. Welcome and update

The flattening of the curve has continued, this group indicates the benefits of collaboration.

The West Australian Science on the Swan magazine will be published on 22 May which will raise the profile of COVID-19 research in WA. <http://info.thewest.com.au/westadvertising/feature/20200522/index.html>

Minutes

The Minutes from this meeting and all previous meetings are circulated as quickly as possible and uploaded to the WAHTN COVID-19 website.

The WAHTN website for COVID-19 has been receiving a high volume of traffic so it is proving useful to the community and Gary Geelhoed encouraged members to continue to send information to upload.

Website

WAHTN will update the COVID-19 dedicated website to summarise the achievements of the Research Collaboration to date.

Guardianship Act

Issues with the operationalisation of the new Legislation. The system of research governance needs to be modernised and reflect contemporary practice. A consistent approach is required.

Gary Geelhoed advised that a meeting is scheduled today to discuss this in greater detail.

2. Funding

Gary Geelhoed noted that the announcement of the WAHTN/ Dept of Health Research Grants is imminent.

Infrastructure Grant Agreement's entered into with Jon Watson (UWA) to progress the COVID Research Response team set up, biobanking; and Chris Reid (Curtin) towards the CIVIC Study.

With regards to funding, the Biobanking platform is a great example of what WAHTN can achieve with collaboration.

The Hospital Foundations are keen to fund certain projects. Gary can provide additional information on this as this progresses.

3. Updates from Key Areas

Bruce Robinson

EDICT Trial set up for Stage 1 COVID-19 whilst patients are still at home and in isolation. Involves monitoring and trialling different repurposed drugs.

Connected with Imperial College and Stanford in novel drug learning.

Bruce has established a collaboration via his connections at the University of Indonesia to achieve monitoring and results. There is an opportunity to use Indonesia for Stage 2 trials, hospital in-patients and the University of Indonesia will act as the hub. Further expansion into Australia can then be discussed.

Bruce is happy to be contacted if anyone wishes to be involved.

Owen Robinson advised there are a couple of strategies being considered for the ASCOT trial, one is potentially expanding the protocol to other countries (funding and IP could be a concern). Another strategy is to have a smaller trial linked.

CIVIC – Chris Reid

CIVIC is continuing to develop.

Mental health project is progressing. The next iteration is focusing on long term health impacts. Mental health issues around the lockdown, loss of employment etc, particularly with tertiary students and tertiary education workers.

FIFO development of appropriate programs enabling them to undertake screening of their workers and CIVIC has dovetailed into this looking at the longer term health implications. This could be expanded to frontline workers.

All of the above projects are aligned, collecting consistent data across the various groups to enable pooling with other States within Australia.

Mental Health (Sean Hood)

Discussions held with Mental Health Commission to take a reverse research proposal approach, utilising the network created with the WAHTN COVID-19 Research Collaboration.

Pip Brennan mentioned that the Health Consumers Council would like to have a special session on the mental health research as it is an important area of focus from a consumer's aspect.

Bruce Robinson mentioned the Fathering Project which focuses on mental and emotional wellbeing which would be a valuable source for synergies.

COVID-19 Research Response (CRR)

The CRR has shown the feasibility of setting up a platform of research from all three metropolitan health areas.

A collaboration with the Telethon Kids Institute has commenced to focus on children and they will utilise the CRR platform to facilitate other projects moving forward ie respiratory project, community or other hospital base projects.

The CRR has collected samples and data on 40% of all hospitalised patients who have presented with COVID-19 which is more data in WA than the rest of Australia combined (averaging at 92%, compared to 32%).

Steve Wilton

Collaborators at Monash University (Merlin Thomas), UWA (Kevin Pflieger) and Murdoch University (Steve Wilton) are looking at several indirect approaches to modify *RAGE (Receptor for Advanced Glycation Endproducts) expression to reduce the cytokine storm in severe COVID cases. A scientific meeting has been held with the company set up called Rage Biotech (the technology has been recently patented). Another approach is using ACE 2 (Angiotensin 1-converting enzyme 2, an attachment protein for COVID-19) to generate a soluble form which can act as a decoy. Animal studies are commenced. This is a somewhat lateral approach to minimise the infection and allow time for your own immune response to respond to the infection.*

Consumer and Community – Ben Hogan

Online training workshop was held with the Community Representative Pool last week focusing specifically on consumer involvement in COVID-19 research. It was a success and the CCHRN team will schedule further online training workshops.

The survey distributed to consumers to get feedback from the general public about the importance of COVID-19 research and what they felt was acceptable and unacceptable around a pandemic. The findings will be presented to by June.

COVID-19 Immunity Collaborative Workstream (Dominic Mallon)

A research proposal has been prepared by Dominic Mallon and the COVID-19 Immunity Collaborative Workstream which outlines opportunities to detect immunity, particularly those that have recovered from COVID-19.

Edith Cowan University (Rob Newton)

Technology is moving very fast. We should utilise the opportunity to progress Telehealth.

Fiona Wood is in negotiations with Ernst Young to establish a virtual and face to face workshop to progress the telehealth initiative (in approx. 3 weeks' time). This will be promoted further when confirmed via WAHTN.

WA Department of Health (Darren Gibson)

The Future Fund is tabled in Parliament this week.
Further funding may be available to support COVID-19 initiatives.

Child and Adolescent Health Services (Peter Richmond)

Perth Children's Hospital is part of a national network to develop a uniformed case definition and data collection if Kawasaki shock cases occur in Australia. This will be aligned with international collaborators in the UK.

4. Next Meeting

It was proposed that these meetings be held on a fortnightly basis moving forward.

Gary Geelhoed asked for ideas for how this meeting should evolve. If members could feedback at the next meeting. Consideration should be given to workstream reports which is more functional.

The next meeting will be scheduled on Tuesday 2 June, 3pm.