

Conduct of Research in UnitingCare Queensland



HREC

UnitingCare Queensland Research Committee

The establishment of the UnitingCare Chair in Social Policy and Research in partnership with The University of Queensland in June 2008 demonstrated a clear commitment by UnitingCare Queensland to build research capability and thereby influence social policy more successfully and deliver improved outcomes for the people served by UnitingCare agencies.

Professor Jill Wilson AO was appointed as the inaugural incumbent of the UnitingCare Chair and subsequently the UnitingCare Queensland Research Committee was established with representatives from all UnitingCare agencies. The committee will facilitate the setting of research priorities for UnitingCare Queensland and will maintain a record of UnitingCare research.

UnitingCare Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

The key focus of the UnitingCare Research Committee is research across service groups. As part of this focus it is considering ways of aligning service group policies on research governance and in line with this focus has moved to oversee the Human Research ethics approval needs for UnitingCare i.e. for Blue Care, Lifeline Community Care, Wesley Mission Brisbane, UnitingCare Centre for Social Justice and occasionally, where social research is being conducted, for UnitingCare Health hospitals.

Researchers wishing to conduct research in any of the UnitingCare service agencies should examine the relevant websites (links below) for further information about services provided:

Blue Care

**Lifeline Community Care Queensland
UnitingCare Centre for Social Justice**

Wesley Mission Brisbane

The Wesley Hospital

St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital

St Stephen's Hospital Maryborough and Hervey Bay

The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital

Theoretical basis of UnitingCare Queensland research

Research plays an important role in assisting UnitingCare to provide evidence-based services. UnitingCare promotes a range of research activities including:

- The application of research findings to promote evidence-based practice
- Participation in research studies as participant or gatekeeper
- Design and implementation of research studies
- Dissemination of research findings to facilitate evidence-based practice

Researchers are encouraged to develop research projects that address UnitingCare's research priorities (see **A framework for research in UnitingCare.**) Collaborative partnerships between researchers, practitioners and consumers improve the potential of research to benefit society. UnitingCare encourages the development of joint research proposals between researchers from academic institutions and staff from UnitingCare services and hospitals. Proposals should address an issue of relevance to UnitingCare service delivery and place considerable emphasis on the implications of the research to practice.

UnitingCare supports genuine consumer and community participation in research. Researchers wishing to conduct research in UnitingCare service or hospital facilities should be familiar with the Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Research (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002) available from the National Health and Medical Research Council or on-line at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r22syn.htm>.

Although research is an important organisational activity any involvement in research results in both direct and indirect costs for UnitingCare. Thus, all research activity within UnitingCare should promote evidence-based practice and be conducted with clearly defined benefits for UnitingCare in mind. Research projects should not place unreasonable time or resource demands on UnitingCare staff or clients.

Research outcomes

All research conducted within UnitingCare facilities has resource implications for the organisation and it is important that these costs can be related to demonstrable benefits to the organisation as a result of participating in the research.

Research activities conducted within UnitingCare should result in improved outcomes for clients, enhanced quality of care within UnitingCare, and at least one of the following additional outcomes:

- More efficient working practices within the organisation
- Benefits for UnitingCare staff
- Provision of benefits across UnitingCare with particular emphasis on benefits across all regions
- Benefits for health, ageing and / or community care, Australia-wide
- Meeting of knowledge needs within UnitingCare
- Contribution to ongoing evaluation of effectiveness of services and practices

UnitingCare's key research themes

UnitingCare has key research themes that will guide all research activity and assist researchers in targeting projects to areas of importance to UnitingCare. The four key research themes identified here address broad areas of research need in UnitingCare. They represent areas where an increase in research effort has the potential to make a significant contribution to UnitingCare.

- Client/community needs
- Workforce issues
- Service models/financing services
- the overarching area of social policy in relation to the research topic

<p>Client/community needs UnitingCare aims to provide quality, client/community focussed services. Research is needed to assist in meeting the challenge of facilitating a Best Practice approach throughout our services.</p>	<p>Service models/financing services Research is needed to develop, pilot and evaluate initiatives aimed at developing new service models and/or challenging current policy directions.</p>
<p>Workforce issues The recruitment and retention of staff has been identified as an issue of concern. These issues also relate to carers and volunteers who are vital to the operations of our services and hospitals. The impact of workforce issues on service provision is also of interest.</p>	<p>Social Policy implications UnitingCare seeks to understand the impact of policy and programs on people's lives and to identify and measure ways of achieving change in policy and programs.</p>

In conjunction with these research areas nine potential research questions have been agreed addressing the four areas separately or in combination. These questions can be grouped into four areas:

1. Evaluating the impact/outcomes of work done
2. Theorising and operationalising concepts that inform practice
3. Developing, piloting and evaluating initiatives aimed at developing new service models and/or challenging current policy directions
4. Solving practice issues

For more information follow the link to [A framework for research in UnitingCare](#)

UnitingCare Queensland HREC membership

UnitingCare's HREC is constituted according to Section 5.1.30 of the *National Statement* (2007). Members of UnitingCare's HREC include:

Ms Colleen Geyer, Chair
Dr Anthony Tuckett, Nursing Representative
Dr John North, Medical Representative
The Rev. Heather den Houting, Minister of Religion Representative
Mr Neville Jolly, Community Representative
Ms. Julie McStay, Legal Representative
Dr. Sally Bennett, Academic Research Representative
Ms Glenys Webby, Allied Health and Clinician

Application process

UnitingCare will only consider applications **from persons with qualifications and/or significant experience in research** (Section 5.1.28 [a]). Persons undertaking research with appropriate supervision will also be considered.

All research undertaken in UnitingCare services or hospitals is to have been appropriately reviewed and given authorisation prior to commencing. UnitingCare has the right to refuse participation in or the conduct of any research project at its discretion.

All researchers wishing to conduct research in UnitingCare service agency must submit a completed **Application Coversheet, Project Proposal, and Ethics Application Form**.

The Project Proposal must include:

- Rationale and study aims
- Background literature review
- Research plan (including methodology, method and analysis plan)
- Research outcomes

A copy of all data collection instruments, consent forms, information sheets and other relevant material used in the conduct of the research must be provided with the application. The completed application form and associated documentation must be sent both electronically and in hard copy to the HREC Coordinator, UnitingCare Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee, c/o PO Box 1539 Milton BC, Queensland 4064.

Process for gaining approval

All submitted research applications will be reviewed by the UnitingCare Queensland HREC Coordinator the first instance. Applications will be reviewed to ensure the proposed research:

- is methodologically sound;
- is consistent with UnitingCare's key research themes; strategic direction; and has clearly defined benefits for the organisation; and
- is achievable within UnitingCare's service delivery framework.

UnitingCare agency and directors and managers and other relevant staff will be consulted where appropriate in determining the relevance of and support for a proposed project.

Where a project has no identified issues regarding its conduct the project will be forwarded to the UnitingCare Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee for review.

Once a project is approved

A letter of approval from the Chair of the UnitingCare HREC will be sent to the Chief Investigator listed on the application. Relevant executives, management teams and care service staff will be notified of the approval.

The research will be listed in the UnitingCare research register and project reports will be published on the research section of the UnitingCare intranet site.

Conflicts of interest

- The applicant must disclose any conflicts of interest to the HREC.
- The HREC will make a determination using Section 5.4.3 of the National Statement (2007) to determine what measures may be put in place to adequately manage conflicts of interest.

Reporting of adverse events

- All adverse events must be noted by the applicant or other members of the research team. Minor adverse events are to be documented in reports completed during monitoring periods.
- Serious adverse events are considered to be those events which:
 - Cause psych-social and/or financial harm to a research participant.
 - Compromise the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- All serious adverse events must be reported immediately to the UnitingCare Queensland HREC Coordinator on: HREC@ucareqld.com.au. The Committee will be informed of any serious adverse event within two working days of the event taking place.

Project variations

- The applicant is responsible for informing the Chair of the HREC **in writing** of any major or minor variations to the project protocols. The applicant must ensure all relevant information regarding the nature of the variation, its ethical implications and relevant documentation is provided. The Chair will review all noted variations.
- Minor variations will be approved by the Chair of the HREC. The applicant is responsible for ensuring the variation(s) is/are noted on the next Progress Report for the project.
- Major variations will be reviewed by the full HREC at their next scheduled meeting.

Suspension or cessation of research

- The applicant must inform the UnitingCare Queensland HREC if the research is discontinued before the expected completion date and why.
- The applicant must develop and communicate to the HREC a process to ensure the health and wellbeing of participants is not compromised in any way as a result of the discontinuation of the research project.
- The applicant cannot resume the research without approval by the HREC.

Progress and final reports

The UnitingCare HREC Coordinator will request a progress report from the Chief Investigator at specified intervals (in May and November each year). A final report is to be submitted electronically at the completion of the project (this does **not** involve a copy of an entire research dissertation). This report is to provide a concise overview of the study and be suitable for dissemination across the organisation.

Publications

UnitingCare reserves the right to peruse and provide comment on any reports or manuscripts for publication resulting from the research prior to wider public dissemination.

Further information

All persons undertaking research in a UnitingCare service should be familiar with the organisation's research policies and processes. This material is available upon request from: the UnitingCare HREC Coordinator on HREC@ucareqld.com.au.