

WA Health Translation Network

COVID-19 Research Collaboration

Minutes

Monday 14 September 2020, 3.00pm – 4.00pm

Via Zoom

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

1. Welcome and update

Gary Geelhoed noted that 2 papers provided by Steve Webb on the use of steroids were attached to the Agenda for information.

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

2. Presentation - Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation (JTSI) (Peter Klinken)

Peter Klinken provided an overview of JTSI's involvement throughout the COVID-19 crisis, including projects funded through JTSI and a synopsis on how the projects were awarded.

Peter advised that he was approached at the beginning of the pandemic by various companies that had capabilities asking what they can do to help for the COVID-19 crisis. Peter said it was a remarkable response from the community, in a time of need. The Minister for Health advised that there were 4 key items required, these included; PPE, ventilators, face shields, sanitisers. Companies were able to deliver prototypes and assist with manufacturing these items.

In addition, Peter was asked by the WA Treasurer to identify a list of significant research projects applicable to COVID-19 across the WA University sector. The 5 Western Australian Universities were incredibly supportive during this process and a list of projects was identified (included with the Agenda). Subsequently, \$5million was approved by the WA Department of Premier and Cabinet and injected into the research sector to support COVID-19 research.

There was a variety of projects supported, several were unique to the awarded University, however, there were many that were complementary to each other from a cross section of the University sector, focusing on data collection and analysis, mental health and Aboriginal health. This demonstrated how a cohesive and collaborative approach could be compiled in such a short timeframe.

Stephen Stick (Telethon Kids Institute) asked the best process to retrieve 10,000 samples from Santiago, Chile (in a way not to damage the samples) which have been collected as part of the CoCo Trial.

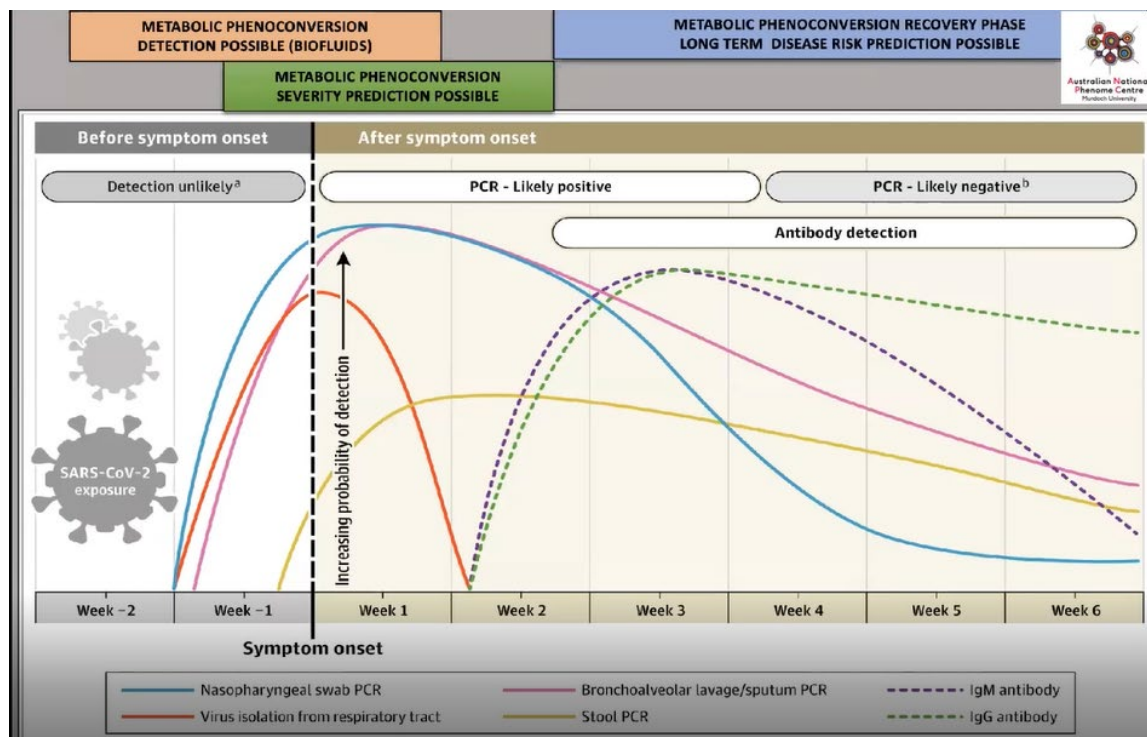
Jeremy Nicholson (Australian National Phenome Centre) advised that the ANPC have a COVID-19 import licence. The Minister of Agriculture assisted the ANPC through this process and noted that a live virus sample needs to be immediately transported to a PC3 facility. It was suggested the Stephen Stick consider contacting Mark Watson at the Institute for Immunology and Infectious Diseases to get advice on how best to approach the governance.

3. Presentation - Australian National Phenome Centre (ANPC) (Jeremy Nicholson)

Jeremy Nicholson presented slides relating to the International Phenome Centre Network and the exchange of data and samples.

The ANPC is expecting to receive samples from key collaborators within the International Phenome Centre Network. This will represent the best collection of COVID-19 samples in the world.

Timeline of symptom onsets is shown in the following slide:



Integrated COVID-19 Biomarker discovery platforms was explained.

From the studies conducted to date, the ANPC team know that COVID-19 has complex system diagnostics, it is an acutely systemic disease with a variety of complications and variations such as diabetes, liver dysfunction, Porphyria and inflammation. Recovery varies between individuals. Reversibility can be directly assessed and potentially linked to other long term health effects and disease risks.

The ANPC has published its two COVID-19 related papers with more to follow.

4. Presentation - WA Department of Health (James Williamson)

James Williamson discussed the WA Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Strategy 2020 – 2022, summarised as follows:

The Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Legislation was endorsed in May 2020.

The WA Minister for Health has now approved the WA Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Strategy. Meetings are being scheduled to discuss the strategy in further detail.

The strategy document outlines the high level approach to support health research and innovation, including policy development.

An Advisory Council has been established to support the Fund. The Chair is currently being identifying and will be confirmed shortly.

The WA Department of Health has distributed \$8million to date towards COVID-19 related research; with \$3M distributed through WAHTN for research projects and infrastructure.

A call has been distributed for COVID-19 related research (up to \$4million) with 3 main themes: research (up to \$250k per project), innovation (up to \$50k per initiative) and infrastructure (up to \$1million). The remit is broad at present (given the limited amount of COVID-19 cases in WA), however, the focus of funding could be allocated to; mental health, social consequences of isolation, immunology, cancers that might have been missed and other areas. Closing date is 16 October 2020. Further information can be found here:

<https://fhrifund.health.wa.gov.au/Funding/Current-opportunities/FHRI-Focus-Grants---COVID-19>

Other projects progressing at the WA Department of Health include the DETECT Schools project, being led by the Telethon Kids Institute, in collaboration with Area Health Service Providers (WACHS, CAHS, PathWest). Data from the social questionnaires distributed is being analysed, with results informing how people react to COVID-19.

The DETECT FIFO project is also continuing, which has allowed FIFO operations to continue.

A proposal has been received from 5 of the major aged care providers and looking at how we can develop research methodologies, specifically for residential aged care. Further information will be provided on this project in due course.

Peter Richmond (Child and Adolescent Health Service) asked James Williamson's thoughts around a vaccination strategy for WA. James Williamson indicated that a significant amount of modelling has been conducted on how vaccines might be distributed, if available. There are none locally in WA at present.

Toby Richards (COVID-19 Research Response) asked whether the ANPC could help with screening of new arrivals to WA. James Williamson that the Department had not received a formal proposal as yet.

5. Updates from Key Areas

COVID-19 Research Response (CRR) (Toby Richards)

State-wide platform established and has been successful. The CRR is fully set up and uses OpenSpecimen.

Currently require further funding to continue.

Fiona Stanley Hospital (Dale Edgar)

Dale Edgar discussed his project; **Life AFTER** covid-19 (**LATER-19**): a prospective, longitudinal, cohort study of symptoms, physical function and psychological outcomes. Summarised as follows:

Methods manuscript is now accepted to print in the Tasman Medical Journal. The paper is with the Editor now after the first round of proof setting - it should be finalised and available open access within the month.

All three tertiary sites recruiting patients and completing LATER19 assessments onsite. Senior Physiotherapist Liz Hurn - LATER19 Site Coordinator for SCGH navigated Ethics and Governance requirements and has now commenced recruitment at SCGH.

77 patients have been recruited to date with > 100 assessments. Research clinics are at maximum capacity allowing us to recruit and, or assess 50+ patients per week across the three sites.

Establishment of novel research methods has been completed with pilot video conference 1-minute sit-to-stand tests.

Access to the COVID19 Clinic data from FSH, RPH and SCGH. This has allowed us to establish a large group of potential control patients through propensity score matching.

REDCap functionality has been expanded, which allows set-up of the capacity to SMS survey and e-consent links to patients so they can be completed on their smartphone. In addition to using emailed links, this provides an additional method to engage patients to complete the online components of our study.

The pivot of the ISARIC study is still with Ethics and Governance. While biospecimens are not part of the LATER19 focus, our researchers and in particular, recent PhD awardee Dr Sheeraz Mohd, have been integral to the ongoing collection of repeat biospecimens as per the original ISARIC protocol and the establishment of the paediatric arm (aka PANDA trial) while awaiting the amendments.

COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration (Dominic Mallon)

The COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration is progressing.

A number of developments have been made overseas which emphasise the need to understand and measure the quality and duration of immunity. Including confirmed re-infections, vaccine with potential immune mediated adverse events and chronic morbidity related to the infection.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled in one month, Monday 12 October, 3.00pm – 4.00pm.