

profile

Health
Sciences
Postdoctoral
Fellowship

DR REBECCA BROOKLAND



Dr Rebecca Brookland is a research fellow in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, University of Otago. Her background is in psychology and public health. Having just completed her postdoctoral fellowship, she is about to begin work on an HRC project as Principal Investigator.

“For me it is essential that my research has the potential for real change – that it can influence policy and practice for better health outcomes.”

Mobility and safety in an ageing population

By 2036, one quarter of New Zealand’s population will be over 65 years old. To maintain our health and wellbeing into our later years, we need to identify ways to balance safety and mobility needs.

“For the majority of older New Zealanders, the private car is the main means of transport. The ability to continue to drive is key to maintaining mobility, independence, and quality of life. Ceasing to drive, and the associated loss of independent mobility, can have serious consequences.

“It is also important, for everyone’s wellbeing that older drivers remain as safe as possible. Although older drivers have relatively few crashes, due to frailty they have high fatality rates.”

Rebecca’s HRC project is *Older drivers, families and GPs: Navigating the path between mobility and safety.*

“Our mixed methods project examines driving and driving cessation issues, and the impact on health, from the perspectives of older drivers, current and former, and their families. It also explores the issues facing GPs – who make fitness-to-drive assessments – to understand the problems they encounter in their relationships with older patients, who are dealing with changing driving abilities or adapting to life after licensure.”

Understanding what influences our actions

“I have always had an interest in people’s behaviour and trying to understand what influences our actions. Applying a public health and epidemiological approach to my research was a natural step for me. Now I undertake applied research to improve the health outcomes of whole sectors of the population through informing legalisation, policy and practice.”

Fellowship provided time at a critical stage

“The postdoctoral fellowship was central to my success with HRC funding. It allowed me the luxury of time – time to develop a sound research project with a strong team of collaborators, and to foster relationships with end-users to form a project advisory group – all factors which were influential in successfully being awarded funds to undertake our project, and establish myself as a lead investigator.”

POSTGRADUATE



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