

Franklin Women

January 2016 Newsletter

Happy New Year! It is only January but if you're like me you're already planning for the year ahead and that involves conferences. They're an important part of professional development for researchers and critical to career success, but the logistics around conference attendance can often be difficult, and get even more complicated once caring responsibilities are involved. Last year FW launched a Carer's Travel Scholarship to address a barrier faced by women that may prevent them from taking opportunities to present their research at conferences. This scholarship is funded through support from members (FW is a [social enterprise](#)) and this year we can offer two – hoorah! In this newsletter we hear from our inaugural scholarship recipient on how this helped her, as well as another FW member who shares tips on how to make the emotional side of leaving your family for work travel that little bit easier. Conference planning aside, there are lots of other things we can do to get the year off to a good start – we have included links to some useful resources at the end of this newsletter.

Look forward to catching up with many of you at our first event for the year (details in the next newsletter). To a great year!

Melina and the FW team



What happened this month

- Two reports have been released outlining the [importance of biological and medical sciences](#) to Australia's economic growth.
- A short term [Researcher in Residence scheme](#) has been launched by Biomedical Research Victoria giving ECRs an opportunity for part-time government experience.
- Outgoing Chief Scientist Professor Ian Chubb published a [final statement](#) on the importance of science to our future and a welcome to his successor Dr Alan Finkel.
- The [NSW Health Translational Research Grants Scheme](#) is calling for EOIs to accelerate research and evidence translation into the NSW health system.
- Applications are also open for the [NSW Medical Research Support Program](#) to provide infrastructure support to independent medical research institutes in NSW.
- Thinkable.org has announced two relevant funding opportunities for [medical research partners](#) and [QLD Women in STEM](#).
- The first national [STEM Programme Index](#) was launched outlining more than 250 STEM programs for school students.



FW Journal Club

This month's Journal Club contribution comes from [Upeksha Chandrasiri](#), a PhD candidate at the Peter Doherty Institute in Melbourne. Happy reading!

[Chandrasiri UP, Randall LM, Saad AA, Bashir AM, Rogerson SJ, Adam I. Low antibody levels to pregnancy-specific malaria antigens and heightened cytokine responses associated with severe malaria in pregnancy. J Infect Dis 2014;209:1408-17. doi: 10.1093/infdis/jit646](#)



What were the aims of this research? The aims of the project were to determine the immunology markers associated with severe malaria during pregnancy, and their association with pregnancy outcomes.

What are the top 3 take home findings of your research? 1. Pregnant women with severe malaria had low antibody levels to pregnancy-specific malaria antigens. 2. High levels of cytokines are associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes. 3. Low malaria antibody levels and heightened cytokine levels together may lead to severe malaria infection during pregnancy.

How does this research contribute to the field? Severe malaria is rare among pregnant women and may be found in areas with unstable malaria transmission. Severe malaria in pregnancy accounts for a 10–50% chance of maternal death and numerous pregnancy complications. The effect of malaria immunity on severe malaria in pregnancy has never been studied. This is the first study to determine the importance of immune markers in severe malaria in pregnancy.

Who are your collaborators and how did your work relationship come about? My collaborators were my primary PhD supervisor Prof. Stephen Rogerson and Prof. Ishag Adam and his team from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, Sudan.

What is your current role and organisation and how long have you been there for? I am currently a PhD candidate, soon to be graduate, from the University of Melbourne, Department of Medicine, Peter Doherty Institute. I have been in this role for over three and a half years.

What new skills or projects are you currently working on? I am currently on the lookout for a post-doctoral position in the field of infection, immunity, maternal and child health. In the meantime I am publishing a manuscript from my PhD thesis where I investigated the effects of maternal nutrient supplementation on malaria antibody immunity in pregnancy and infancy.

Who is a woman that inspires you? My mother. I grew up watching how my mother perfected the balance between her work and family life. She has been working as a medical officer of health for over 30 years. Her hard work inspired me to pursue my career in the medical field. I can see myself following her pathway making a difference in patient lives.

What food have you eaten too much of in your life? Probably chocolates. The perfect comfort food that comes in all different flavours and sizes. They definitely helped me get through long hours of working in the lab and writing my thesis and publications!

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. ☺

FW Carer's Travel Scholarship

After the successful launch of our Franklin Women Carer's Travel Scholarship last year we are very excited to announce that, thanks to the support of our members, we will be offering two scholarship rounds in 2016! The aim of this scholarship is to provide financial support to a researcher attending a national or international conference, which is to be used towards childcare. The first round (which is now open) is for researchers attending conferences before 30 June 2016, and a second round will open later this year for researchers attending a conference between 1 July and 31 December. For all the details including eligibility and application instructions visit our [website](#).

It is so rewarding to be able to assist talented researchers to take advantage of professional activities that would otherwise be financially and logistically difficult because of caring responsibilities. Below Willa, our inaugural recipient, talks about how she used the scholarship to help her travel while breastfeeding her 4-month-old daughter...



"There was a conference I really needed to present at for my career track record, and I was placed in such a difficult position for how it would be possible to attend with the recent birth of my second child. The FW Carer's Travel Scholarship enabled me to cover much of the costs of my sister-in-law travelling with me as babysitter so I was able to attend all the conference, give my plenary presentation and participate in networking events, plus still breastfeed my baby! The networking, visible presence at conferences, and learning from other presenters is such a vital part of our career as scientists, yet it is the hardest thing to find money and time for as mums. Being awarded the FW Carer's Travel Scholarship greatly helped ease this barrier for me and I am so grateful to have been the first fortunate recipient. I highly encourage any other researchers in similar positions to apply in 2016!"

Willa Huston is a molecular biologist and senior lecturer at the University of Technology Sydney.

Tips for travelling without your kids

Besides the practical difficulties of leaving children at home when travelling, being separated from your young family can be heart-wrenching. [Melanie Shakespear](#) shares her story and some practical tips on how to make the separation easier.

The time had come to undertake overseas travel after having my children – I was heading to Spain to attend a conference and Germany to present my research to collaborators. Although I knew it was a great professional opportunity I was a little apprehensive as it would be my first time away from them (Miss 4 and Mr 2) for 2.5 weeks. We were lucky enough to be able to arrange grandparent support to cover my absence so I knew the kids would be well taken care of, yet as the time drew closer I was starting to feel a little guilty at how upset my daughter was getting about me leaving and wondering how I would cope being away from them.



I reached out via Franklin Women and Twitter for suggestions on how to make the experience easier and received great suggestions. I drew up a calendar outlining the kids' activities for each day and included a spot for Miss 4 to put a sticker every morning to help her count down the sleeps until I was home. I also arranged for her daycare teachers to use a world map and show her the different countries I was visiting. And just before I left I was reminded that this is a positive experience and a chance to be immersed in the science with more after hours time free to build networks that I wouldn't usually have the opportunity to do. That said, saying goodbye at the airport was very hard, there were plenty of tears! But once I was on the plane (with a spare seat to sweeten the deal!) I was able to watch a movie and eat a meal without having the tray land in my lap. What a treat!

The conference days were so busy and the time difference difficult that we didn't have a chance to Skype until after it had finished. I had been warned that Skype could be a double-edged sword for causing upset and that was my experience too. Miss 4 was happily chatting to me and then said 'I miss you Mama' and her little face crumpled into tears so I decided not to Skype again as I thought it would cause more upset!

My presentation at University Heidelberg in Germany was a great experience and after a few nights visiting a friend in Stockholm it was time to come home. While waiting in Frankfurt airport I made a little video for the kids saying I was on my way home and couldn't wait to see them and emailed it through to Miss 4's daycare. They played it to her the day before I arrived and printed her out a photo of me from it.

It felt so good to see their little faces at the airport! Miss 4 was very excited to see me, but Mr 2's reaction was quite different, he didn't want to be cuddled and was quite distant for a few hours, but later that day he warmed up. What I wasn't prepared for was Miss 4 to be quite emotional for a few days afterwards, worried that I might leave again and still getting

upset about how much she missed me while I was gone. But she was also quite curious about what I did in the different countries so I took the opportunity to give her a few examples of the different cultures that I experienced.

Some of the other helpful suggestions that I received were:

- The first night away can be difficult, try to arrange dinner with colleagues/friends.
- Line up a lot of support at home, and maybe only discuss with kids only a day or two in advance (3 yr old).
- Create a list in coloured pens of who was doing what pick-up, which activities, where they are staying – being organised is key!
- Goodbyes are hard, but remember it is nice to have some time not being the mum.
- Send pictures or short videos by phone or email if timezones are awkward: ‘how was your day? I did x, y and z. Time for your bath, have a good night!’

I’ve been assured that travel does get easier, and remember – life is not either/or, enjoy being a mother and enjoy your work. Your kids will be proud of everything their mum’s achieved!

[Melanie Shakespear](#) is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, University of Queensland. She researches how innate immune cells contribute to inflammatory disease, is a mum to two children, two huskies and four chickens and is passionate about pilates.

 **We are loving right now...**

Setting up for a new year!! After a (hopefully) restful holiday period it’s time to get organised for 2016. To help you out here are some of our favourite productivity links:

- Start with a [massive wall planner](#), you could even try laminating it to make those due dates a little more flexible ;)
 - Need a harsher to-do-list taskmaster? Try the [Carrot App](#) (warning this one isn’t for the faint hearted!)
 - If you’re more of a pen and paper kind of gal, try these [cute to-do-list printables](#).
 - Want to make all those meetings more productive? Make it a new year’s resolution to do these [two things after every meeting](#)
 - Join other researchers around the world aiming to read a new paper every day of the year. Even better share them with others on Twitter with [#365papers](#) (or [#366papers](#) for those of us that remember it’s a leap year!)
 - Research has shown that looking at pictures of baby animals [improves concentration and focus](#), so here’s [one for every day of 2016](#). You can thank us later ☺
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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](#).