



UNSW Medicine

PhD Scholarship



When psychology and genomics collide. Thinking about what the genomic revolution means for paediatric cancer patients, their families and the health system

Kids Cancer Centre, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and School of Women's and Children's Health, UNSW Sydney is proud to offer a new PhD position dedicated to researching the psychosocial implications of genetic testing for children, their families and the healthcare professionals who care for them.

Project description:

The genetic revolution is now in full flight with huge advances in genetic technology emerging over the past decade. Whole genome sequencing is one technique that is helping shape the future of cancer care by allowing clinicians and scientists to determine the complete DNA sequence of a patient's genome and identify variants that may contribute to ill-health. Despite the exciting potential of this technology, there is little data available on the psychosocial impacts of whole genome sequencing for families affected by childhood cancer. Additionally, there is a need to better understand healthcare professional's experience and perspectives of this testing in paediatric cancer care.

This PhD project is linked to a larger study that will offer whole genome sequencing to all children with cancer. The PhD project will aim to better understand families and health care providers experiences of whole genome sequencing.

The PhD scholar will be a UNSW student, based on the UNSW main campus and at the Kids Cancer Centre. The student will receive the full support of the Behavioural Sciences Unit (BSU) in the Kids Cancer Centre. The BSU was established in 2001. It is recognised as one of the largest paediatric psycho-oncology research groups and is supported by a multidisciplinary team of psychologists, educators, oncologists, nurses, dieticians, exercise physiologists, social workers, biostatisticians and international collaborators.

Description:

A full-time postgraduate scholarship is available for a suitably qualified candidate with a minimum of an honours or masters degree, or equivalent research training. The research will be conducted under the supervision of the Head of the Behavioural Sciences Unit at the Kids Cancer Centre at Sydney Children's Hospital (Professor Claire Wakefield), a Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Dr Kate Hetherington) and Director of the Kids Cancer Centre/Paediatric Oncologist (A/Prof Tracey O'Brien).

Eligibility criteria:

Our ideal candidate will have:

- An Honours or Masters degree (or equivalent experience in a research setting) in a health-related area (e.g. psychology, biomedical sciences, genetic counselling),
- In depth knowledge or understanding of genetics is not necessary but an interest and willingness to learn about the area is essential,
- An interest in pursuing a career in behavioural medicine or psycho-oncology,
- Experience working with children with a chronic illness or parents of children with a chronic illness (desirable but not essential),
- Training in both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (desirable but not essential),
- Experience writing ethics applications and preparation of manuscripts (desirable but not essential),
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to work empathically with families affected by cancer,
- The ability to meet deadlines and work in a self-directed manner,
- Excellent written and oral communication skills,
- Enjoy working in a multi-disciplinary team,
- Experience working with software such as STATA, SPSS, NVivo and Endnote.

Scholarship details:

The successful candidate will enrol as a student at UNSW beginning Term 1 2020. They will receive an annual stipend of \$27,596 (Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) equivalent) which will be renewed for up to 3 years pending satisfactory progress. The successful candidate will be required to prepare a 2-page project proposal (with the support of the supervisors) for submission to UNSW in February 2020 for Term 1. While the stipend offered is guaranteed, the candidate will be encouraged to apply for external, competitive, stipends over their candidature. The scholarship is funded by a grant from Paediatric and the Office for Health and Medical Research, NSW Government.

To apply:

Applications should be sent direct to Dr Kate Hetherington (k.hetherington@unsw.edu.au) and cc Rebecca Daly (rebecca.daly@unsw.edu.au). Applications should include a cover letter addressing the eligibility criteria, a curriculum vitae, a copy of an academic transcript and the names and contact details of at least two referees. Interviews for the position will be held the week following the closing date.

Closing date: 19th of January 2020.

Further enquiries:

Dr Kate Hetherington (k.hetherington@unsw.edu.au)

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Women's and Children's Health, UNSW Sydney
Team leader, Ethics and Genetics team, BSU, Sydney Children's Hospital

Rebecca Daly (Rebecca.daly@unsw.edu.au)

Research Assistant, School of Women's and Children's Health, UNSW Sydney
Ethics and Genetics team, BSU, Sydney Children's Hospital