

NCAHA NEWS

Your monthly communication from the
North Coast Allied Health Association



Message from the Board



**Professor Susan Nancarrow,
Chair, NCAHA Board**

It is with pride that I reflect back upon NCAHA's 2016 successes. The year started with a real 'bang' at the North Coast Allied Health Forum in Coffs Harbour in March. We connected you with vital allies in health like Kathryn Refshauge from Sydney University, Teresa Anderson from Sydney Local Health District, and Suzanne Punshon from the NDIS, as well as our treasured local talent. We are always striving to connect you with allies.

Our activities and achievements during 2016 include:

- Becoming a member organisation of NCPHN
- Allied Health for the Future event at UCRH (Lismore in May)
- Telehealth workshop (Port Macquarie in November)
- Speed networking with GPs (Ballina in November)
- Memorandum of Understanding with MNC Health Training to support CPD
- Growth in membership
- Growing Facebook profile
- Rob Curry (Director) elected as President of SARRAH

We represented and advocated for North Coast Allied Health Professionals (AHPs):

- NCPHN Clinical Councils and Learning and Development sub-groups

- Centre for Healthcare Knowledge & Innovation
- Local MPs, Universities, LHDs
- Negotiating to develop a collaborative with other corporate partners (University Centre for Rural Health, University of Newcastle, Southern Cross University, other universities with campuses on the North Coast, and Local Health Districts)

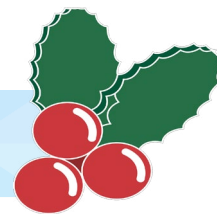
We have greatly benefitted from our collaborations thus far with NCPHN, AMSN, UCRH North Coast, MNC LHD, NNSWLHD and MNC Health Training, and we thank all for a range of sponsorship, especially NCPHN for its sustained support which enables NCAHA to function in a self-governing manner.

As we look toward 2017, the aspirations of NCAHA include:

- Revised constitution to have a more inclusive membership structure and growth
- Workforce survey to understand what you do and where you work
- Greater inclusion of AHPs in healthcare decisions and projects to put the patient at the centre of the care
- Better engagement through social media

I am humbled by the hard work and wonderful thinking of the AHPs working on the North Coast who always strive for the best health care possible. Thank you for enabling NCAHA to blossom.

On behalf of the NCAHA Directors, I wish all our members and supporters a peaceful end to this year, a happy New Year and a merry Christmas for those celebrating. We will continue to represent AH in the New Year as we strive to let your opinions be heard and ideas come to life.



Michael Woods, Exercise Physiologist, Health Hub, Lismore

Michael Woods has been involved in clinical practice for the past 30 years. Before this he completed the Sports Science course at Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education. At the time he'd also been heavily involved in coaching both athletics and Rugby League.

"From there I had the great fortune of being involved in a sports medicine clinic. It was a very collaborative and supportive environment. I was blessed to have had the support and mentorship of a physiotherapist, doctor and orthopaedic," he said.

For the last 26 years Michael has been working in his own clinic in Lismore and for 13 years he has also been consulting in multidisciplinary physiotherapy clinics at Robina, the Queensland Academy of Sport and Brisbane's West End during the week. He's clearly a man in demand.

Michael sees exercise physiology playing an expanding role in health care.

"As the name suggests, exercise prescription forms the main component of our approach. Predominately, I work with referred chronic pain conditions. Although the majority are musculoskeletal, we have had the benefit of also working with a number of neuromuscular conditions. With the expanded Medicare format involving EPC or Chronic Disease Management, exercise physiology has an expanded role with all these related conditions."

He explained that exercise has always been a complimentary medicine.

"The prescribed exercise has to be relevant for the condition but also for the patient. So often people are told they need to exercise, but aren't told what type is most relevant for them, or they are unable to exercise due to pain. The role of the exercise physiologist is to make the exercise relevant to both the condition and the client."

In February this year Michael and his daughter Lauren, also an exercise physiologist, saw a vision they held for a health hub come to life. They have turned a former run down Telstra depot in Lismore into an attractive, supportive, collaborative environment for both clients and a variety of health practitioners.

"The essence of The Health Hub is our large courtyard area which allows us to be collaborative because we're always colliding there. The Hub's layout brings practitioners together," said Michael.

The vast majority of Michael's clients come to The Health Hub when everything else they've tried to alleviate their chronic pain or assist an injury has failed. Each client is treated as an individual requiring a flexible approach to their care.

Around the courtyard, The Hub is made up of a reception and admin area, various consulting rooms, one of which has an x-ray machine, a spacious rehab area with a variety of machines and weights; a studio currently being turned into a Pilates space, a meeting room and a physiotherapy area where the physiotherapist also offers specialised hand therapy, including casting for clients.

Practitioners currently working at The Health Hub include a GP, a podiatrist, exercise physiologists, a physiotherapist and a stress and trauma counsellor.

But Michael emphasises that The Health Hub is a work in progress and will be for years.

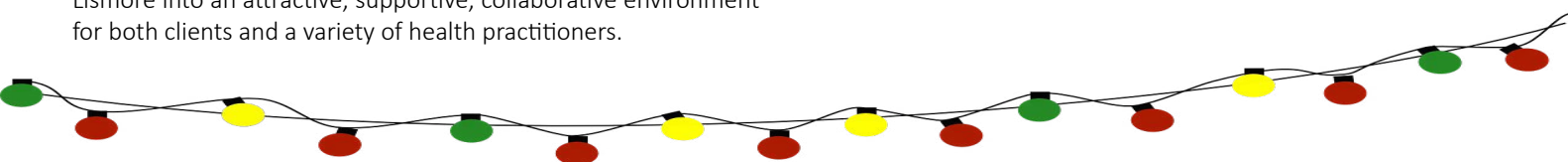
"The basic idea is that if you have an environment where people and ideas collide, things happen, and if you create the correct environment, good things happen more than not.

"We also wanted to minimise the hierarchy out, minimise the rules out and allow a space where the professions can collaborate with as few restrictions as possible. It's understood that if any of us are struggling we can knock on the door of another practitioner and just walk in and ask questions.

"In the broader health system we get into ticking boxes and having to justify our jobs. We wanted to create an environment here with as little box ticking as possible to allow flexibility and a quicker resolution to our client's condition," he said.

As The Health Hub grows, Michael wants to expand the services offered and provide more community based programs.

Contact Michael on 6622 0218.





The annual Physiotherapy Symposium was held at the Lismore campus of the University Centre for Rural Health (UCRH) on 29 November 2016. Seven diverse topics were presented by clinicians based in public and private practice, as well as university teaching and research scholars. The topics were:

- Physiotherapy in the Emergency Department
- Exercise and bone health
- Telehealth and physiotherapy assessments
- Ankylosing spondylitis
- Student physiotherapists' contributions to health care during clinical placements in NNSW schools and aged care facilities
- Medicinal cannabis and ICE update
- The place of surgery in the treatment of rotator cuff tears

The Symposium was very well attended with 52 attendees in Lismore and videoconferencing to clinicians in Coffs Harbour, Maclean and Grafton. Along with engaging in some great continuing professional education, the happy buzz during the breaks confirmed that physiotherapists were taking the opportunity to network with each other as well.

Some of the feedback received included:

“Great cross-section of topics. Very interesting and applicable to physiotherapy practice.”

“A great day and very well organised, thank you.”

“The highlight was having the opportunity to mix with and listen to other health care professionals.”

“It’s always good to have a mix of private and public practice physios, as well as the orthopaedic surgeon.”

If you missed out on this event, the presentations have been recorded – you are welcome to book a time at UCRH to view them. To do so, please contact Larisa Barnes by phoning 6620 2145 or emailing larisa.barnes@ucrh.edu.au.

Thank you to the presenters Jennifer Langton, Lisa Olsen, Steven Watson, Cherie Zischke, Tony Morley, Lindy Swain, Karen Drew and John Mison, and all who were involved in making the day a great success. UCRH was very happy to again host this annual event- see you next year!



Ankle Injuries

Ankle injuries are often thought of as sport injuries. But you don't have to be an athlete or even a “weekend warrior” to turn your ankle and hurt it. Something as simple as walking on an uneven surface can cause a debilitating sprain. Despite being common injuries, this doesn't make them any easier to cope with. If you have ever spent two weeks hobbling around on crutches, you will understand how painful even a simple twist can be.

HealthPathways features a series of ankle conditions providing general practitioner and Allied Health approaches to assessment and management. These include:

- **Acute Ankle Injuries**
- **Ankle Fractures**
- **Ankle Sprain**
- **Achilles Tendon Rupture**

Please check that your individual or practice details are correctly recorded in the services pages. Please feel free to send feedback via the 'send feedback' button at the top right of any HealthPathways page, if there are any changes you would like made or if you have anything to add to the clinical content of the pages. We would love to hear your opinion.

Follow this link to access an example of one of the new referral pages: [Physiotherapy](#)

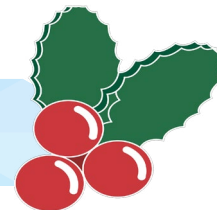
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For further information about HealthPathways please contact:

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Over-confidence about condom skills puts festival goers at risk

A milestone survey of young people attending a NSW music festival has found that while most of those interviewed felt confident about their condom usage, a significant number had used condoms inconsistently or incorrectly, resulting in high annual rates of condom failures during intercourse.

While 77 per cent of those interviewed said they were confident with their condom practices, 37 per cent had experienced condom breakage in the past year, 48 per cent had seen a condom slip off during intercourse, and 51 per cent when withdrawing the penis after sex.

This poses significant risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), specifically chlamydia and HIV, and unwanted pregnancies, and highlights the need for health promotion campaigns targeting this cohort, according to researchers from the University Centre for Rural Health North Coast (UCRH), Western Sydney University and the North Coast Public Health Unit.

Western Sydney University Medical students undergoing UCRH clinical placements, in collaboration with the North Coast HIV & Related Programs (HARP) and the North Coast Adolescent Sexual Health Consortium (PASH), interviewed 290 music festival attendees, male and female, aged 18-29 years.

An 11-question survey was conducted in private at the festival site. It asked for participants' own assessment of their confidence and ability to use condoms consistently and correctly, and how often they did so.

According to Franklin John-Leader, Co-Chair of PASH the survey found that only 18 per cent of respondents said they always used condoms during sex in the past 12 months.

"When asked where they had learnt about condom use, 55 per cent of participants said they had learnt through high school sex education, 27 per cent from a partner, 18 per cent from

packet instructions, 17 per cent from friends or family, 7 per cent from the internet, and 5 per cent from a health-care worker," Mr John-Leader said.

"Around 34 per cent of interviewees reported consuming at least ten drinks in the past 24 hours. Not surprisingly, this group was more than twice as likely to feel confident about their ability to use condoms correctly."

Some 94 per cent had been under the influence of drugs or alcohol during sex some time in the last year, while 19 per cent reported being under the influence "most of the time" or "always" when they had sex, according to UCRH researcher Dr Sabrina Pit.

"To our knowledge this is the first study to demonstrate that young Australian festival attendees, as an identified risk group, may be experiencing a significantly higher rate of problems when using condoms."

Dr Pit added, "Despite reasonable levels of confidence in their ability to use condoms, inconsistent use and a high rate of condom failure put this population at an increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, specifically chlamydia.

"This study has implications for sexual health promotion and public health programs, and targeting future interventions toward this group may be of value. There is a need to empower young Australians, particularly females, with knowledge and confidence in order to improve condom use."

UCRH Director, Professor Ross Bailie said, "This is important research with apparent implications for the health of a significant number of young Australians. It not only has national relevance but is particularly timely for the North Coast as we move into schoolies celebrations and the various music festivals over the holiday season."

Pets help with mental health

New research has found that pets can play an important role in the daily management of long-term mental illness.

When people living with serious mental illness were asked what helped them manage their condition, many put their pets right near the top of the list.

In the study, published in BMC Psychiatry, 60 per cent of participants placed their pets in their central circle of support when given a diagram to illustrate their support network, and a further 20 per cent put their pet in the second circle.

Through interviews with the participants, researcher Helen Brooks of the University of Manchester found that pets helped people manage their feelings "through distraction from symptoms and

upsetting experiences" and acted as "a form of encouragement for activity".

"When you just want to sink into a pit and just sort of retreat from the entire world, they force me, the cats force me to sort of still be involved with the world," one participant said.

They also found that pets were of particular importance to people who had limited or difficult relationships with other people.





Daily serving of nuts boosts health

Nuts make a great Christmas snack - and a daily handful will stave off a variety of diseases, an international study has found.

The study, led by researchers from Imperial College London, was published in the journal BMC Medicine. It showed that a daily serve of nuts (20g) can cut the risk of coronary heart disease by nearly 30 per cent, the risk of cancer by 15 per cent and risk of premature death by 22 per cent.

The research team analysed 29 published studies from around the world that involved up to 819,000 participants, including more than 12,000 cases of coronary heart disease, 9,000 cases of stroke, 18,000 cases of cardiovascular disease and cancer, and more than 85,000 deaths.

While there was some variation between the populations that were studied, such as between men and women, people living in different regions, or people with different risk factors, the researchers found that nut consumption was associated with a reduction in disease risk across most of them.



Primary Care Nursing Survey

NCPHN's Primary Care Nursing survey has been developed to seek input on the establishment of primary care nurse networks and identify learning and development needs for nurses working in General Practice.

We have a strong health system on the North Coast that is supported by a highly-trained and dedicated workforce. However, our system is faced by challenges in supporting patients with complex and chronic health issues.

NCPHN is committed to supporting general practices to become patient centred medical homes. Visit <http://bit.ly/2hXGjKE> to learn more about this initiative.

Boosting the role of general practice nurses is crucial to meeting this challenge.

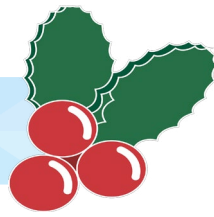
NCPHN is working collaboratively with Southern Cross University and the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association to establish primary care nursing networks across

the North Coast in early 2017. The intention is that these networks will provide primary care nurses with a local forum for continuing professional development and networking.

NCPHN is conducting a 'Primary Care Nursing' survey to inform the structure and focus of these networks, as well as gain a broader understanding of learning and development needs and the primary care nursing workforce more broadly.

The survey is open now and closes Friday 3 February 2017. It will take around 5 – 10 minutes to complete.

Visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Primarycarenursing> to complete the survey.



Volunteers wanted for text message weight-loss study

Participate in a North Coast study of how regular text messages from health experts can potentially assist with weight loss and living healthier.

The Text 4 Health! study being conducted by Western Sydney University students at UCRH will see participants split into two groups who receive differing kinds of tailored advice on how to potentially reduce their weight and create healthy habits.

At the start and finish of the 8-week study both groups will be asked to record their weight, hip and waist measurements, and fill out a short survey.

Participants must be employed, over 18 years of age, have access to a smartphone, not be involved in another weight control program and not be taking any medication that causes weight loss or gain.

The study is confidential and participants may withdraw at any time.

Volunteers are now being invited to join up, said study coordinator Dr Sabrina Pit: "The aim of Text for Health! is to compare the value of different motivational techniques on health habits. Whichever group they join, participants will receive positive health tips free-of-charge, as well as contributing to scientific knowledge."

UCRH Director, Professor Ross Bailie said, "This study is another example of how our Western Sydney University students and researchers are engaging in projects highly relevant to the community. It's fair to say that most of us can benefit from improving our fitness, and having this information in the palm of the hand is an ideal use of commonplace technology."

Visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/73BHJR3 to register.

Upcoming Events

Click the event titles to learn more.

6-8 February
Comprehensive Course in Natural Fertility Education – Melbourne

13 February
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders – Tweed Heads

16 February
Speed Networking – Coffs Harbour

21 February
Chronic Pain Management – Coffs Harbour

22 February
Chronic Pain Management – Kempsey

23 February
Chronic Pain Management – Port Macquarie

28 February
Chronic Pain Management – Mullumbimby

28 February
Responding to and Management of Crystal Methamphetamine ('ICE') – Kempsey

1 March
Chronic Pain Management – Grafton

1 March
Responding to and Management of Crystal Methamphetamine ('ICE') – Coffs Harbour

2 March
Responding to and Management of Crystal Methamphetamine ('ICE') – Port Macquarie

11 March
Management of Dementia – Port Macquarie

More Events

Visit www.healthynorthcoast.org.au/events to view the Healthy North Coast Practitioner Events Calendar.

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