

# Women's Wellbeing Academy

Newsletter December 2023

## Message from the WWBA Co-Chairs

2023 has been an eventful year, and we are pleased to be winding down with a report of recent successful events. We'll keep you posted through 2024 on upcoming initiatives, events and news. We look forward in early 2024 to introducing you to more of the new Steering Committee members as various foundation members are leaving us. Our sincere thanks to Professor Adrienne Torda, Professor Timothy O'Leary, Angela Hehir and Angela Griffin for their invaluable contributions to the Steering Committee and the Academy. And warm thanks to all of you for your involvement and interest.

We wish all our WWBA colleagues a very happy holiday season, a healthy and safe New Year, and a well-deserved break.

Associate Professor Mehera San Roque



Professor Bill Ledger



## Associate Professor David Carter joins the Steering Committee of the WWBA



David J. Carter is a Scientia Associate Professor based in the School of Law, Society and Criminology in the Faculty of Law & Justice at UNSW. He is an Australian lawyer and expert in the field of medical and health law, applying his legal expertise and research to understand law as a factor in the cause, distribution and prevention of disease and injury while advancing the fair treatment of those living with communicable disease.

David currently leads the [Health+Law](#) research partnership which aims to improve access to justice and quality of life for those living with Hepatitis B or HIV in Australia by removing legal barriers to testing and treatment. David's research is generally socio-legal in nature and often cross-disciplinary. David came to the academy following a career as an executive in the Australian health sector. He serves as a board member of the [HIV/AIDS Legal Centre](#) and is Chair of the Ramsay Health Care Human Research Ethics Committee A. He is looking forward to working with the WWBA, in particular through connections between

the WWBA and the new National Centre for Sex and Gender Equity in Health and Medicine being launched in 2024. <https://www.unsw.edu.au/staff/david-carter>

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### Launch of the report 'Supporting Carers at UNSW Sydney: Findings from Career Coaching for Carers (3C)'



UNSW's Division of Equity Diversity & Inclusion through the Women's Wellbeing Academy and Athena Swan UNSW hosted the launch of the report

Fiona Stapleton, Athen Swan Academic Lead, with Lizzie Muller, 3C Research Lead, Amy Kusuma, Project Lead, and Mehera San Roque, WWBA Co Chair

"Supporting Carers at UNSW Sydney: Findings from Career Coaching for Carers (3C)' on 21 November in the UNSW Chancellery, which recommends building on existing flexible work and funding initiatives by establishing a carer network and acknowledging carer responsibilities in performance metrics.



Provost Vlado Perkovic

Introduced by UNSW Provost, Professor Vlado Perkovic, and with comments from UNSW Chief People Officer Deena Amorelli on what UNSW already does for carers, Scientia Professor Fiona Stapleton (UNSW's

Athena Swan Academic Lead) moderated a panel discussion of the report. The panel included lead author of the report Lizzie Muller, SAGE CEO Dr Janin Bredehoeft, Carers NSW CEO and Ms Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW.

'Hearts' by Lauren McKnight. This rosette was made during the 3C event UNSW Women Carers: Connect, Create and Celebrate', facilitated by artist Michele Elliot. Photo credit: David Lawrey, 2023. The Report and its recommendations can be found [here](#).

Co-hosted by UNSW's Division of Equity Diversity & Inclusion through the Women's Wellbeing Academy and Athena Swan UNSW.

The WWBA will keep you posted on next steps in moving forward with the Report's recommendations.



### 2023 Small Grants Program Winners

We are delighted to announce the following WWBA Small Grants recipients for 2023:

### Resistance Training in Perimenopause

#### Project team

Dr Mandy Hagstrom  
Dr Kemi Wright  
Dr Mitchell Gibbs  
Anurag Pandit

#### About the project

This study will lay the methodological foundation for a first of its kind clinical trial set to be launched at UNSW in 2024. Research in the field of exercise science is biased toward men in general. When women are studied, there appears to be an even more pronounced underrepresentation of women in the menopausal transition period. This bias is even more pronounced in the field of resistance training (RT), a unique exercise modality that confers many benefits not achieved by other modalities, many of which are incredibly important for aging women.

RT increases bone and muscle mass and can help prevent and symptom manage many non-communicable diseases. Specifically, there is little research examining the efficacy of exercise in the perimenopause transition.

***From Beliefs to Behaviours: Exploring Sex and Community Dynamics in Sexual and Reproductive Health Beliefs***

***Project team***

Dr Julie Chow  
Dr Saoirse Connor Desai  
Prof Kristy Martire

***About the project***

This project will examine current beliefs relating to sexual and reproductive health among adult Australians. A survey will assess endorsement of various claims, including common misconceptions in fertility, contraception and menstruation, and the impact these beliefs have on direct (e.g., contraception use) and indirect behaviours (e.g., policy endorsement). It will also assess how people come to form these beliefs, and whether beliefs and behaviours differ by sex and across communities in Australia, providing an intersectional perspective which considers the intricate interplay between sex and culture on sexual health-related beliefs and behaviours.

The internet has become a prominent source of health information, with social media platforms emerging as popular avenues for sharing and accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information. Recent evidence indicates a correlation between SRH trends, such as contraception use, and emerging trends on social media. However, misinformation about SRH is also rampant on these platforms. An analysis of social media content related to birth control practices found a majority contained inaccurate or incomplete information, including citing retracted scientific evidence. The proposed project aims to bridge this gap by investigating belief prevalence and the influence of sociocultural factors on SRH beliefs and behaviours in Australia, a setting with widespread online information access.

***Stigma and Discrimination Experienced by Sex Workers Identifying as Women and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Background in Australia***

***Project team***

Dr Elena Cama  
Associate Professor Loren Brener  
Dr Timothy Broady  
Scientia Professor Carla Treloar

***About the project***

This project aims to examine experiences of stigma and discrimination related to blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible

infections among sex workers identifying as women and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background in Australia, and how stigma can impact on health service utilisation, mental health, quality of life, and resilience. The project will support a research partnership and capacity building between the Centre for Social Research in Health (CSRH), Scarlet Alliance, and their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group to support their engagement in research, by collaborating to analyse, interpret, and disseminate the data appropriately and sensitively.

***Unlocking Care-friendly Leadership: Reimagining Job-sharing in NSW Education and Beyond***

***Project team***

Professor Rosalind Dixon  
Emeritus Professor Eileen Baldry  
Professor Leisa Sargent  
Rose Vassell

***About the project***

The proposed program of work is focused on unlocking the leadership potential of women (cis and trans), and especially those with additional disadvantages in the form of sole parent responsibilities, disability, or other mental or physical health challenges, which would otherwise preclude access to leadership roles. This project seeks to further investigate the usefulness and effectiveness of new forms of job-sharing, specifically "vertical" job-sharing (VJS), as a means of achieving this in a range of contexts, but especially in leadership roles. To this, it proposes to conduct a large-scale pilot of VJS at the principal level within the Department of Education, following a successful small-scale pilot in 2023.

***Testing the Effectiveness of a Combined Physical and Mental Health Intervention for Women Experiencing Social Disadvantage in Sydney, Australia: Adding the 'Doing', Not Just Talking, into Mental Health***

***Project team***

Dr Gulsah Kurt  
Associate Professor Simon Rosenbaum  
Chiara Mastrogiovanni  
Uzma Choudhry

***About the project***

This project will test the feasibility and effectiveness of a combined physical activity and mental health intervention for women experiencing intersectional social disadvantage, for example, survivors of gender-

based violence, and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. A 5-week program including a self-guided mental health intervention, Doing What Matters in Times of Stress (DWM) developed by the World Health Organization augmented by weekly, group-based physical activity (PA) sessions will be piloted with two groups of women (N = 8-16) in a community-based, trauma-informed, PA centre, Addi Moves in Sydney. This study will help us understand the impact, barriers, and facilitators of delivering a scalable intervention for improving mental and physical health of women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.