The Menzies School of Health Research is offering scholarship assistance to Higher Degree by Research students (Master by Research/PhD) to undertake research studies in *Discovering Indigenous Strategies to Improve Cancer Outcome Via Engagement, Research Translation and Training (DISCOVER-TT)*.

Until now cancer has been a low priority on the Indigenous health agenda, despite the disease accounting for a greater number of deaths each year than diabetes and kidney disease. Little is known about the availability of Indigenous-specific cancer support services, which models of care are most effective and which aspects of health service design and delivery could be modified to improve cancer outcomes. We also know relatively little about the needs of Indigenous cancer patients and their families, including how they can engage productively with health services. The Centre for Research Excellence, DISCOVER-TT, was established in 2013 to address these research gaps.

**DISCOVER-TT aims and objectives:**

A core component of DISCOVER-TT is to build capacity in the health research workforce by training future research leaders, practitioners, and research users. The program aims to build the capacity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous early-career researchers to carry out innovative, collaborative, outcomes-focused work in partnership with Indigenous people.

We are seeking higher degree research students to undertake research under our CRE DISCOVER-TT. Several projects have been outlined below for potential candidates; however, we also encourage the design and development of new projects that are consistent with the goals of DISCOVER-TT, which is building an evidence base through innovative, high-quality, priority-driven, applied health services research which aims to reduce disparities in treatment and survival for Indigenous Australians with cancer. The DISCOVER-TT program comprises of two key areas: 1) Pathways and Outcomes of Care; and 2) Improving Models of Care and Service Delivery. More information can be found here:

## Research Opportunities

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| Factors associated with self-reported health-related quality of life for Aboriginal patients with experience of head and neck cancer: a mixed-methods study | The primary objective of this project is to enhance health care professionals’ understanding of the impact that head and neck cancer and associated biomedical therapies have on Aboriginal people’s functioning and health-related quality of life. To enable improved information delivery and counseling for patients in relation to their treatment options and predicted outcomes after diagnosis of head and neck cancer.  
  **Aims:**  
  To report on the pre- and post-therapy experiences, symptoms, functioning and health-related quality of life of Aboriginal patients with experience of head and neck cancer  
  To determine what factors are associated with better or poorer self-reported health related quality of life for Aboriginal patients with experience of head and neck cancer  
  To assess the construct validity, internal consistency, criterion validity and data yield of the ‘Universalist health-related quality of life assessment’ (UHRQL).  
  In addition to quantitative data analyses, qualitative data from the narrative/free text response section of UHRQL can be analyzed in relation to determining other factors associated with better or poorer self-reported health-related quality of life. | Jasmine Micklem, Gail Garvey |
| Understanding the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cancer | Cancer is now the second leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians but until recently it has not been seen as a priority. Indigenous Australians have higher mortality and lower survival compared with other Australians with cancer, in part because they are more likely to be diagnosed with high fatality cancers (e.g. lung and liver), to have advanced disease when diagnosed, to have other chronic health conditions and to fail to complete treatment. This project is aimed at improving our understanding of the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cancer in order to improve the design and delivery of preventative, diagnostic, curative and palliative services. It will involve extensive interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with selected cancers as well as with their family members and a range of relevant health care professionals. This work can be conducted under a framework such as Interpretative Phenomenology or Grounded Theory, and will complement quantitative work on patterns of care and innovative models of care currently under way within DISCOVER-TT. | Joan Cunningham, Gail Garvey |
| Understanding the impact of Indigenous status on geographical inequalities in Pap smear screening participation across Queensland | Analysing temporal and spatial trends in health outcomes has a long standing history in informing policy and health service provision. To improve our understanding and dissemination of these patterns, increasingly innovative statistical and visualisation methods have been developed. Previous international and Australian research has documented the reduced likelihood of women living in rural and remote areas to participate in Pap smear screening programs. However these have been primarily ecological in nature, and to date, have not considered the role of Indigenous status on these spatial and temporal patterns. By utilising the data collected through the Queensland Pap Smear Register, along with the Indigenous identifier obtained through the NHMRC-funded Pap smear data linkage study, this project provides the opportunity to apply innovative spatial and visualisation methods to better understand the geographical distribution and temporal changes in participation in pap smear screening, and thus inform policy, planning and support programs aimed at reducing these observed differentials, particularly among Indigenous women.  
  Specific candidate requirements: Strong statistical skills and aptitude are required. | Peter Baade Kerrie Mengersen |
| To be determined (TBD) by candidate                                           | Several projects have been outlined above for potential candidates; however, we also encourage the design and development of new projects that are consistent with the goals of DISCOVER-TT, which is building an evidence base through innovative, high-quality, priority-driven, applied health services research which aims to reduce disparities in treatment and survival for Indigenous Australians with cancer. The DISCOVER-TT program comprises of two key areas: 1) Pathways and Outcomes of Care; and 2) Improving Models of Care and Service Delivery. More information can be found here: [www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/Centres_initiatives_and_projects/Centre_for_Research_Excellence_Cancer/](http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/Centres_initiatives_and_projects/Centre_for_Research_Excellence_Cancer/) | TBD |

**DISCOVER-TT** is a multi-disciplinary program that encompasses primary, secondary and tertiary care models of delivery. It is funded by a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Collaborative Clinical Projects Grant (number APP1128210) and a Queensland Health Cancer Council Grant (number 09-20). It is led by a multidisciplinary steering committee comprised of health care providers from each of the program’s participating centres. The program is a partnership between the Queensland Government and the University of Queensland, with additional support from the Australian Cancer Research Foundation, Cancer Council Queensland, Cancer Council Victoria, Cancer Council NSW, CancerCare Australia and the NHMRC. The DISCOVER-TT program is building an evidence base through innovative, high-quality, priority-driven, applied health services research which aims to reduce disparities in treatment and survival for Indigenous Australians with cancer. To improve our understanding and dissemination of these patterns, increasingly innovative statistical and visualisation methods have been developed. Previous international and Australian research has documented the reduced likelihood of women living in rural and remote areas to participate in Pap smear screening programs. However, these have been primarily ecological in nature, and to date, have not considered the role of Indigenous status on these spatial and temporal patterns. By utilising the data collected through the Queensland Pap Smear Register, along with the Indigenous identifier obtained through the NHMRC-funded Pap smear data linkage study, this project provides the opportunity to apply innovative spatial and visualisation methods to better understand the geographical distribution and temporal changes in participation in pap smear screening, and thus inform policy, planning and support programs aimed at reducing these observed differentials, particularly among Indigenous women. Specific candidate requirements: Strong statistical skills and aptitude are required.
Scholarships are open to domestic students (Australian citizens and Permanent Residents) across Australia who are studying or intending to study a PhD program- full-time enrolled through Charles Darwin University commencing semester 1, 2015.

Applications must be lodged by 31 January 2015

The scholarship will be offered for 1 year (subject to satisfying course academic requirements) and will include full tuition fees and a tax free living stipend of up to $32,729.

The candidate will be encouraged to seek scholarship funding elsewhere for the duration of their candidature.

If an externally funded primary scholarship is secured and less than the NHMRC priority stipend, a top up scholarship will be provided to match the tenure of the primary scholarship.

$3,500 p.a. for up to 3.5 years will be available to support travel and other costs directly related to the PhD.

The Scholarship Panel will base their decisions on the following guidelines and criteria:

a) Applicants will be ranked on academic merit.
b) Careful consideration will be given to grade point average in undergraduate studies.
c) Applicants should have research interest in area of cancer research and Indigenous health (as outlined above)
d) Publications and relevant work experience will be considered where they bear direct influence on the applicant’s academic or research capacity.
e) An applicant’s ranking will not be affected by age.

To apply please send the following:

- Please contact the DISCOVER-TT Research Program Manager, Dr Bronwyn Morris, on 07 31694214 or Bronwyn.Morris@menzies.edu.au to discuss potential applications.
- HDR 01 Application for Admission Form
- HDR 02 Application for HDR Scholarship Form
- HDR 03 Project Outline Form
- Research Proposal (400-600 words)
- Curriculum vitae
- Certified Transcripts for relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses

If you are seeking admission and do not hold an Australian Bachelor Honours Degree, you will need to submit the following documents:

- HDR 05 Honours Equivalence Form
- HDR 37 Existing Research Outputs. This form should be downloaded and completed for each output you wish to have considered in support of your application for Equivalence.
- HDR 38 Recognition of Professional Attainment

If you have further questions, please contact:

Caroline Sheridan
Research Degrees Administration Officer
Education and Training Division
Menzies School of Health Research
PO Box 41096
Casuarina NT 0811
Ph: (08) 8946 8420
Email: Caroline.sheridan@menzies.edu.au