

# Franklin Women

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## July 2016 Newsletter

You have probably noticed that I am a big fan of researchers sharing their story (both about their research and also themselves). This is something I did a lot of during my PhD/post-doc days when I was at QIMR. Whether it was talking to school kids, donors or community groups, I always took the opportunity to talk about my research – I wanted them to know just how amazing our work was and what dedicated people were behind it. I don't get a chance to do it as much now and I often miss it. That is why I love this time of year – National Science Week is just around the corner. It's packed full of events aimed at sharing science with the country and they make me happy! This year we have joined our friends at Women in Science AUSTRALIA to deliver an event for high school students (you can read more about it below). We have also listed some of our other favourite events at the end of this newsletter. If you are involved in an event this year (or attending one) do let us know on Twitter ([@franklinwomen](https://twitter.com/franklinwomen)) and we will share it so others know about it too...

Happy reading!

Melina and the FW team

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## What happened this month

- Public consultation is being sought for two key health and medical research funding programs – the [Medical Research Future Fund](#) and the [Structural Review of NHMRC's Grant Program](#).
  - The Australian Academy of Science launched the '[180 Seconds of Science](#)' video competition for early and mid-career researchers. Go for it!
  - Happy snaps and slides from our last event 'Research funding outside the box' are now up on the Franklin Women [website](#) – enjoy!
  - While you are there, check out our new career [blog](#). Dessi Mladenova talks about moving into the field of bioinformatics and balancing motherhood and a part-time research career.
  - 17 of Australia's leading health and medical researchers were acknowledged for their high quality work through the [NHMRC Research Excellence Awards](#) – Hoorah!
  - Our friends at Women in Science AUSTRALIA have just announced registration is now open for their inaugural [National Symposium: Connecting Women in STEMM](#). Our Founder Melina is very excited to be joining them as a panel member.
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# FW Journal Club

This month's Journal Club comes from [Jesse Jansen](#), NHMRC Early Career Fellow and Senior Research Fellow at the School of Public Health, University of Sydney.



*Jansen Jesse, Naganathan Vasi, Carter Stacy M, McLachlan Andrew J, Nickel Brooke, Irwig Les et al. Too much medicine in older people? Deprescribing through shared decision making BMJ 2016;353:i2893*

**What were the aims of this research?** Reducing inappropriate and unnecessary use of medicines in older people is one of the most common and important challenges of current day medicine.

Interestingly, the balance between possible benefits and harms of a medicine changes as people age. For example, a medicine commenced when a person is 50 years old to prevent heart problems might no longer be providing the same benefit when a person lives to 80 years of age, in fact it might even be harmful. Reviews of trials where medicines are selectively and carefully stopped (deprescribing) show that reducing specific types of medicines may reduce adverse events and improve quality of life for older adults. However, although deprescribing is important, it can be difficult to achieve in practice. Doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other health professionals are used to talking to patients about why medications need to be started or continued, but are less comfortable talking to patients about stopping or reducing medications. We drew together evidence from the psychology, communication, and decision-making literature to describe the unique tasks required for patients and health professionals to engage in shared deprescribing decisions, and the challenges involved.

**What are the top 3 take home findings of your research?** Our advice is to inform older people (and their companions) about the option to deprescribe, invite them to express their views and preferences, and support them to make the decision. This requires carefully adapting care to the individual needs and preferences of the patient, as this may vary widely among older adults and change over time.

**How does this research contribute to the field?** Over recent years there has been increased awareness of the importance of reducing inappropriate use of multiple medicines in older people through deprescribing. Involving older patients and their companions in this process is considered to be key; however, there is very little research looking at how best to support shared decision-making for this group. Our paper intends to provide guidance for clinicians and outlines areas where more research is needed.

**Who are your collaborators and how did your work relationship come about?** My work is very multidisciplinary. I have a background in cognitive and health psychology and could not do this research without my amazing team of collaborators including clinicians, researchers, policy people and a consumer representative. The team has expertise in epidemiology, geriatric medicine, geriatric pharmacy, public health ethics, home medicine reviews and decision support. Everyone on the team is very engaged and involved in the project and they are all a pleasure to work with. The team started off small but as the project grew so did the team as we identified areas where expertise was lacking. We approached people with relevant expertise to be part of the team to close the knowledge gaps. The

timeliness of the topic and reputation of the senior researchers who were supportive of the project from the beginning certainly helped getting other people on board.

**What is your current role and organisation and how long have you been there for?** I am an NHMRC Early Career Fellow and Senior Research Fellow at the School of Public Health. Since May this year I am also the Sub-Dean for early career researchers in the school. I have worked at the School of Public Health since 2009 but have been on maternity leave three times, my youngest is 9 months old.

**What new skills or projects are you currently working on?** For the deprescribing project I am now developing a communication and decision-making tool together with a PhD student to help pharmacists and GPs to have meaningful conversations about medicines with their patients. I am also very fortunate that my supervisor/mentor and other senior collaborators recently received two large grants to form a research collaboration for reducing overdiagnosis and overtreatment (see <http://wiserhealthcare.org.au/>). In this context, another of my PhD students just started working on a project looking at disease labelling and overdiagnosis of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

**Who is a woman that inspires you?** Kirsten McCaffery without a doubt. She is an incredibly successful researcher who has really paved the way for research at the intersection of psychology and public health. She is also an awesome person to work with, never seems stressed and always finds time to help you out. She understands the juggle of combining an academic career and having a young family and is very supportive of female early career researchers.

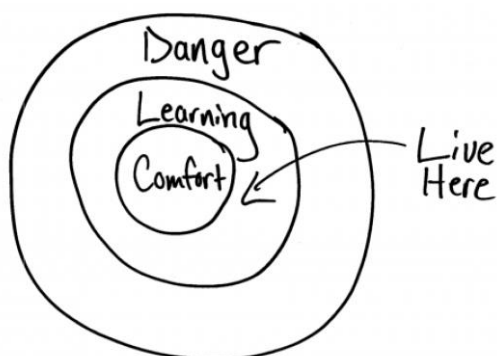
**What food have you eaten too much of in your life?** It would have to be homemade lasagne with bolognese sauce, spinach and béchamel sauce. My dad always used to make it for me if I needed a bit of love and so when I eat it I instantly feel better. I always make a big tray with the intention of freezing half but there are never any leftovers.

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

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## Leadership in academia

Franklin Women Peer Advisory Committee member [Dr Anita Heywood](#) shares her experiences with the University of NSW Academic Women in Leadership Programs.



We all know the stats – women are seriously under-represented in senior academic positions, including appointments to key decision-making and governance bodies across the university. That means fewer role models for women as we move up the ranks of academia and research. In my career, I have had the good fortune to have a supportive mentor during my PhD and academic career with whom I have regular conversations about my professional development and she

provides strategic advice on my academic career. Despite this, during my early career as an academic I would observe my mentor and other women in leadership positions and wonder

if I had the ability to take on these roles or whether the leadership qualities they possessed were just innate. Several universities offer Academic Women in Leadership Programs as one of several strategies to address the under-representation of women in higher academic appointments. The UNSW program has been running since 2006 and has been so successful a similar program, Professional Women in Leadership, has been launched for women in non-academic positions in the university.

I decided to apply for this competitive program at UNSW to gain a greater understanding of my personal strengths and develop my leadership skills without compromising my personal style. One of the first sessions broke down my assumptions of a leader needing to know it all and make all the decisions (the “incomplete leader”). Providing a bunch of academics with evidence around leadership styles and key management tools was a comfortable way of easing us into what was an often confronting set of self-reflective sessions, getting us out of our comfort zones.

While the program was challenging and required a huge time commitment – one full day per month plus pre-reading and personal reflection – it was truly invaluable. I was able to spend that time developing strategies for building my career, reflect on my career goals and establish priorities, something that I would never find the time to do outside this program. Some of the key outcomes were working with peers on overcoming key challenges, being introduced to key leaders including the Dean and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), gaining a deeper understanding of how decisions are made at the university and what leadership roles are available. We had presentation skills training from an acting coach and finished the sessions with our own AWIL choir (behind closed doors, thankfully). However, the most valuable feature of the program was meeting other academic women at my level across different faculties, hearing what drives them in their chosen fields and sharing our experiences of life as an academic.

***Anita*** is a Senior Lecturer in Public Health at UNSW and the Director of the Master of Public Health programs. She spends her spare time trying new cafes and restaurants across Sydney and planning her next holiday.

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## Hats on for the WiSA Hotseat

Dr Mel Thomson shares the inspiration for the National Science Week event ‘Hats on for the WiSA Hotseat’ giving high school students the opportunity to connect with inspiring women in STEMM. All the event info and tickets are available [here](#).



It’s often said that ‘You can’t be what you can’t see’ and I think there is not enough focus on giving women ‘permission’ to be less than perfect and to learn from ***instructive failure***. We all would benefit from more role models who were prepared to be ‘brave’ enough to speak about times they got things wrong or had struggled...and how they got it back to succeed. Particularly to encourage young girls to pursue (and persist in) STEMM careers. With this in mind, ***Women in Science AUSTRALIA*** (WiSA) has

joined forces with Franklin Women to run an event during the [Sydney Science Festival](#) that aims to showcase the epic fails and successes experienced by a diverse group of women in STEMM and how the setbacks did not stop them from succeeding 'for the win'. 'Hats on for the WiSA Hotseat' plans to follow the rapid-fire 'grilling' session of the women with a mocktails and canapes networking event.

'What can you do to help??' I hear you sing out. Why, I'm glad you asked! We are currently running a [crowd funding campaign](#) to cover the costs of offering this FREE event to 150 school students, so please pop by and give us \$20 or so (and spread the word!), which will help us offer these students the opportunity to directly engage with inspiring women...who understand the value of failure as well as success!

Volunteers are also needed to be part of the cohort of women in STEMM 'Bingo' participants...the novel facilitated networking activity to try and encourage the students to chat to the women from STEMM fields one on one or in small groups. It would be great to have some of the inspiring members of Franklin Women as part of the event, so if you are interested in volunteering a couple of hours of your time (and to get a free fedora!!) please contact me on [m.thomson@deakin.edu.au](mailto:m.thomson@deakin.edu.au)

***Me!** is a member of the Twitterati and a torchbearer for the concept of crowd funding academic research. She is a passionate advocate for equity and diversity, particularly for women in STEMM, a passion only outweighed by her love of fashion legwear and impractical shoes.*

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 We are loving right now...

Science week!! It is that time of the year again where around the country there are festivals, events and activities that celebrate science. We have picked some of our favs below. You can pick your own [here](#).

- [Hats on for the WiSA Hotseat](#) –Women in Science AUSTRALIA and Franklin Women are hosting a great event for up and coming women in science to grill a panel of talented women already making waves in the field.
- [STEMania](#) – when science and comedy combine, a fact-filled theatrical comedy about science!
- [The Global Biohack Revolution](#) – at this event you get to meet Aussie biohackers who are leading the biotechnology revolution! Very cool!
- [Brian Cox – Journey into Deep Space](#) – Professor Brian Cox is touring Australia to discuss the unanswered questions you have about our universe.
- [STEMSEL inventors club](#) – for year 4 students and above to build and test their own electronic inventions with university mentors to guide them. Who doesn't want to build their own robot?

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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](#).