

**UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO
ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA**

JOB DESCRIPTION

ROLE TITLE:	Assistant Research Fellow
DEPARTMENT:	School of Physiotherapy
SCHOOL / DIVISION:	Faculty of Health Professional Programmes, Health Sciences
REPORTS TO:	Associate Professor Ramakrishnan Mani
DIRECT REPORTS (FTE):	N/A

PRIME FUNCTION

The Assistant Research Fellow is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the setup, implementation, and conduct of a Health Research Council-funded clinical trial investigating the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation for people living with chronic musculoskeletal pain.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

An Assistant Research Fellow (60% FTE for three years fixed term), preferably with a health professional background and experience in project management within clinical and research settings, ideally will be based in Dunedin. This position is aligned with the clinical trial timeline.

The Assistant Research Fellow will co-ordinate the project, working closely with the co-principal investigator(s), trial management group, wider research team, advisory groups, collaborators, and key stakeholders to deliver core project activities.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES: CLINICAL TRIAL PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

- Lead day-to-day trial coordination, including planning activities, timelines, and milestones.
- Maintain governance documentation, including centralised document control and audit-ready records across all sites.
- Manage and organise project files within the designated institutional data repositories/storage systems.
- Maintain version control across all active team documents, ensuring clear identification of current files versus archived drafts.
- Ensure all files containing identifiable material are handled securely in line with project ethics and data protocols.
- Apply standardised file-naming conventions and version numbers to all project documentation

before internal sharing or formal submission.

- Coordinate team meetings (agenda, minutes, action tracking).
- Support development and manage study materials (operationalisation protocols, manuals, participant information, intervention guides) and oversee provider training.
- Develop and manage survey systems (electronic and paper-based) and data capture platforms (e.g., REDCap).
- Support ethics and locality approvals, amendments, and reporting requirements.
- Design and implement recruitment strategies (with communications teams); monitor targets and optimise enrolment and diversity.
- Manage participant communications in a culturally appropriate and ethical manner.
- Coordinate participant screening, baseline assessments, and scheduling of interventions (telehealth and in-person group sessions).
- Develop randomisation procedures in collaboration with a biostatistician and administer allocation in accordance with the protocol.
- Manage procurement, logistics, and distribution of study materials and participant resources.
- Support in-person and telehealth infrastructure (platform/physical location setup, access, security, troubleshooting).
- Oversee intervention delivery, facilitator coordination, adherence monitoring, and retention strategies.
- Ensure compliance with Good Clinical Practice, data protection regulations, and institutional policies.
- Oversee data quality, validation, monitoring, and query resolution, ensuring data security and confidentiality.
- Coordinate data collection at Dunedin and Christchurch sites and across all timepoints.
- Liaise with multi-site research teams to ensure consistent implementation and data collection.
- Support or coordinate qualitative interviews with participants and providers.
- Monitor study progress against KPIs and report to the PI.
- Prepare reports for funders, ethics committees, and governance bodies.
- Ensure trial registration and reporting meet required standards.
- Contribute to dissemination and research outputs.

RELATIONSHIPS

Directly responsible to: Associate Professor Ramakrishnan Mani

Functional relationships with:

- Dr Sharon Awatere (Co-First Named Investigator)
- Trial management group
- Research staff
- Advisory group members
- Relevant communities
- Professional/health/Hauora organisations
- University of Otago Professional Staff, including CHARR
- Stakeholders

BUDGETARY RESPONSIBILITY: Nil

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Perform assigned tasks efficiently, accurately, and in a timely manner.
- Demonstrate the ability to work independently while meeting project timelines, milestones, and deliverables.
- Meet regularly with the trial management group (including Associate Professor Ramakrishnan Mani and Dr Sharon Awatere) to provide collective progress updates, discuss emerging findings, and align on project priorities.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

- A relevant postgraduate qualification and/or professional experience in health, clinical research, psychology, physiotherapy, public health, or a related discipline.
- Minimum of 2 years' research experience, ideally within health, public service, or policy settings. Prior experience in administering clinical trials is desirable. Experience with hybrid (telehealth, in-person and group) trials is also desirable.
- Strong communication and relational skills, ideally with some knowledge of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga (the language and its cultural practices) and/or Pacific languages and protocols.
- Good understanding of the New Zealand health system, including its social and economic context.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English.
- Proven ability to work effectively as part of a multidisciplinary team.
- Strong computer literacy, including proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, Teams, REDCap or equivalent and quantitative and qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo).
- Highly motivated and able to work independently, with strong organisational and time management skills.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain confidentiality, privacy, and high standards of data management.
- A commitment to improving health care access, outcomes, and equity.
- Commitment to developing personal research capability and contributing to a positive research environment.

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY:

Act in a manner consistent with the University's commitment to anti-racism and the co-creation of accessible, safe, respectful, and welcoming environments where all students and staff are supported to achieve their full potential.

MĀORI STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

Act in a manner consistent with the principles and implications, as well as the University's commitment to the Treaty as articulated in the Māori Strategic Framework.

PACIFIC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

Act in a manner consistent with the strategies and goals contained in the University's Pacific Strategic Framework, role-modelling and promoting Pacific values, equity and diversity principles and cultural safety practices.

HEALTH & SAFETY:

Act and work in a manner compliant with current health and safety at work legislation and University procedures, frameworks and guidelines. Role model safe behaviour and practices, share the responsibility to prevent harm and contribute to a safe campus and work environment, including raising workplace health and safety concerns for self, students, visitors and other staff.

SUSTAINABILITY:

Act in a manner consistent with the University's sustainability commitments; role-modelling sustainable practices, with a particular emphasis on minimising the environmental impact of day-to-day activities.