



CAHE & DECS – improving the future for our children

CAHE's Dr Susan Hillier talks about her collaborative research with DECS

Dr Susan Hillier, Senior Lecturer with the School of Health Sciences, has been with the University of South Australia for the past 6 years. She divides her time between her University schedule and her private practice, which she established 17 years ago. Susan now runs her practice from home or the UniSA City East Campus, and also conducts home visits to cater to the specific needs of her clients. Dr Hillier enjoys the diversity and challenges that all these environments bring to her professional life.



In addition to this already hectic schedule Susan has been working with the Department of Education and Children's Services producing two research initiatives that will have major impacts on the specialist areas of children's health that she is exploring.

One area of the collaborative research undertaken by Dr Hillier and Deb Kay, DECS Manager Interagency Health Care, is in the field of children with acquired brain injury (ABI), where several key agencies are working together to build a service pathway from intensive care to the school environment. This pathway is essential to the successful integration of the injured child into typical school life.

This project explores the roles of all participants in this pathway, from the child and his/her family, to health practitioners, to educators, both in the hospital and school environments.

From the moment a child experiences a brain injury and arrives in intensive care health services, therapy practitioners and the education service are notified so that all parties unite to ensure that all treatment and therapy is orientated towards successfully bringing that child back into the school environment. This pathway, including rehabilitation options and team decisions should be tailored to the individual requirements of each child to ensure the most positive outcome. The philosophy behind this is to keep rehabilitation and planning for re-integration one step ahead of the child's requirements and remain adaptable to child needs.

A unit within the hospital called School Links has been established to provide direct liaison between the hospital and the school from the initial stages of the injury through to recovery and re-integration.

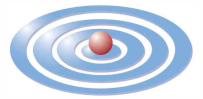
Dr Hillier and Deb Kay (DECS) are currently working together to create a developmental picture of this initiative, and will then include a full evaluation of the program to establish the evidence of effectiveness.

Dr Hillier is also currently working on other projects, which were presented in November 2005 at the DECS **chess** launch. Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is defined as subtle but impactful movement difficulties that affect areas such as handwriting and sporting participation and success. The CAHE and DECS DCD projects focus on three major research streams: investigation of individual child's characteristics, identification tools and effectiveness of new interventions

The DCD projects also include a teacher training package which will be officially launched in April this year. Contact Dr Susan Hillier (susan.hillier@unisa.edu.au) for more information.

STOP PRESS: CAHE's Dr Saravana Kumar, a JBI accredited systematic review trainer, will run a JBI accredited workshop to train new reviewers in the JBI systematic review process in the first week in May 2006 at UniSA's City East Campus. There are five modules commencing on 1 May. Participants will be trained in JBI systematic review software in the CREMS suite. There are only places for 12 registrants so book early. Cost: \$100 per module. An email registering interest should be sent to Helen Walker (hrwalker@bigpond.com) ASAP. For more information visit the CAHE website: www.unisa.edu.au/cahe/wkshps/upcmng.asp

Dr Saravana Kumar's takes teaching to new levels with undergrad program!



Dr Saravana Kumar is excited about his new role with the University of South Australia as an undergraduate lecturer, an integral link between the School of Health Sciences and the Centre for Allied Health Evidence. Underpinning this *and* his existing role as CAHE research fellow is the need for evidence-based practice to be accessible to all stakeholders in the allied health care arena, including students.

CAHE has been tasked to review the transformation of the current evidence-based physiotherapy teaching program with a view of converting this to a generic allied health focused teaching program. This will provide a wider framework to support the philosophy that encourages allied health practitioners to collaborate and coordinate in the delivery of health care which is underpinned by best evidence.

Dr Kumar's new responsibilities enables him to work alongside Professor Karen Grimmer and the other dedicated CAHE staff to influence post-graduate allied health students, and now, in this new initiative, undergraduate allied health students as well.

The new teaching program, a composite of face to face and online learning, provides a framework for the staff and students to retrieve vital information on accessing, implementing and evaluating evidence-based practices. The outcome of this program aims

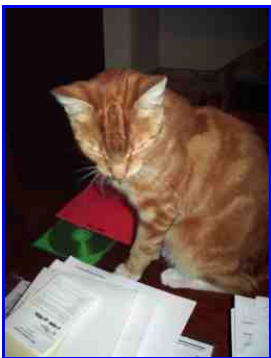
to provide opportunities to improve the quality of health services by influencing the next generation of allied health practitioners' perspectives on evidence based practice, and hence potentially improved clinical practices.

One such project Dr Kumar is currently working on a report undertaken for Child, Youth and Women's Health Service, focusing on the service delivery models for vulnerable infant groups. Vulnerable in this context refers to children who are potentially at risk of harm due to various social and environmental factors. Dr Kumar and his CAHE team have submitted their final report to the client on this topic after undertaking a systematic review of the available literature.

Dr Kumar's passion for evidence-based practice and the continued improvement of the quality of health care is represented in all his research projects. For more information contact Dr Saravana Kumar



(saravana.kumar@unisa.edu.au) at the Centre for Allied Health Evidence.



The Squiggly Theory: Systematic Reviewing!

Last year Dr Saravana Kumar, deputy director of CAHE, completed training by Joanna Briggs Institute academics to teach others how to undertake systematic reviews using the specified JBI approach to setting research questions,

establishing targeted search strategies, critically appraising the literature and identifying the best evidence for the research question. Squiggly is currently spending time with Saravana while his family is overseas. He has taken advantage of this exposure to Saravana's expertise to attempt his first review of the literature. His review is slow to proceed however because his literature sources keep changing. While his review topic remains constant – the most effective way to evenly distribute the papers

on the study table, the frequency, organisation and location of this literature keeps being changed by the humans in the house. Like most systematic reviewers, Squiggly is frustrated by the need to keep on top of the current literature and to be aware of incoming evidence which could influence his study outcomes. Most systematic reviewers call a halt to incoming evidence when they believe that their search strategy has uncovered all available material. Their review then has to be completed quickly in order to prevent a time delay which could see more information becoming available. Discussions with Saravana about organization of the literature on the study table has failed to produce a solution to the changing evidence sources, and Squiggly continues to seek methods by which he can standardize his literature search so that he can come to terms with his review findings.

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