



We hope that our newsletter finds you well in these trying times.

## **Welcome to the latest edition of the PCHSS newsletter**

Amidst the unprecedented challenges to health, life, and work that the COVID-19 pandemic presents for us all, healthcare sustainability is a [more pressing issue than ever](#). In these difficult times, PCHSS research has continued apace and we are pleased to share with you the latest outcomes from the [NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability \(PCHSS\)](#).

Many of our research partners work on the front lines of care as well as conducting research. The COVID-19 pandemic is touching all of us in different ways and has been highly disruptive for some. We recognise and applaud the wonderful work being delivered by our investigators and partners for the benefit of the front lines, or response planning, policy and decision-making. Despite the disruption, we have adapted and remain resilient – and productive – as a research centre.

The Partnership Centre is a \$10.75M, five-year collaboration involving 17 lead investigators, 20 expert advisors and over 40 system implementation partners from around Australia. Our vision is that our research findings significantly influence the development of a more resilient health care system – one that is affordable, cost-effective and delivers improved health outcomes for all Australians.

---

## New publications

PCHSS researchers published over 50 papers last quarter on health system sustainability. All of our publications can be accessed through the [Our Publications](#) page on our [website](#).

Some of the highlights include:

- Zhou et al. (2020) [The role of telehealth in reducing the mental health burden from COVID-19](#). *Telemedicine and e-Health*.
- Glasziou et al. (2020) [Estimating the magnitude of cancer overdiagnosis in Australia](#). *Medical Journal of Australia*.
- Raban et al. (2020) [Effectiveness of interventions targeting antibiotic use in long-term aged care facilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#). *BMJ Open*.
- Coiera (2020) [The cognitive health system](#). *The Lancet*.
- Jessup et al. (2020) [Identifying alternative service models to achieve lower cost delivery of healthcare services in high-income countries: a scoping review of systematic reviews](#). *BMJ Open*.
- Roseleur et al. (2020) [Evaluations of healthcare delivery models in Australia](#). *JBI Evidence Synthesis*.
- Ellis et al. (2020) [Implementation of e-mental health for depression and anxiety: A critical scoping review](#). *Journal of Community Psychology*.

- Cheng et al. (2020) [An examination of public hospital productivity and its persistence: An index number approach](#). *Australian Economic Review*.
  - Braithwaite et al. (2020) [The three numbers you need to know about healthcare: the 60-30-10 Challenge](#). *BMC Medicine*.
- 

## Media contributions and opinion pieces

Since the last edition of our newsletter, PCHSS researchers have been featured in more than 220 popular press stories.

Here are just a few recent news stories:

- [In defence of thongs ... and science](#) (*The Age*, 15 January 2020, by Rachelle Buchbinder)
  - [New study claims some cancers 'better left undiscovered'](#) (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 2020, covering Paul Glasziou and colleagues' recent [publication](#))
  - [Making the most of telehealth in COVID-19 responses, and beyond](#) (*Croakey News*, 5 March 2020, by Centaine Snoswell, Ateev Mehrotra, Emma Thomas, K-lynn Smith, Helen Haydon, Liam Caffery and Anthony Smith)
  - [Children's hospital sees dramatic drop in medication mishaps under new e-system](#) (*10 daily*, 11 March 2020, profiling the [research findings](#) of Johanna Westbrook and colleagues)
  - [COVID-19 is opening up fault lines in the health care system](#) (*MJA InSight+*, 6 April 2020, by Anthony Scott and Jeffrey Braithwaite)
  - [Should everyone be wearing face masks? It's complicated](#) (*The Conversation*, 8 April 2020, by Paul Glasziou and Chris Del Mar)
-

# The latest news from PCHSS' research themes and the Centre Coordination and Research Unit

## Using Analytics, Technology and Shared Data

This Research Theme tackles the big questions in informatics and healthcare — including shared health information; big data; quality, effectiveness and cost of care; and the impact of telehealth. Professors [Johanna Westbrook](#), [Enrico Coiera](#) and [Len Gray](#) lead this research.

Highlights of our activities include:

- In response to an explosion of interest and demand for the telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Len Gray's group has produced a range of articles and resources, including analyses of current obstacles to the work of 'mainstreaming' telehealth ([Smith et al. 2020](#)). In collaboration with the PCHSS Centre Coordination team, they also created a set of [guides for health professionals](#) and [consumers](#) for using telehealth.
- Vulnerable older Australians may experience greater difficulty accessing services following 2017 home care package allocation reforms, new study finds ([Jorgensen et al. 2020](#)). By analysing client experiences at a large Australian aged care provider before and after the reforms, Professor Westbrook and colleagues found that fewer people started services following the reforms and that those that did were more likely to be younger and have a partner.
- People are increasingly using chatbots (or and other conversational agent (CA) systems) that mimic human conversations for health advice but do these CAs provide good advice? Professor Enrico Coiera's team analysed how commonly-available CAs on smartphones and smart

speakers responded to health and lifestyle questions ([Kocaballi et al. 2020](#)). They found that CAs are limited in their ability to advise on both the safety-critical health needs and lifestyle advice.

## **Reducing Waste and Low-value Care**

Approximately, 30% of healthcare is not beneficial to patients and not delivered within best practice guidelines. Worse yet, 10% of care can be actually harmful to the patient. The teams led by Professors [Paul Glasziou](#) and [Rachelle Buchbinder](#) are undertaking research into reducing waste from unnecessary or inappropriate care and delivering effective and appropriate services at a lower cost.

Highlights of our activities include:

- Professor Glasziou and colleagues found that nearly one in four cancers in men and one in five cancers in women were overdiagnosed in Australia every single year ([Glasziou et al. 2020](#)). Their findings were widely reported in the popular press, generating over 60 news articles around the globe.
- Professor Buchbinder's group published a scoping review of systematic reviews of alternative service models to achieve lower cost delivery of healthcare services in high-income countries. Among their findings was a lack of economic evaluations of delivery arrangements in most reviews, indicating that the value of many of these alternative models is unknown ([Jessup et al. 2020](#)).

## **Promoting Better Value for the Health Dollar**

This Research Theme, led by Professors [Tony Scott](#) and [Jon Karnon](#) and Dr [Delia Hendrie](#), covers four major areas: 1) using financial incentives to promote value-based healthcare, 2)

priority setting and decision-making in healthcare organisations, 3) the impact of markets, competition and choice in healthcare, and 4) the impact of a collaborative research program on cost savings and efficiencies in healthcare settings.

Highlights of the activities include:

- Professor Jon Karnon and colleague Dr Brita Pekarsky published a paper exploring the implications of economic evaluations of health technologies and services from a ‘societal perspective’, which aimed to capture a broader range of costs across the whole of a society, in contrast to a ‘health service perspective’ (which considers only the cost effects of evaluated interventions on the relevant health system). Focussing on the question of “fiscal multiplier effects”, the paper will be of particular interest to policymakers seeking to understand how to best gauge the economic impacts of the health policy decisions they make ([Karnon and Pekarsky 2020](#)).
- Professor Tony Scott and colleagues carried out an in-depth study of hospital productivity in Victoria using data between 2007 and 2012. Among a variety of findings, their research showed large hospitals performing significantly better than small hospitals ([Choon et al. 2020](#)).

## **Partnership Centre-wide Activities**

The Partnership Centre Team has also been actively promoting health system sustainability research through meetings, workshops, and conferences as well as published papers.

Here are a few highlights of what’s been happening:

### ***Publicity and Outreach***

- **60 seconds with... Sharon Sanders**. Assistant Professor Sharon Sanders of Bond University described her research on overdiagnosis in non-cancer conditions. She noted that, although overdiagnosis is often driven by the best intentions, it represents a challenge to healthcare sustainability around the world.
- **60 seconds with... Andrew Partington**. Health economist Andrew Partington explained how his team helps provide frameworks for stepping back from the complexity of healthcare to make good financial decisions based on data and evidence.
- Three new videos from November's Treatment Overload event have recently been uploaded to PCHSS's YouTube channel. They are: a 5-minute showcase of the day, an overview of the healthcare complexity simulation game, and the talk by consumer health advocate Tim Benson.
- In light of the massively expanded interest in telehealth services at this time of crisis, Professor Len Gray's team has produced a variety of new resources, including the ones found here.
- In February, Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite participated in the Charter Day Meeting of Ireland's Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, during which he conducted the healthcare complexity game.

**For more information check out PCHSS' News and Media page.**

### ***Research***

- Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite and colleagues produced a 12-article special supplement on the Deepening our Understanding of Quality in Australia (DUQuA) project—a multisite, multi-level, cross-sectional study of 32

of Australia's largest hospitals—for the *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*.

- Led by Associate Professor Yvonne Zurynski, the evaluation of the implementation of a LifeSpan suicide prevention program continues in partnership with the Black Dog Institute. The team submitted successful abstracts for an oral presentation at the International Conference on Integrated Care, which was scheduled to be held 27-29 April in Croatia, but was cancelled due to the pandemic.
- Many other abstracts have been submitted and accepted for presentation at international conferences such as ISQua in Florence. Unfortunately, most conferences have been cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The PCHSS coordinating team carried out a [rapid literature review on social prescribing](#), published by the Consumer Health Forum of Australia (CHF) on 10 February. We mapped the evidence on the effectiveness social prescribing from studies in the last three years.

---

## New funding

Recently secured grants:

- Professor Rachelle Buchbinder and colleagues received [a new \\$2.5 million grant](#) for a National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce from the Walter Cottman Endowment Fund, Ian Potter Foundation and the MRFF.
- Associate Professor Yvonne Zurynski and colleagues received a grant from the Sax Institute to carry out a review of the evidence on factors for improving health practitioner referrals to — and patient uptake of — lifestyle modification programs for chronic disease management.



## Other news

- On Australia Day, Professor [Rachelle Buchbinder](#) was [named to the Order of Australia](#).
- In March, Professor Johanna Westbrook [received the Elizabeth Blackburn Award for Leadership in Health Services Research](#) at the NHMRC's annual Research Excellence Awards in Canberra.

---

## Contact

If you would like to partner with a stream of health system sustainability research, or you have an interest in any of the above areas of research, please [contact us](#).

Warm regards,

The Partnership Centre Team on behalf of:

Chief Investigator Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite

Founding Director, [Australian Institute of Health Innovation](#),  
Macquarie University



Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability  
Based at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation  
Level 6, 75 Talavera Rd  
Macquarie University NSW 2109

The NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability (Grant ID #: 9100002) is administered by the [Australian Institute of Health Innovation](#), Macquarie University. Along with the NHMRC, the funding partners in this research collaboration are: Bupa Health Foundation; NSW Ministry of Health; Department of Health, WA; and The University of Notre Dame Australia. Their generous support is gratefully acknowledged.

You are receiving this email because you subscribed to our newsletter. To unsubscribe, please click below.

Share

Tweet

Share

Forward

[Preferences](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)