

# Behavioural Sciences Unit (BSU) update

The BSU was established in 2001 to look after research studies that cover all the psycho-social aspects of paediatric cancer, from diagnosis to survivorship and bereavement. It is led by Assoc Prof Richard Cohn, and Claire Wakefield, and has 11 members with a range of expertise, including social work, dietetics, nursing, bereavement counselling and several medicine and psychology students. We also work closely with CanTeen, Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Universities of NSW, Sydney and Newcastle.

## Achievements

**Congratulations to Catharine Fleming**, who has received a very prestigious PhD scholarship from the Anthony Rothe Memorial Trust. She will begin her PhD next year and will be developing '**ENeRgy**', which is an **Exercise and Nutrition inteRvention** for survivors of childhood cancer.



**Congratulations to Jennifer Cohen**, who received a best poster prize at the Australian New Zealand Children's Haematology and Oncology Group Annual Meeting. Her poster presented early data about parent's attitudes toward nutrition after completion of their child's cancer treatment.

**Claire Wakefield** received a NSW Young Tall Poppy Science Award for 'outstanding young researchers and communicators in NSW' from the Australian Institute of Policy and Science. The award is a fantastic opportunity to increase community awareness of the needs of families affected by cancer.



## Completed studies....

1. The psychosocial study was looking at the psychological impact of finishing treatment. We have submitted two articles to academic journals. One article discusses the difficulties faced by families of adolescents around making health decisions during and after treatment. The second article documents the experiences of young survivors returning to high school after treatment.
2. The nutrition study looked at children's nutrition after cancer and found that parents feel their child's dietary intake has changed as a result of their treatment, although they are generally motivated to ensure their child has a nutritionally adequate diet.

We are using this information to improve care for our next generation of families.

## We're currently recruiting for...

1. The sleep study: We are looking for suggestions to improve sleep experiences on the ward. Su Lynne is handing out questionnaires most mornings if you would like to participate.
2. Siblings study: CanTeen is looking for young people (aged 12-24) who have a brother or sister who has been diagnosed with or treated for cancer in the last 5 years.



## Coming soon....

1. Long term survivors: We will be surveying our long-term survivors (over 18s) asking them about their preferences for follow up care.
2. Grandparents study: We will be surveying grandparents to find out about their needs and concerns and hope to use this information to develop a booklet specifically for grandparents.

If want to contact us, or if you are interested in participating in any BSU study, please call Catharine on (02) 9382 1731, or email Claire at [c.wakefield@unsw.edu.au](mailto:c.wakefield@unsw.edu.au).

**Thank you to all the families who participate in our projects!**

