Challenging stigma and improving health outcomes through best practice in digital translation

Name of Applicant: Dr Steph Kershaw

Organisation: The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of Sydney
PART B

1. Additional Information (max 400 words)

My research focuses on impacts and harms associated with crystal methamphetamine use. Crystal methamphetamine use is a global health concern, and Australia has one of the highest rates of use worldwide. Use is often associated with co-occurring mental health issues including anxiety, depression, psychosis and suicidality, exacerbating associated harms and in the last National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2019) it was rated by 40% of Australians as the drug of most concern to the community.

Crystal methamphetamine attracts a high level of negative attention. My research has demonstrated that 40-60% of Australians hold negative attitudes towards people who use crystal methamphetamine, and that two thirds of those who use crystal methamphetamine regularly experience discrimination (national cross-sectional survey of 2,108 Australians). Due to the high levels of stigma surrounding crystal methamphetamine, people often delay seeking help despite there being effective treatments available. My research has also shown higher levels of knowledge are associated with less stigmatising attitudes which indicates the importance of improving access to accurate, evidence-based information and resources.

As part of my program of research I lead Cracks in the Ice (CITI), which is multi-award-winning e-health initiative to develop and disseminate evidence-based resources about crystal methamphetamine for people who use methamphetamine, their families, health workers and communities. CITI has achieved significant reach (830K site users, 33% international) and a mobile app with offline capability, allows access to resources in areas where internet access may be unreliable. My research has demonstrated that exposure to CITI is associated with increases in knowledge and decreases in stigmatizing attitudes among people who hadn’t seen the site before (Kershaw et al, 2021), providing important evidence of links between CITI and changes in community knowledge and attitudes, rarely assessed within the context of real-world large-scale implementation.

As part of this program of work I also lead Australia’s first e-health project to develop and adapt culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often disproportionally affected by methamphetamine, however, access to evidence-based community-led resources is limited. This adaption involved a national 2-year consultation involving 166 people, iterative development of culturally appropriate resources and strong collaboration with a National Expert Advisory Group of Aboriginal elders, people with lived experience and leading researchers in the Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, health and research sectors (>29K pageviews, >28K hardcopy resources distributed since August 2021).
2. **Focus**

Describe how your research illustrates Innovation, Best Practice and or Excellence (maximum 200 words)

My research represents significant innovation to support best practice, reduce stigma and promote help-seeking through:

- **Development and dissemination of world-first, trusted, non-judgemental information and resources that reflect best evidence to date.** The use of digital translation allows access to trusted information and resources, and links people with a wide range of support options including web and telephone-based services, online interventions and programs. It also provides health workers with the latest information, guidelines and online training to support best practice. Emerging literature is regularly scoped, and new resources developed in response to new evidence, end-user requests and community need.

- **Continuous engagement with community and end-users.** Cracks in the Ice is a living and responsive program with multiple dissemination and feedback channels including the online portal, mobile app, webinar series and strong social media presence. This allows active engagement with community across the country and also increases access to evidence-based resources for people who use drugs, affected family members/friends and health workers.

3. **Potential Impact**

Summarise the potential contribution to and/or implications for the wider community (maximum 200 words)

Interaction with CITI improves knowledge (p<0.001) and decreases stigmatising attitudes (p<0.001). Given the high levels of stigma associated with crystal methamphetamine, these findings demonstrate the potential role it has as a national stigma reduction initiative. Cracks in the Ice shows how digital technology can be utilised to reduce attitudinal, geographic and structural barriers particularly among disadvantaged or hard to reach populations who often have limited access to traditional treatment options.

CITI also facilitates access to resources and support not only people who use crystal methamphetamine, but family, friends, health workers and communities. To assist with dissemination of CITI among Australians in regional areas, I established and led a partnership with Tonic Health Media (Australia's largest health & wellbeing media network) to develop and implement a promotional TV campaign that reached 3.8 million people. I led a partnership with Mindframe to develop National evidence-informed guidelines on accurate and non-stigmatising reporting on crystal methamphetamine use for media professionals (>500 DLs). In the National Ice Action Strategy final report (2021) CITI was cited as having greater than expected reach and impact, rigorous evaluation methods and named as 1 of 2 programs serving as exemplars for future national programs.
4. Consumer’s Contribution

Describe any contribution by Mental Health consumers/persons with lived experience other than as subjects e.g. reference group, researcher (maximum 200 words)

Cracks in the Ice was developed using an iterative co-design process including multiple rounds of consultation including community engagement to determine information and resource needs, beta-testing of initial site, and a large-scale national evaluation (n=2108, 27% had used ice before) to ensure that CITI is meeting the needs of its end-users as well as identify areas for improvement and future development. I have also worked closely with a number of lived experience consultants to develop and improve resources. Most notably is my work with Jack Nagle, who has been involved in several stages of the project from development to launch and dissemination, is a co-author on the development paper and continues to play an ongoing advisory role and assist with dissemination activities including a recent webinar we co-presented on “Methamphetamine and Mental Health”.

The development of culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was also iterative, with community consultations guiding the key areas of development and the project overseen by a National Expert Advisory Group of Aboriginal elders, people with lived experience and leading researchers in the Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, health and research sectors based in New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
Current position: Research Fellow (Level B), Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of Sydney

Date of PhD conferral: 20th August 2015

Career Summary / Relative to Opportunity

My research focuses on reducing the impact and harms associated with illicit substance use disorders through epidemiology and development of innovative and effective research translation models with particular focus on challenging stigma and discrimination and improving health outcomes among disadvantaged groups. I am currently the project lead for Cracks in the Ice, a national e-Health portal, and manage a number of concurrent research projects on developing and evaluating research translation models. Following completion of a Doctorate of Philosophy in Medical Science, I worked for the World Health Organisation as a Technical Officer (2015-2017) looking at the impact of illicit drugs on public health and the translation of evidence-based research into international policy outcomes. While in this role, I did not have the opportunity to undertake, contribute to or produce traditional research outputs (peer reviewed publications, grants and fellowships) and as such I am 4.4 years post PhD, taking into account the 2.4 years career disruption in non-research roles.

Professional appointments

2022-pres Research Fellow, The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of Sydney, Australia

2018-pres Project Lead, Cracks in the Ice Online Toolkit, The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of Sydney, Australia

2018-2021 Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of Sydney, Australia

2018 Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of New South Wales, Australia

2016-2017 Technical Officer/Consultant, Innovation, Access and Use Unit, Department of Essential Medicines, World Health Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland

2015 Intern, Innovation, Access and Use Unit, Department of Essential Medicines, World Health Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland

2010-2016 Research/Teaching Assistant, School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences/School of Psychology/School of Health Sciences, University of South Australia

Research Funding

I am a Chief Investigator on a total of $3.5 million external grants ($470,392 CIA, $845,396 CIB, 849,986 CIC).


Scholarships & Awards
- Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship 2011-2014 (AUD $28,715 p.a.)
- University of South Australia Top-Up Scholarship Award 2011-2014 (AUD $2,000 p.a.) and School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences HDR Travel Grant 2013 (AUD $2,000)
- Martin Hansen Award 2011 (AUD $1,000): Awarded to the student with the highest GPA in 3rd and 4th year of Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine

Teaching & Professional Activities
- Currently supervising a team of 5 research assistants and has supervised 3 research students to completion.
- Invited peer reviewer for 7 leading journals (e.g. Addiction, BMC Public Health, Journal of Medical Internet, Research, BMC Psychiatry)
- Webinar Coordinator, Cracks in the Ice Webinar and Professional Development Program (2018-current). Leading program development and coordination of the National webinar program for the general Australian community and health professional development. Coordinated 19 webinars, with 11,052 registrants and 3,963 live attendees, and 1,683 recording downloads.
- Webinar presenter for QLife Peer Supporters monthly webinar series “Methamphetamine” (February 2021)
Steph Kershaw, BLabMed (Hons), PhD

Curriculum Vitae

- **Webinar presenter** for the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) Research Skills webinar series. Webinar 5 “What is an evidence-base” (February 2021)
- **Lunch and Learn Academic Lead**, the Matilda Centre (December 2020 - current)
- **Guest lecturer** for the “Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs” course, Master of Public Health, University of New South Wales (2020)
- **Invited Member**, Program Innovations Committee for The Mental Health Services Learning Network Australia and New Zealand (TheMHS; 2019-present)
- **Early Career Research Coordinator**, the Matilda Centre (January 2019 - December 2020)
- **Conference Portfolio Coordinator**, the Matilda Centre (previously NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use) (February 2018 – December 2020)
- **Invited judge**, the Charles Perkins Centre Early and Mid- Career Research Symposium (2019)
- **Grant Reviewer**, the Matilda Centre Grant Development Workshop (2019, 2020, 2022)
- **Member**, the Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association (2018 till present) and the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol & other Drugs (2018 till present)

**Media and Community Outreach**

I have presented my research at 34 conferences (26 first author, 5 invited) and have also engaged in a number of media activities to disseminate my research to the wider community including:


**Publications**

*Peer-reviewed papers (in preparation or submitted)*

Curriculum Vitae

Steph Kershaw, BLabMed (Hons), PhD

Alcoholism (submitted, under review)


**Peer-reviewed papers (published)**


- Guinan, T; Kirkbride, P; Della Vedova, C; **Kershaw, S.**; Kobus, H; Voelcker, N. *Direct detection of illicit drugs from biological fluids by desorption/ionization mass spectrometry with nanoporous silicon microparticles.* In Analyst, vol. 140, no. 23, pp. 7926-7933, 2015

**Educational Materials, Programs and Resources**


**Commissioned, Technical Reports & Monographs**


**Parliamentary Inquiry Submissions**

- **Kershaw, S.**, Deen, H., Kay-Lambkin, F., Kelly, B., Lynch, S., Newton, N., Teesson, M. Chapman, C. (2019) *Submission to the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug ‘ice’.* The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, the University of Sydney & the Priority Centre for Brain and Mental Health Research, the University of Newcastle, 7th May, 2019.
Referees

- 1 written ‘reference’ from someone familiar with the research.
To Whom it May Concern

It is my pleasure to provide a referee letter for Dr Steph Kershaw. I have known and collaborated with Steph for approximately 4.5 years during her time at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use and as Project Lead for Cracks in the Ice. Steph’s program of work is focused on translational research to reduce the impact of illicit substance use on individuals, families, and communities by harnessing digital technologies. A key pillar of Steph’s work is also to reduce the stigma and harms associated with illicit substance use, particularly methamphetamine, encourage help-seeking and service utilisation particularly among disadvantaged groups.

Steph is currently leading the development, evaluation and dissemination of research through the National Cracks in the Ice online portal and its related programs including the cultural adaption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Steph utilises innovative and best-practice methods to ensure access to non-judgemental, evidence-based resources for people who use drugs, their affected family/friends, health workers and the wider community. Steph also strives to implement the principles of co-development in her work, and regularly undertakes community consultations and involves people with lived experience to ensure an iterative process and community needs are met.

Even at an early career stage, Steph shows a rising trajectory as evidenced by her exceptional leadership, community impact and research performance. Steph has attained over $3 million in grant funding (CIA/CIB $1.2M), 8 publications submitted or in preparation, 34 conference presentations (3 invited) and engaged in several media activities. Steph has also produced several reports for the Australian Government Department of Health and was responsible for leading a Submission to the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug ‘ice’ which included key recommendations to improve access to evidence-based resources/programs and to reduce the high level of stigma associated with methamphetamine that often prevents people from seeking help. Steph has also shown outstanding leadership in forging sustainable, and multidisciplinary national collaborations with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders in research and translation and Australian media and health promotion partners. Two examples of the exceptional collaborations she has led are the development of media guidelines to encourage accurate and responsible reporting on methamphetamine and the informational TV campaign with Tonic Health Media which reached 3.8 million Australians. Steph actively engages in mentoring and capacity-building, she is currently supervising a team of 5 staff and coordinates a successful national webinar series for health professionals, researchers, and community. She also participates in the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) mentoring program to build capacity and key research skills among alcohol and other drug workers (AOD).

Steph is a passionate researcher with outstanding potential, and I am delighted to endorse her for this award.

[Signature]

PROFESSOR FRANCES KAY-LAMBKIN

Institute Director,
Hunter Medical Research Institute

W: hmri.org.au
1 referee who may be contacted by phone.

**Mr Jack Nagle**

Presenter, Media Commentator, Recovery Advocate and Founder and Director of ‘Real Drug Talk’.
Supporting Material
1. Screenshots from Cracks in the Ice

- Screenshot on one of the evidence-based video resources available.

- Ice-breaker quiz designed to improve knowledge and bust myths about crystal methamphetamine.
2. Peer-reviewed papers referenced in application:

3. Cobranded Mindframe and Cracks in the Ice media guidelines