



2021-2022 STUDENT PROJECT HANDBOOK

**The Communicate Study: improving
Aboriginal patient experiences and
outcomes of care in the Northern Territory**

| MASTERS | PhD



The Communicate Study: improving Aboriginal patient experiences and outcomes of care in the Northern Territory

GLOBAL AND TROPICAL HEALTH

MASTER BY RESEARCH

PhD

Aboriginal people interacting with healthcare services often experience racism, poor communication and poor quality of care. Health systems need to change to genuinely meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Health system improvements that incorporate cultural safety, wider uptake of Aboriginal interpreters and greater utilization of Aboriginal health practitioners, can be implemented within existing systems to start to bridge these gaps in quality of care, create a cultural shift among healthcare providers, and improve the experience of care and health outcomes for Aboriginal peoples.

To date, the dynamic Communicate study team has forged collaborations with NT Health, NT Aboriginal Interpreter Service and Aboriginal community leaders in the Top End. Research has focused on Royal Darwin Hospital. We are keen to expand the body of work to other hospitals and primary health care. This project has both qualitative and quantitative PhD/Master by research opportunities.

Examples of study activities to be undertaken by the qualitative research scholar include:

- Scale up and evaluate the impact of novel cultural safety educational approaches for NT healthcare providers, building on the multi-award winning podcast, 'Ask the Specialist' which is delivered alongside reflexive discussion groups.
- Implement and measure the effects of a suite of health service interventions including clinical championing of cultural safety, new models of working with Aboriginal interpreters and Aboriginal Health Practitioners.
- Explore the impact of cultural safety interventions on health provider attitudes and behaviour with a particular focus on intercultural communication
- Explore the impact of cultural safety interventions on patient healthcare experience and outcomes of new approaches to communication including around surgical consent

Alongside this work, a quantitative research scholar will:

- Develop, monitor and analyse key performance indicators (KPI) on language documentation, interpreter use and rates of self-discharge ('leave against medical advice') from hospital in the tertiary system, and / or long-term medication adherence in the primary care setting
- In partnership with health services, implement initiatives to help achieve KPI targets including technological improvements - such as iPad-based interpreter access via video link and development of resources for common medical conditions in Aboriginal languages.
- Feedback data in a continuous quality improvement process to key health system stakeholders and front-line healthcare providers to build momentum to achieve better KPI targets

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Eligibility: The successful applicant will meet the eligibility criteria for admission to a Master by Research or Doctor of Philosophy degree at Charles Darwin University.

Scholarship Provisions:

Candidates will be encouraged to seek Research Training Program (RTP) scholarship funding through Charles Darwin University. Further information about RTP scholarship application process, eligibility criteria and key dates can be found on this [CDU webpage](#)

A successful candidate who is a recipient of a primary scholarship such as RTP will be eligible to apply for a Menzies top-up scholarship to the value of \$10,000 per annum for up to 3.5 years. Successful candidates will receive \$3,500 per annum for up to 3.5 years to cover direct costs of the research.

Application Process

Applicants should submit the following:

- Brief summary of why they want to complete the project
- Current CV
- Copies of certified academic transcripts
- Proof of Residency (not required for Australian citizens)

All applications should be submitted to Prof Anna Ralph anna.ralph@menzies.edu.au. The 2021 CDU RTP scholarship round closes on 30 October 2021. The research opportunity will continue to be available into 2022 for applicants with an alternative funding source(s).