

2015/2016 Summer Studentship Project Application Form

Send to: Research Office, University of Otago Christchurch, PO Box 4345, Christchurch, by 5pm on **3 July 2015**

Supervisor Information (First named supervisor will be the contact):

Supervisor's Name and Title(s): A/Prof Roderick Duncan, A/Prof John Horwood, Prof Roger Mulder

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Research Category (Choose one category only – to be used for judging the students' presentations):

Clinical

Laboratory

Community X

Project Title (20 words MAXIMUM):

Somatisation disorders in people with childhood sexual abuse

Project Description:

Introduction:

Patients who present with a variety of somatisation disorders are more likely to recall childhood sexual abuse than are those from comparable community sample, or those with comparable symptoms with an identified medical cause (Applied & Preventive Psychology 1995;4:143). Multiple symptomatology and greater healthcare utilisation have also been associated with CSA (Psychological Medicine 1999;29:399). However, the literature lacks a controlled, population-based study of somatisation and healthcare utilisation in patients with CSA. Such a study would improve our understanding of the degree to which CSA predisposes to somatisation, and what factors within the CSA population might be associated with it, potentially providing insight into the nature of the relationship between CSA and somatisation.

Aim: To determine healthcare utilisation for all reason and for medically unexplained symptoms in a cohort of patients with CSA, comparing with a cohort of patients without CSA

Method: We propose studying a cohort of 962 patients from the Christchurch Health and Development Study. We have their permission to access their medical records and propose to carry out an exploratory study by examining the electronic medical record of the 500 patients who reside in the CDHB catchment area, relating to the past 5 years. We will count all recorded medical symptoms, encounters, tests and treatments. At a second stage, we will estimate the proportion of this healthcare burden that arises from somatisation. We will do this by using the 'medically unexplained' paradigm (JNNP 2011;82:810), defining a medically unexplained symptom (MUS) as one that has been sufficiently troublesome to result in a referral to secondary care, but which has not been explained by the results of tests, or by a clear clinical diagnosis. We will analyse the resulting data by comparing overall healthcare utilisation and MUS-associated healthcare utilisation between groups with CSA (14.1% of our cohort), and without CSA.

The student will be given training in examination of medical records, and support throughout the project. It is anticipated that the student will gain an understanding of this type of research, will gain experience in data processing, and will also gain knowledge and understanding of common presentations of medically unexplained symptoms. The student will also gain insight into epidemiological research methods.

Student Prerequisites (eg. Medical Student) if applicable:

None