



Pilot WA Public Health Officer Training Program (WAPHOTP) Communiqué 30 September 2022

UPDATE

The WA Public Health Officer trainees have now embarked upon the final section of the course for 2022, where they present the teaching and learning activities. This provides the trainees with an opportunity to:

1. explore an area of interest that has not been covered or to explore a topic in more depth;
2. gain skills and experience in teaching and helping colleagues to learn; and
3. invite a health leader whom you have always wanted to hear from and ask questions of.

Make sure you keep an eye out for the next editions where we will showcase their presentations.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

On 31 August the WA Health Media and Communications Team led a teaching and learning session for the WAPHOTP trainees on marketing, media and communications. Trainees were provided with an opportunity to develop a media statement, including a communication plan, on monkey pox, emergence of Japanese encephalitis in Australia or the effects in childrens of *in utero* exposure to bushfire smoke. Each trainee received constructive criticism from their peers and communications team.

HEALTH ECONOMICS

A webinar held on 9 September hosted by Dr Veronica Hoad, Public Health Physician, AFPHM Regional Committee Chair, Australian Red Cross Lifeblood gave the trainees an insight into the principles and complexities of health economics evaluation using anti-HCV testing for blood donation as a case study, Dr Qinglu Cheng, Research Fellow, Kirby Institute, UNSW.

MENTAL HEALTH

On Tuesday 13 September the WAPHOTP Trainees joined the Mental Health Commission's Webinar: 'Let's talk about sex, syphilis, STIs and BBVs – Raising the issue in an AOD (alcohol and other drugs) setting', expert panel speakers from the AOD and mental health sectors, chaired by Dr Donna Mak.

ALUMNI – WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW?



Photograph provided by the WA Country Health Service, with permission of patient's family

Since completing the inaugural WAPHOTP in 2021, **Chantelle Pears** has drawn on the skills and expertise developed in the program to further immerse herself in public health nursing in rural WA. In February 2022, Chantelle took the opportunity to lead the frontline COVID-19 contact tracing response in the Pilbara, working with a variety of intersectoral stakeholders to manage the surge of COVID-19 cases, with a particular focus on supporting testing, treatment and reducing transmission in remote Aboriginal communities.

More recently, Chantelle has been working on an innovative research collaboration with Menzies School of Health Research, looking at the implementation of novel technology to detect Rheumatic Heart Disease in the Pilbara – an area she is very passionate about.

For now, though, Chantelle has taken the plunge and accepted a 4-month secondment to the Kimberley; working as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Public Health/Sexual Health in Kununurra. Chantelle sees this a unique and invaluable experience, whereby she can take pragmatic action in her public health role to create meaningful change at the grassroots. Chantelle believes these opportunities would not have been possible without her engagement with the WAPHOTP and her mentorship with Maurice Swanson.



HEALTH LEADER SPEAKER SERIES

At each session over the past six weeks, WAPHOTP trainees learn from, and are inspired by, Health Leader Speakers reflecting on their career journey throughout the healthcare system. Trainees have had the privilege of hearing the following health leaders:

- Dr Clare Huppatz, Director Public Health Operations
- Dr Veronica Hoad, Public Health Physician, Red Cross Lifeblood
- Judi Stone, Manager Workforce Development, Mental Health Commission.

MEET THE TRAINEE / MEET THE MENTOR

Trainees continued to meet and work closely with their respective mentor, all of whom are highly skilled senior healthcare professionals throughout Australia. In this edition we meet trainees Iolanda Shaker and Cassie MacArthur and their respective mentors Shireen Martin and Mike Daube AO.



**Iolanda Shaker,
Surveillance Officer,
Public Health Operations**

I currently work as a Surveillance Officer at PHOps and have over 40 years' experience in the UK and Australian health care systems. After 20 years in the clinical sector as a nurse, midwife and health visitor, I specialised in health promotion and public health with a special interest in immunisation.

I am passionate about public health and strive to continue to use my wealth of public health knowledge and experience within Public Health Operations Surveillance Team to make an impact and a difference in the health and well-being of the population of Australia. I thoroughly enjoying the challenge of being part of the WAPHOTP within WA Health.

WAPHOTP 2022 has given me the opportunity to learn about aboriginal health and the Australian health care system. I meet Shireen on a monthly basis to discuss my objectives and discuss constant changing public health environment during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Shireen's experience, knowledge and guidance shines through at every encounter. I am privileged to have her as my mentor.



**Shireen Martin,
Director Integrated Care
Implementation,
NSW Health**

I am currently a Director of Integrated Care at NSW Ministry of Health. My role has highlighted for me the need and the challenges for providing a more seamless journey for our patients as they utilise the health and social care systems to maintain their health and wellbeing. Social determinants and limited health literacy increase's an individual's vulnerability and places them at greater risk of deteriorating health issues; this affects a large portion of our communities.

Providing a seamless journey requires improved relationships, technology and data sharing with organisations that sit in and outside NSW Health, like the PHNs and Primary Care and other Community providers. Working to the principles of Integrated Care ensures a person centred, interdisciplinary approach to care that engages with all the providers in a patient's care circle. I am passionate about systems improvement and through my work strive to address the needs of the more vulnerable in our community.

I started my journey as a mentor for the Public Health program in 2020. I have really enjoyed the experience, learning about the goals and experiences of the trainees and sharing my journey through Health.



**Cassandra MacArthur,
Analyst and Research
Officer –
Epidemiology Directorate
Public and Aboriginal
Health Division**

I'm currently working in my dream field of epidemiology at the Department of Health; however, I certainly didn't know this is where I'd end up! My original career direction was leaning more towards the clinical side, with the aim of becoming a neuropsychologist. A few years later and following a short pivot into advertising, I decided to enrol in a Master of Health Science at UWA. After completing the compulsory biostatistics and epidemiology units in my first semester, I realised my previously unknown passion for all things public health and changed my degree to a Master of Public Health.

Within a few months of starting at the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre, the opportunity to apply to the WAPHOTP arose, which I of course jumped at. I was already very happy to learn I'd been accepted into the program, but when I found out that Emeritus Professor Mike Daube was going to be my mentor, my jaw dropped. Years ago (2018 to be exact), I attended the Western Australian of the Year Awards where Mike was receiving the top honour. I distinctly remember turning to my friend upon hearing his name and saying, *'if there are rock stars in public health, this man is in the hall of fame'*.

At our first meeting, I thankfully overcame my star struck nerves as speaking to Prof Mike was as easy as speaking to an old friend. Prof Mike's mentorship has been incredibly valuable to me, where he has provided unique insights on my professional and educational aspirations for both the present and future. I have also learned about the incredibly fascinating (and at times trying) world of advocacy and public policy from one of the best, which I am particularly grateful for as I only had limited experience in these fields from university.

I personally count myself extremely lucky to have Prof Mike as my mentor, and I also think that it's a great privilege that WA has someone as dedicated and passionate as him to champion public health in our state.



**Mike Daube AO,
Emeritus Professor,
Faculty of Health Sciences,
Curtin University**

It's quite some privilege to be a mentor for the WAPHOTP. You get to spend time with bright, interesting people who are genuinely committed to public health, to learn about their work and interests, and to offer occasional pearls of wisdom in the sure and certain knowledge that there is no pressure on them to follow any of your advice! And in a world where there is so much to worry about, with mentees like Cassie, you get to feel some reassurance that the future of public health here is in good hands.

We need talented people like this working inside the health system who understand the importance of good, evidence-based public policy, who are enthusiastic about their work, and who are committed not just to technical excellence, but to making a difference to both the system and to the community.

It has been a real pleasure to talk through some familiar concerns – but also some of the new challenges that we face in this ever-changing environment. When we look at benefits from the WAPHOTP program, I also don't think we should overlook the benefits mentors gain from learning about current issues and challenges, and even about new ways in which we can contribute!

Coffees with Cassie (as with previous mentees) have been enjoyable and stimulating. I look forward to seeing their careers develop and congratulate the WAPHOTP on the range and variety of experiences it has been able to offer its participants.

UPCOMING EVENTS

27 October 2022 - Observation of Emergency Management Desktop Exercise, Heatwave

23 November 2022 - WAPHOTP Trainees Graduation.

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