

Faculty of Medicine and Health, The Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN)

PhD Scholarship in Intellectual and Developmental Disability Health

Background: Do you want to pursue a career in research, improving equity in healthcare and wellbeing for vulnerable population groups? People with developmental or intellectual disability experience high rates of mental and physical health conditions. They are disproportionately represented in mental health services and particularly in the costs of mental health service delivery. They have higher rates of morbidity and avoidable deaths, alongside poor access to health services and preventative healthcare. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has found people with cognitive disability “continue to be subject to systematic neglect in our health system”.

Information about 3DN’s activities: We work to improve health policy, practice and support for people with an intellectual or developmental disability. We conduct co-designed research with high translational benefit to the disability and health sectors. 3DN builds capacity through teaching, training, health promotion, development of educational resources and the conduct of other professional activities.

The department leads numerous initiatives that improve access to and capability of Australian healthcare and disability support providers to meet the needs of people with intellectual disability. Exemplar projects include the MySigns app to facilitate mental health assessment for people with intellectual disability, the Intellectual Disability Mental Health Service Pathways Tool, as well as specialist intellectual disability health service evaluations. The department’s data linkage work formed the basis for the successful “End Deadly Disability Discrimination” campaign.

3DN has a multi-agency linked dataset comprising a NSW population-capture of people with intellectual disability and population-based age- and sex-matched controls. Data is available from relevant NSW and Commonwealth health and human services, on 574,630 individuals (116,999 with intellectual disability), including for emergency and inpatient hospital visits, Medicare Benefits Schedule items, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme items, National Death Index and cause of death, Australian Immunisation Registry and National Bowel Cancer Screening, various disability, education, and mental health datasets, cancer and cancer screening, and notifiable conditions.

Opportunities for PhD Projects: The successful candidate will have an exemplary track record and will work with 3DN academic staff to propose an inclusive, highly translational and innovative body of work in areas aligned with 3DN’s data linkage programs. Current opportunities include mental health care, interactions between mental health and physical health outcomes, medicines use and associated benefits and harms, specific populations including First Nations People, people with Down syndrome, those with multiple or complex needs, ageing and frailty in people with intellectual disability.

Eligibility: Students with honours, masters or equivalent degrees in medicine, allied health, data science, biostatistics or related disciplines would be well suited. Aboriginal or Torres Strait applicants are encouraged to apply. Applicants may be Australian citizens, permanent residents or international. Applicants must meet the UNSW PhD entry requirements and be able to enrol as a full-time domestic PhD scholar.

Value: \$35,000 per annum (tax exempt) for 3.5 years for full scholarship; if applicant attracts their own scholarship (eg RTP) a top-up of scholarship of \$15,000 per annum for 3 years with a \$10,000 per annum travel, professional development and consumables allowance. Relocation allowance could be considered for the right applicant.

More information: Various projects conducted at 3DN are funded by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). More information about specific projects can be found here: <https://www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects-publications/projects>

How to apply: To commence the EOI process please contact the 3DN Student Coordinators Dr Rachael Cvejic (r.cvejic@unsw.edu.au) and Dr Janelle Weise (j.weise@unsw.edu.au) with a 1 page EOI, your CV and academic transcripts.

Closing date: 31-12-23

