

Franklin Women

August 2016 Newsletter

When it comes to personality types it would be fair to say I am an extrovert. I like people and I like to talk (a lot!). However, come the morning tea break at a conference where I don't know anyone and you will often find me hiding in the toilets. I don't know why I have such a problem with networking in these professional settings, I think it is a lack of confidence that I cannot hold my own when it comes to talking shop (thanks [Imposter Syndrome!](#)). However, we all know making professional connections is important for your career and it is often how future opportunities arise.

Creating an environment where women in our field can connect in a fun but meaningful way was one of the reasons I started Franklin Women. Our first ever event was a meet and greet and the room was buzzing. It has been 2 years and over 300 new members since, so we thought it is about time that we do it again! All the details are in this newsletter.

Hope to see you there (I promise I won't be hiding in the toilets!).

Melina and the FW team



What happened this month

- Registrations opened for the [55th national ASMR conference](#), with a theme of merging biology and technology, cool!
 - Nominations opened for Australian-based ECRs to attend the [67th Nobel Laureate Meeting](#), to be held in Lindau Germany and dedicated to chemistry.
 - Have you been following the #5scientistpledge? We hope so! Especially since some of our favourite women in science were named in the [answer sheet](#) (including FW founder Melina Georgousakis and some FW members!)
 - The NHMRC named their [10 best research projects of 2015](#).
 - Eight new institutions have joined the [SAGE Pilot](#) of the Athena SWAN Charter, making a grand total of 40 Australian institutions involved!
 - A [new fund](#) has been launched by the Federal Government to accelerate development and commercialisation of Australian biomedical discoveries.
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FW Journal Club

This month's Journal Club contribution comes from [Alison Gibberd](#), a PhD candidate at the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney.

[Gibberd AJ, Simpson JM and Eades SJ. No official identity: a data linkage study of birth registration of Aboriginal children in Western Australia. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. 2016;40\(4\):388–94 doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12548.](#)



What were the aims of this research? The aims were to estimate the number of children in Western Australia with Aboriginal mothers whose births had not been registered and to identify some characteristics associated with birth registration.

What are the top 3 take home findings of your research? 1. Almost one in five children with Aboriginal mothers had unregistered births. 2. These children were more likely to have mothers who had their first child when they were teenagers, lived in more remote and socioeconomically deprived parts of Western Australia, as well as

having other markers of deprivation, such as no private health insurance. 3. Adults were much more likely to have registered births than children, suggesting that people may register their own births when they face difficulties accessing services without a birth certificate.

How does this research contribute to the field? This research shows that there are significant barriers to obtaining a birth certificate for many Aboriginal people. A birth certificate is essential to access all of the rights and services for Australians such as obtaining an Australian passport or driver's licence.

Who are your collaborators and how did your work relationship come about? Several years ago, I saw an email on a statistics mailing list advertising a PhD scholarship. I was interested in the topic and the supervisors; I knew I could learn a lot from Judy Simpson about statistics and I had heard great things about Sandra Eades and her work in Aboriginal health. I hadn't actually been planning on doing a PhD, but decided that if I was ever going to do one, it should be with such excellent researchers.

What is your current role and organisation and how long have you been there for? I'm a third year PhD student at the University of Sydney.

What new skills or projects are you currently working on? I am now looking at perinatal outcomes (stillbirth, preterm birth, low birthweight) within Aboriginal families.

Who is a woman that inspires you? Lyn White, the Campaign Director for Animals Australia. She has used her skills as a police officer to gather and present evidence of

cruelty in live exports, greyhound racing, factory farming etc. She is extraordinarily effective, brave and, like scientists, uses evidence to advocate for change.

What food have you eaten too much of in your life? Salt!

Have you published recently? Firstly congratulations! Secondly drop us a line at hello@franklinwomen.com. We'd love to hear from you and are always on the lookout for journal club contributors for our newsletter. ☺



Upcoming FW Event

Our next event '**Let's Meet**' is on Tuesday 27th September at Hotel CBD Sydney, with special guest Julia Palmer, a networking strategist. Here's a teaser piece from Julia on how stepping out of your comfort zone to meet and connect with others can lead to great things ...

You've probably heard about this 'comfort zone' thing, and how stepping out of it occasionally is good for your mental health. But do you really know *why* stepping out of your comfort zone is so beneficial?



Your comfort zone relates to your anxiety levels. Places you go, routines you follow and things you do that are familiar and safe are also comfortable. They don't give you too much anxiety, so they're part of your comfort zone.

When you try new things that are unfamiliar, or do something you've never done before, you have no idea what to expect. As a result, you naturally become more anxious about what might happen. It's completely normal to want to get back to something you know and can predict. It's safer.

However, stepping outside your comfort zone just a little bit is where you do most of your learning. Here are some of the benefits of taking a small step into unfamiliar territory:

- 1. It will help you grow.** Some anxiety and self-doubt can lead to learning and personal growth. When a task you're anxious about (such as speaking at a networking event) is completed, you feel a huge sense of accomplishment and have greater levels of self-confidence.
- 2. Your comfort zone gets bigger.** Getting out of your comfort zone regularly actually increases the number of things you feel comfortable doing. As you overcome and succeed at each challenge, it's no longer something you feel anxious about. The more you attend networking events and put yourself out of your comfort zone, the more relaxed you'll become about doing it.
- 3. You'll learn and be motivated.** Doing something new that's a novelty increases the levels of dopamine in the brain – your 'happy hormone'. Dopamine motivates us to go looking for more things that make us happy, and the novelty of the occasion increases that urge. Succeeding at networking and growing your research collaborations is surely something that will motivate you!

Stepping out of your comfort zone (but making it a positive experience) is all about taking small steps. You want your anxiety to remain manageable, but challenge yourself to achieve something great at the same time.

This Franklin Women networking event will be the perfect opportunity to practice stepping out of that comfort zone, and of course a friendly environment and some good food and wine doesn't hurt either!

Julia Palmer is a respected Networking Strategist and Chief Executive of the Business Networking Academy. For all the event details including registration, please visit our website. Places are strictly limited!

A pet that lives in the fridge!?

At Franklin Women we love things that are a little out of the box, and you may have noticed our weakness for animals of all shapes and sizes! So when we heard about Mexican walking fish we just had to learn more ...



“The lease says no pets,” my husband exclaimed, in a half relieved, half authoritative tone. But I wasn't going to let this one go. “But we're not talking cats or dogs, it's a fish ... kind of. A fish with legs ... and frills.” Axolotls, or Mexican walking fish as they're colloquially known, are critically endangered amphibians endemic to the icy freshwater lakes of Mexico, Lake Xochimilco and Lake Chalco. Several also now inhabit a little house in Sydney's Inner West, much to my husband's dismay.

The story goes like this. I had been talking to a vet friend of mine about how I had wanted to adopt a clawed frog (as you do). My friend works for a medical research institute, and I'd been enquiring about whether any little laboratory frogs were no longer needed and looking for a home. Turns out no frogs needed homes, however my friend, seeing the gaping amphibious-shaped hole in my heart, asked whether I'd be interested in adopting one of his pet axolotls.

So, like any prospective axolotl parent should, I did some research. The more I read about these little creatures, the more fascinated I became. Axolotls have incredible regenerative abilities. They are able to regrow limbs, and even parts of their brains. They are also excellent transplant recipients. The axolotl embryo is incredibly hardy; it may be sliced and combined with sections of other axolotl embryos with great success. Axolotls are also neotenic, meaning instead of undergoing metamorphosis from egg to larva to adult form, they remain in larval form throughout their life.

Despite these amazing traits, axolotls do have their shortcomings when it comes to maintenance in the home. They're blind, so food must be carefully delivered. They are also very anti-social animals, and have been known to bite a tank mate's leg or arm off here or there. Luckily, limb regeneration is pretty fast. Perhaps the biggest drawback to keeping

them, at least in our house, is their lack of tolerance to heat. During a long Sydney summer, this can be problematic. Luckily the solution is pretty simple – the fridge. Since fridge temperatures closely reflect those of the axolotl's native Mexican lakes, they love it in there! There is also something quite nice about opening the fridge door to get some milk in the morning, and being greeted by smiley little frilled faces.

So, friends, if you are considering adopting a fishy friend in the future, but want something a little more weird and wonderful, axolotls are for you. However, keep in mind that they live, on average, 15 years. We found that out *after* the adoption, and whilst my poor husband was less than thrilled, I am thoroughly looking forward to spending another decade with these amazing little critters!

Alex Griffin is a marine biologist turned physiotherapist and PhD candidate at the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney. Rarely spotted without gym pants, Alex is also a group fitness instructor, pilates instructor and fantastic cake baker!



We are loving right now...

Public speaking!! Well actually not all of us do love it, and for others not all of the time! So this month we are sharing some of our favourite public speaking tips, tricks and resources:

- Start with this awesome new [TED talk](#) all about the secrets of public speaking and the common elements of a great talk.
 - Have a read of these expert [tips and resources for academics](#) or these [10 tips to improve your public speaking skills](#).
 - You could try practising your presentation on a virtual audience using this cool [app](#).
 - External facilitators (like [Econnect](#) or [Science in Public](#)) can help train scientists to communicate their work more effectively.
 - Looking for a way to make your presentations pop? Why not try some [alternatives to PowerPoint](#) such as [Prezi](#) or [PowToon](#).
 - Finally, a university came up with this fantastic solution for public speaking nerves as part of a pilot program for anxiety prone students – [practice in front of dogs!](#)
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We want to include your contributions in our newsletter. If you have published your work recently or are doing (or know of) something that other women in our field would be interested in, drop us a [line](#). Want to receive our newsletters directly to your in-box? [Subscribe here](#).