

2020 Master Project List

Supervisor	e-mail	Project	Number of Students
A/Prof. Christina Bryant	cbryant@unimelb.edu.au	<p><u>Project 1: Promoting health and well-being in midlife</u></p> <p>Many adults are concerned about preserving their cognitive abilities as they get older. There is now a solid body of evidence regarding a range of preventative measures that healthy adults can take to maintain their brain health and well-being. The aim of this project will be to draw on this evidence to develop and pilot a six-week brain health program to be offered to healthy adults as one of the group programmes in the University of Melbourne Psychology Clinic.</p> <p>This project will be co-supervised with A/Prof Kathryn Ellis, Deputy Director of the Academic Unit for the Psychiatry of Old Age, University of Melbourne.</p> <p>If you are interested to read more: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1567635/1</p>	1
		<p><u>Project 2: Psychosocial needs of people experiencing hearing disorders</u></p> <p>Hearing disorders, such as hearing loss and tinnitus, are highly prevalent conditions with significant implications for communication and well-being. Current models of care for those with hearing impairment frequently pay little attention</p>	1

		<p>to psychological needs and offer little in the way of psychological intervention or support. This exciting new project offers the opportunity for us to work with my colleagues in audiology to develop and pilot a psychologically informed intervention for adults with hearing impairment. This work is in its early stages, thus giving the student the valuable opportunity to contribute to the refinement of the research question and the design of the intervention.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Health consequences of grief and loss</u></p> <p>Grief and bereavement can pose a considerable risk for older people’s mental and physical health, so it seems reasonable to assume that experiencing a significant loss would result in increased health service use. However, there are conflicting findings with some studies suggesting that grieving individuals may not always seek help through the healthcare system, even when needed. In order to examine the relationship between grief and loss and health care use, the student will undertake a systematic review of this literature. This project will be co-supervised with Dr Katrin Gerber at the National Ageing Research Institute.</p> <p><u>Project 4: Emotional well-being</u></p> <p>I have a broad interest in topics relating to mental health and ageing, the promotion of well-being and women’s health. You are very welcome to approach me with ideas of your own within these areas, and I’d be happy to discuss these with you.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>relationships between dimensions of alcohol alcohol and other drug use and functional impairment (quality of life, social, and vocational function) in young people presenting with emerging mental illness and co-occurring substance use at a headspace centre. Co-supervisor: Gill Bedi, Orygen.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Student well-being</u></p> <p>It is increasingly recognised that university students are at extremely high-risk for the development of mental health conditions. However, many of the previous studies examining this are cross-sectional in design. The aim of this project is to investigate predictors of both mental health difficulties and successful adaptation to university in a cohort of students who commence in 2020. The study will build on previous research (i.e. Bailey and Phillips, 2015) and has scope to develop into a PhD. (Clinical stream students only)</p> <p><u>Project 4: Evaluation and management of risk in young people with comorbid Autism Spectrum Disorders and other mental illnesses.</u></p> <p>Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition that can be identified from early childhood onwards and can affect a person throughout their life. ASD is associated with higher rates of a range of comorbid mental illnesses, however there can be difficulties differentiating between features of ASD and symptoms of a co-occurring mental disorder; and providing an intervention that takes</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>into account both the ASD and psychiatric comorbidity. Presentation and management of risk is poorly understood in this cohort. This project will consist of a file audit consultations with young people and clinicians, with a view to better understanding this. (This project will be co-supervised with A/Prof Jo Robinson at Orygen).</p> <p><u>Project 5: Projects associated with #chatsafe</u></p> <p>#chatsafe is a set of evidence-informed guidelines developed to help young people to communicate safely online about suicide (Robinson et al. (2018). PLoS ONE 13(11): e0206584. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206584.; https://www.orygen.org.au/chatsafe).</p> <p>A number of projects are available that are associated with that project: one would look at online memorialising for a young person who has died by suicide and one would look at conversations around self-harm and what is perceived to be helpful and unhelpful by young people. Both involve some literature reviewing and some qualitative work. Co-supervised by Associate Prof Jo Robinson- Orygen.</p> <p><u>Project 6: Investigating the relationship between social media engagement and mental health</u></p> <p>Increasing evidence suggests that some aspects of engagement with social media can have negative impact on mental health- particularly for young people. The parameters for this project are very broad at this stage- it could focus on predictors of the relationship between social media</p>	<p>2</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>engagement and mental health or investigation of resilience factors- why are some people more affected by their social media engagement than others? There is definitely scope for a PhD in this area- potentially looking at the impact of a break from social media.</p> <p>Project 7: Acceptability and feasibility of a group-based sleep intervention (Sleep SENSE) for youth with mental health and cognitive concerns</p> <p>Sleep and cognitive disturbances are common co-occurring features of mental disorders, including mood and psychotic disorders, often emerging early in the illness course and contributing to cognitive impairment. Despite this, few studies have investigated whether sleep interventions are useful in simultaneously addressing sleep and cognitive disturbances in mental disorders. This project will examine whether a 7-week group based intervention for sleep (Sleep SENSE) is acceptable and potentially beneficial for sleep and cognition in young people with mental disorders. Suitable for expansion into a PhD.</p> <p>Co-supervisors: Kelly Allott and Orli Schwartz, Orygen</p>	1
Dr. Isabel Krug	Isabel.krug@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: The impact of STRIVE support groups for caregivers of people with an eating disorder</p> <p>A variety of interventions have been developed for caregivers of people with an eating disorder (ED) either to help them cope with the burden and distress that commonly accompanies this role or to make them more effective at providing support. This study will examine the impact of</p>	1

		<p>Strive support groups offered through Eating Disorders Family Australia (EDFA) for caregivers of people with an ED, which are run by facilitators with lived experience of caring for a loved one with an ED. This project aims to use both qualitative and quantitative measures to assess the impact of strive support groups on carers' coping strategies, burden and distress.</p> <p>This project will be co-supervised by Sarah Giles, a PhD student working in the area of EDs.</p> <p><u>Project 2: A network analysis of Anorexia Nervosa symptoms before and after Family Based Treatment</u></p> <p>The Eating Disorder Unit at the Royal Children's Hospital outpatient management of eating disorders (mainly anorexia nervosa), is by Family Based Treatment (FBT). The Eating Disorder Unit at the RCH has established a comprehensive dataset on symptoms, comorbidity and family functioning with a current baseline data of > 500-600 patients. The current project aims to assess through a Network Analysis the clustering of symptoms in Anorexia Nervosa and how this cluster profile changes after FBT.</p> <p>This project will be undertaken in collaboration with Dr. Elizabeth Hughes, who is overseeing the research arm at the Eating Disorder Unit at RCH. The student(s) will be asked to provide data contribution hours at the unit.</p> <p>Possibility to extent into a PhD.</p>	2
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		<p><u>Project 3: Consumer and health care professional experiences of the New Medicare Eating Disorder Plan (EDP)</u></p> <p>Since 1 November 2019, Australians experiencing eating disorders are now able to access more support through Medicare. Known as the Eating Disorder Plan (EDP), it is an evidence-based, best practice model of treatment. This new plan can now include up to 20 Medicare-subsidised sessions with a dietician and 40 sessions with a mental health clinician over a 12-month period. The current project will aim to investigate consumer and health care professional experiences of this new plan, 1-2 years after its implementation. This project aims to use both qualitative and quantitative measures. Possibility to extent into a PhD</p> <p><u>Project 4: The micro-longitudinal impact of Food stimuli on Visual Attention in Eating Disorders.</u></p> <p>Those with eating disorders (EDs) show attentional biases to disorder-relevant stimuli, such as food information. The aim of this project will be to investigate attentional biases when viewing food images with different caloric density using an eye-tracking task, in two separate groups: healthy individuals and ED/at risk for ED individuals. Furthermore, this study will also examine a range of physiological reactions (e.g. skin conductance and heart beat variability) using a new measurement device called Empatica. A further novelty of</p>	<p>2</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>this study will be an ecological momentary assessment (EMA) component of longitudinal eating disorder symptoms. This project will be co-supervised with Dr. Jason Forte. Possibility to extent into a a PhD</p> <p><u>Project 5: A systematic review and meta-analysis on treatment seeking males with eating disorders.</u></p> <p>A range of reviews have tried to describe the complex issues that underlie Eating disorders (EDs) in men, including the clinical presentation, risk factors and clinical management of males with EDs These reviews have mainly agreed that men and women with EDs exhibit, some overlap in clinical presentation and risk factors, but essential differences do also exist. Determining which factors best explain these differences remain uncertain, maybe because none of these reviews have achieved a systematic appraisal, including a meta-analytic approach of the literature. The current project will for the first time undertake a systematic review and meta-analysis of all the studies to date including males with EDs attending a tertiary ED service.</p> <p><u>Project 6: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the Dual Pathway Model of bulimic symptoms</u></p> <p>The Dual Pathway Model (DPM) is a model that proposes to account for the multifaceted aetiology of bulimic symptomology. Despite its theoretical appeal in being able to capture the multifaceted aetiology of bulimic symptoms, to our knowledge no study has systematically reviewed and/or</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>performed meta-analysis on studies that assess the model. The proposed study aims to identify and summarize the available literature that has examined the longitudinal and/or experimental relationship between the respective pathways (10 in total) proposed by the DPM, and to quantify the size and direction of their effects by conducting a meta-analysis on available data. Nine of the 10 paths have already been reviewed by various researchers.</p> <p>Co-supervisor: Dr. Francis Puccio, Postdoc and clinician</p> <p>Project 7: Any type of eating disorder/disordered eating (DE)/body image research</p> <p>I'm always excited to hear students' ideas regarding new research on eating disorders/DE and body image. Please contact me if you would like to discuss any research project in relation to this area. I'm particularly interested to supervise new PhD students</p>	Several
Dr. Litza Kiropoulos	litzak@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: Examination of psychopathology measures in multiple sclerosis: a focus on the PHQ-9 and SPECTRA: Indices of psychopathology</p> <p>External supervisor: Dr Charles Malpas, RMH, Department of Neurology, Clinical Outcomes Research This study is aimed at investigating the construct validity of the PHQ-9 and SPECTRA: Indices of Psychopathology scales in a multiple sclerosis sample. Two studies will be offered to two students. These studies are part of a larger research program being conducted by Dr Litza Kiropoulos and Dr Charles Malpas, MS clinic, Department of Neurology, Royal Melbourne Hospital.</p>	2

		<p>You will be expected contribute to data collection and the administration of certain psychopathology measures including the SCID-5 and BICAMS.</p> <p><u>Project 2: Patterns of emotion regulation and psychopathology</u></p> <p>Emotion regulatory strategies such as higher expressive suppression and lower cognitive reappraisal may be associated with increased psychopathology. Yet, it is unclear whether these strategies represent distinct cognitive styles associated with psychopathology, such that there are individuals who are predominantly “suppressors” or “reappraisers.” especially in individuals with multiple sclerosis. Using cluster analysis, examination of whether individuals with multiple sclerosis evidence distinct patterns of emotion regulation frequency, capacity, suppression, and cognitive reappraisal. Data collection is ongoing and ethics approval obtained.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Psychological correlates of depression, anxiety and fatigue in multiple sclerosis: a systematic review</u></p> <p>Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic neurological disease which poses significant psychological adjustment challenges. The purpose of this systematic review is to identify factors that are related to depression, anxiety and fatigue in people with MS and may be modifiable through psychological intervention. It aims to gain an overview of the strength of evidence for relationships between psychological factors and</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>depression, anxiety and fatigue and identify limitations to existing studies and directions for future research.</p> <p><u>Project 4: Validation of the Resilience Scale for Adults in clinical and healthy Populations</u></p> <p>Resilience is a multi-dimensional construct associated with health and well-being. This study is aimed at investigating the construct validity of the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA) in a multiple sclerosis and a healthy community sample.</p> <p><u>Project 5: A mindfulness based group therapy intervention for haematological/ bone marrow transplant (BMT) outpatients: a pilot study</u></p> <p>Integrating psychological support to cancer treatment has increasingly been acknowledged. Mindfulness-based psychological interventions have become popular in oncology settings, and evidence regarding their effectiveness is increasing in the research literature. Yet the mechanisms involved in the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions are not yet well understood and mindfulness based group therapy targeting hematologic cancer patients who have received a bone-marrow transplant (BMT) have not yet been specifically targeted in trials of MBCT or MBSR. The current study aims to address this gap and be a promising avenue for incorporating more effective psychological treatments into routine care for this population.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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Prof. Amy Jordan	ajordan@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: Breath hold duration and arousal threshold in Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)</p> <p>Patients with Post-Traumatic Stress disorder have higher rates of the sleep condition obstructive sleep apnea than the general population. The reason for this is unknown, but may be related to how their brain controls breathing or how easily they awaken from sleep. This study will assess the brains control of breathing in a very simple manner – how long a participant can hold their breath for (1 student), and how easy it is to awaken individuals (1 student), in people with a range of PTSD symptomatology.</p>	2
Dr. Natalia Egorova	natalia.egorova@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: Neuroimaging markers of pain sensitivity in depression</p> <p>This study aims to better understand pain and depression comorbidity by comprehensively investigating the neural correlates of pain processing in depression. In a series of experiments, you will take advantage of the state-of-the-art pain methodology and 7 Tesla brain imaging to investigate pain sensitivity and aversive learning in healthy and depressed individuals.</p>	1
Dr. Camille Short	camille.short@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1 Exploring the moderators of two web-based computer-tailored physical activity interventions</p> <p>Participating in regular physical activity has important mental and physical health benefits that lead to improvements in quality of life and reduce risk of disease. This project will explore potential psycho-social and clinical moderators of intervention effects for two recently evaluated computer-</p>	1

		<p>tailored websites designed to promote physical activity in a low cost and accessible way. One website provided behaviour change support through tailored videos and the other through tailored written text. The study will provide insights into who is and who is not likely to be responsive to web-based lifestyle support provided via tailored videos or text.</p> <p>Project 2: Cancer patient Perceptions of remotely delivered lifestyle interventions during active treatment</p> <p>Access to exercise services that meet the unique needs of cancer survivors is limited, especially in regional and remote areas. There is evidence in parallel fields (e.g., cardiac rehab) that use of sensor and mobile technologies can be a cost-effective way of providing exercise support to patients remotely, thereby increasing reach and affordability. Our research team is interested in applying this approach within an exercise oncology setting in order to improve both physical and mental health among cancer patients. The aim of this survey study is to 1) provide information on the characteristics of patients likely to uptake this kind of service, and characteristics of those likely to fall through the gaps, and 2) identify unmet needs.</p>	1
Dr. Jacqueline Anderson	jfande@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: Investigating factors contributing to poor outcome in individuals with mild traumatic brain injury</p> <p>Although most individuals who have suffered a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) recover well within 6-12 weeks of the injury, a significant number have cognitive and</p>	2

		<p>emotional difficulties that can persist for 12 months and longer. This project will investigate factors that contribute to variations in outcome in a sample of mTBI patients, recruited from the statewide trauma centre at The Alfred and Royal Melbourne hospitals. Cognition, neuropathology, mood, personality and extent of trauma reaction are some of the factors that will be investigated as possible contributors to mTBI outcome.</p> <p><u>Project 2: Determining cognitive outcome after endovascular clot retrieval</u></p> <p>Individuals who suffer a clot within the major cerebral arteries may be eligible for medical intervention, which removes the clot and restores normal blood flow. Currently, it is unknown whether 50% flow restoration has an equivalent outcome on cognition as 100% flow restoration. This study will investigate the cognitive function of individuals who have undergone endovascular clot retrieval and compare performances of those who have full flow restoration with those who have partial flow restoration. This project is being conducted at the statewide endovascular clot retrieval centre at the Royal Melbourne Hospital.</p>	1
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Prof. Simon Dennis	simon.dennis@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: The Impact of Environment on Anxiety and Depression</p> <p>Despite being the most common and burdensome of all mental health conditions, anxiety and depression are still relatively undertreated. Moreover, the currently available treatments often lack long-term effectiveness. It is critical that we develop a better understanding of the dynamics of these conditions and how environmental factors influence their progression. As a component of the Observing Dynamics in Neuropsychiatric Symptom Profiles (ODIN-SP) program, this project will employ Experience Sampling Methods (ESM) to capture participant's environment, behaviour and mental states in real world settings (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 2014; Sreekumar, Dennis, Doxas, Zhuang & Belkin, 2014).</p>	2
Dr. Patrick Goodbourn	p.goodbourn@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: Altered perception and cognitive function in schizophrenia</p> <p>Many people with schizophrenia experience hallucinations or unusual sensory experiences. These perceptual changes may cause distress, confusion or anxiety. This project aims to determine the relationship between sensory and cognitive deficits and specific diagnoses or symptom profiles. Testing will involve medicated and unmedicated patients with schizophrenia, and other patient populations exhibiting non-schizophrenic forms of psychosis. All patient testing will be conducted at the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton; students will be required to coordinate their own transport. The project will be co-supervised by Dr Olivia Carter; please</p>	2

		<p>contact her directly (ocarter@unimelb.edu.au) if enquiring during January.</p> <p>Project 2: Erythrocyte membrane fatty acid concentrations and myelin integrity in young people at ultra-high risk of psychosis.</p> <p>To date, classification of the early stages of psychosis is based on clinical characteristics, which is of limited predictive value. An important yet unresolved issue relates to the pathology underlying structural brain abnormalities at the onset of psychosis. Combining brain-imaging techniques with biochemical and metabolic analyses may provide insight into the nature of this pathology and its underlying mechanisms. This study will analyse existing data with the aim of identifying a new biomarker of transition to psychosis. The project will be co-supervised by Dr Cali Bartholomeusz; please contact her directly (cali.bartholomeusz@orygen.org.au) if enquiring during January.</p>	1
Dr. Simon Cropper	scropper@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: The relationship between creativity, the feeling of insight and the perception of meaning in noisy images.</p> <p>An ongoing project in the lab has been on the role of insight in cognition and problem solving. We recently conducted a large scale public science study during National Science Week (The Aha Challenge: https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2019-08-09/aha-challenge-measures-insight-aha-moments/11396746).</p>	1

		This project aims to examine further the role of personality in creative thought during problem solving and how this relates to hallucination proneness in a normal population.	
Dr. Christian Nicholas	cln@unimelb.edu.au	<p>Project 1: The impact of sleep disruption and disturbance on levels of psychopathy, personality disorder, and offending behaviour.</p> <p>It is well established that sleep disruption/disorders, and altered EEG patterns are related to problem and criminal behaviours. Little research has been conducted on the mechanisms behind such effects, although increased levels of psychopathy and personality disorders (PD) have also been found to be prevalent in offending populations. Even less research has focused on levels of objective sleep disturbance or alterations in the sleep EEG in those exhibiting problem behaviours or psychopathy. This project aims to investigate the relationships between sleep disruption, problem behaviours, psychopathy and traits of PD.</p> <p>NOTE: The scope and requirements of the project will be discussed with the Supervisors Dr Julia Chan & Dr Christian Nicholas.</p>	1
A/Prof Lesley Stafford	Please e-mail at: Lesley.Stafford@thewomens.org.au	<p>Project 1: Quality of life, relief and regret in women under 36 years who have undergone hysterectomy for benign disease: A qualitative analysis</p> <p>This project investigates the long-term experience of QOL, relief and regret in young women (under 36) who had hysterectomy for benign conditions like fibroids or endometriosis. This qualitative component is a substudy of a</p>	2

		<p>quantitative study. It will involve conducting semi-structured interviews and coding and analysing these data. The project could suit one student or two students working together in that more women could be interviewed for a more robust sample size with richer data. Data coding and analysis could be shared, resulting in two separate reports. There have been no previous studies on this issue. Understanding more about this topic will help patients and clinicians considering this option in the future.</p> <p><u>Project 2:</u> Clinical audit of mental health risk factors in women requesting late gestation abortion</p> <p>Women may choose to end their pregnancy for a wide range of reasons including their age and stage of life, health condition, lack of financial support or simply not wishing to be a parent. In Victoria, abortion is legal up to the 24th week of pregnancy, and in certain circumstances, beyond this point. This project involves reviewing the medical files of women who have presented to the Royal Women's Hospital seeking a late gestation abortion. The purpose of the project is to establish a profile of these women in terms of their mental health and psychosocial risk factors. This information will help clinicians at the Women's understand more about how best to care for and meet the needs of these often very vulnerable women.</p> <p><u>Project 3:</u> Evaluation of the model of care of women undergoing prophylactic mastectomy and breast</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>
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<p>Dr. Nicholas van Dam</p>	<p>nicholas.vandam@unimelb.edu.au</p>	<p>Project 1: Assessing understanding of mindfulness among school teachers and clinicians</p> <p>Mindfulness has rapidly gained popularity in schools (esp. via digital apps) despite a glaring lack of research examining whether mindfulness leads to improved outcomes and what factors may facilitate or act as barriers to change. Teacher content knowledge and awareness of a program is strongly linked to how well a program is implemented. The relationship between teacher knowledge, awareness, and use of mindfulness has yet to be studied in education. This project aims to conduct a large-scale survey on primary school teachers' knowledge, awareness, and current use of mindfulness in primary schools. There is room to potentially extend this work to include clinicians (GPs, Psychologists, etc.).</p> <p>Project 2: Exploring the relationship of student behaviour and mindfulness practices</p> <p>Despite the potential benefits of mindfulness for school children, it is unknown whether parent and teacher's own mindfulness practices influence a child's behaviour. It is also unknown whether differences in mindfulness practices between parents and teachers is associated with poorer</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>

		<p>cognitive and behavioural outcomes. This study will draw upon parent and teacher self-reported mindfulness practices, parent and teacher-reported child behaviour, and child executive functioning. Embedded within the Minds@Play RCT, the sample size will be approximately 850 Grade Prep students. Co-supervisors include Dr. Ben Deery & Jon Quach in MGSE.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Improving the way we measure anxiety and depression</u></p> <p>The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS; especially the 21-item version) is one of the most commonly used self-report scales. Despite its popularity, it has limitations with respect to its construct validity. The proposed work would conduct psychometric analysis (e.g., Structural Equation Modelling, Factor Analysis, Item Response Theory analysis) of a pre-existing dataset of the DASS-42 in an extremely large sample (>40,000), as well as examine features of its test-retest reliability and temporal prediction in another pre-existing dataset (n=100) that is part of an ongoing, prospective longitudinal study (weekly assessments, aiming to recruit approximately n=200 individuals). Co-supervisor is Prof Stephen Bowden.</p> <p><u>Project 4: Using natural language processing to understand features of common mental disorders</u></p> <p>Advances in natural language processing have permitted a much more thorough and objective interrogation of</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>behaviour. These analyses permit new insights into the way that people describe their feelings, interactions, behaviours, and experiences of mental disorders. Using such tools, we proposed to explore the ways in which commonly used assessment tools share symptom features, in possible alignment with how people describe their experiences of common mental disorders. Such work will hopefully provide new insights into how to optimally assess and treatment mental illness. Numerous existing datasets are available for this work and computational support will be provided.</p> <p>Co-supervisor Prof Lisa Phillips.</p>	
Prof. Vicki Anderson	vaa@unimelb.edu.au	<p><u>Project 1: Pathways to autism in children with diagnosed genetic syndromes, such as neurofibromatosis type 1</u></p> <p>After decades of research, very little progress has been made into understanding the causes of symptoms seen in children with autism and social impairment. This is partially due to researchers studying the broad population of children diagnosed with autism, which lumps together the many different pathological mechanisms that potentially lead to autism. However, recent progress in identifying some genes that cause autism is helping researchers start to separate out some of the neurobiological mechanisms underlying autism and social impairment. Our group is offering opportunities for students to be involved in an exciting program of research aiming to better understand the pathways to autism in children with diagnosed genetic syndromes, such as neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1). For each child, we collect neuropsychological information about intelligence, social</p>	2

		<p>cognition, executive functioning, psychopathology (e.g., autism and ADHD ratings), and functioning. Older children also undergo state-of-the-art structural and functional neuroimaging enabling us to better understand the psychological and neurobiological factors that contribute to social impairment and autism in children with these genetic syndromes. The scope of the student project will be discussed with supervisors and will fit under the broader umbrella of the research program. Students would need a strong academic track record and an interest in neuropsychology and/or developmental neuroscience. Our team collaborates with other groups within the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute as well as other research institutes, both nationally and internationally.</p> <p><u>Project 2: Autism phenotypes of transgender children and adolescents</u></p> <p>Referrals of transgender children and adolescents for medical care have been increasing exponentially across the Western world. For reasons that remain unclear, there appears to be a much higher prevalence of autism in transgender children compared to the general population. For example, a recent audit of 400 patients at the Royal Children’s Hospital Gender Service in Melbourne indicated that 15.5% have a parent-reported diagnosis of autism, while a further 8.3% are suspected of having autism by their clinicians. In contrast, recent prevalence estimates of autism within the general community are only 1.4%. Anecdotally, it appears that the vast majority of transgender young people with autism do not have a recognized intellectual disability or</p>	1
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		<p>language impairment, both of which are usually common in those with autism. This suggests that the nature of autism is intrinsically different in those who are transgender compared to those who are not, but the nature of such differences has not yet been explored. To address this gap in knowledge, we are undertaking a study of transgender children and adolescents with autism, and are profiling their cognition, communication and social skills using a variety of standardised tools. By comparing these data to that of existing cohorts of young people with autism from the general community, we will be able to better understand the specific strengths and weaknesses of these transgender children. This information should directly inform clinical practice and enable more tailored assessment and treatment of young transgender individuals with autism, whose clinical management is typically more complex. The opportunity exists for a motivated and passionate student to join this project. The successful candidate will be involved in primary data collection and related statistical analyses not only to fulfil their thesis requirements but also to publish their findings in a relevant scholarly journal.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Social competence in dementia</u></p> <p>Social competence in dementia: Feasibility of a novel digital tool of social cognition Difficulties in social and emotional functioning are common in many patients with dementia, which can lead to early loss of livelihood, marital breakdown and societal burden. While diagnosis of social impairment has become an area of significant importance in the early</p>	1
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		<p>identification and treatment for dementia, progress is hindered by a lack of comprehensive, standardised, theoretically driven, ecologically valid assessment tools. The Paediatric Evaluation of Emotions, Relationships and Socialisation (PEERS™) is an innovative digital, comprehensive assessment of social cognitive skills underpinned by a social neuroscience theoretical framework¹ developed to fill this breach in paediatric social assessment², but with applications across the lifespan. This project aims to pilot PEERS with a dementia population to evaluate the clinical efficacy of the tool as a diagnostic aide for various forms of dementia.</p> <p>1. Beauchamp, M. H., & Anderson, V. (2010). SOCIAL: an integrative framework for the development of social skills. <i>Psychological bulletin</i>, 136(1), 39.</p> <p>2. Thompson, E. J., Beauchamp, M. H., Darling, S. J., Hearps, S. J., Brown, A., Charalambous, G., ... & Anderson, V. (2018). Protocol for a prospective, school-based standardisation study of a digital social skills assessment tool for children: The Paediatric Evaluation of Emotions, Relationships, and Socialisation (PEERS) study. <i>BMJ open</i>, 8(2), e016633.</p> <p><u>Project 4: Social competence in neurodevelopmental disorders: Evaluation of social cognition using a novel digital assessment tool</u></p> <p>Poor social and emotional skills are a primary characteristic of several neurodevelopmental disorder such as autism spectrum disorders (ASD), ADHD and conduct disorder.</p>	2
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		<p>Despite the well-known importance of social skills to quality of life, there is a lack of theoretically driven, developmentally appropriate tools to evaluate social and emotional skills in children, limiting our ability to identify those at-risk for poor social outcomes and direct them towards evidence-based early intervention.</p> <p>The Paediatric Evaluation of Emotions, Relationships and Socialisation (PEERS™) is an innovative digital, comprehensive assessment of social cognitive skills underpinned by a social neuroscience theoretical framework¹ developed to fill this breach in paediatric social assessment².</p> <p>The current study aims to evaluate social competence in children with neurodevelopmental disorders using a novel, i-Pad based assessment of social competence (PEERS).</p> <p>1. Beauchamp, M. H., & Anderson, V. (2010). SOCIAL: an integrative framework for the development of social skills. <i>Psychological bulletin</i>, 136(1), 39.</p> <p>2. Thompson, E. J., Beauchamp, M. H., Darling, S. J., Hearps, S. J., Brown, A., Charalambous, G., ... & Anderson, V. (2018). Protocol for a prospective, school-based standardisation study of a digital social skills assessment tool for children: The Paediatric Evaluation of Emotions, Relationships, and Socialisation (PEERS) study. <i>BMJ open</i>, 8(2), e016633.</p> <p><u>Project 5: The association between parent and family function to short- and long –term behaviour and mental health in children with traumatic brain injury</u></p>	2
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		<p>Research suggests that the outcomes of traumatic brain injury (TBI) in children are influenced by environmental factors and not just injury characteristics such as severity of TBI. Using a large pre-collected dataset this project involves examining parental stress, family function and family burden of injury in families with a child with TBI. The relationship of these variables to behavioural and mental health outcomes of children with TBI in the short and long-term may also be analysed.</p> <p><u>Project 6: Examining the relationship between personality factors and delayed recovery following paediatric concussion.</u></p> <p>Paediatric concussion is a major public health concern, with 33 million children sustaining a concussion annually. Most children recover from their concussion on their own, but 30-40% of children continue to experience symptoms beyond 4-weeks post-injury (delayed recovery, DC). It is unclear which children are at a greater risk of experiencing DC, but there is growing evidence that psychological factors play a major role. The purpose of this study is to assess traits of perfectionism and resiliency in a paediatric concussion sample and examine whether they predict DC.</p> <p><u>Project 7: Comparing the efficacy of standard neuropsychological measures to computerized neuropsychological tests in a paediatric concussion sample.</u></p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>Neuropsychological assessment (NA) is a cornerstone of concussion management. NA can be used to assess injury severity, track recovery, and help to determine when a child has recovered. Standard neuropsychological measures are the gold standard, but computerized neuropsychological tools (CNTs) are being increasingly used. CNTs have benefits relative to standard NA, but their clinical efficacy and psychometric properties are unclear. The purpose of this study is to directly compare the clinical utility of standard NA tools and CNTs in a longitudinal paediatric concussion cohort.</p> <p><u>Project 8: Quality of life following childhood stroke</u></p> <p>Stroke affects 1.3-13 per 100,000 children per year. Between 50% and 90% of these children experience life-long impairment across physical, cognitive, social and behavioural domains. Childhood stroke also leads to reduced quality of life. Sixty-eight children were recruited at the time of stroke diagnosis and followed for 5 years' post-stroke. This project aims to examine the trajectory of quality of life following childhood stroke and explore factors that contribute quality of life outcomes.</p> <p>Greenham, M., Gordon, A., Anderson, V., & Mackay, M. T. (2016). Outcome in childhood stroke. <i>Stroke</i>, 47(4), 1159-1164.</p> <p>Gordon, A, Ganesan V et al. (2002). Functional outcome following stroke in children. <i>J Child Neurology</i>, 17(6), 429-434.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>
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		<p><u>Project 9: Effectiveness of psychological interventions for children with chronic illness</u></p> <p>Chronic illness conditions affect 10-12% of children and adolescents worldwide. Young people with a chronic health conditions are at a greater risk of developing psychological problems, particularly anxiety and depression, which is sometimes directly related to their medical condition. Limited evidence is available regarding the effectiveness of psychological interventions for this population and therapies designed for children and adolescents without medical issues may not be appropriate. A recent Cochrane review identified that there are a dearth of therapies specifically designed for treating health-related anxiety in this group. This project would develop a treatment program for anxiety in a paediatric health outpatient setting.</p> <p><u>Project 10: Social cognition and its development through adolescence</u></p> <p>Much is known about the trajectory for development of social cognition in early childhood. In contrast, our understanding of mastery of high-level social cognitive skills is poorer, despite adolescence being a period during which intact social cognition is vital for psychological health/. The proposed project aims to assess high-level social cognitive skills (Theory of Mind, Moral Reasoning, empathy, social information processing) across adolescence, to establish pathways to maturation. Assessment will be via a newly developed interactive, ipad delivered app.</p>	2
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<p>Dr. Angie Jackman</p>	<p>arja@unimelb.edu.au</p>	<p>Project 1: Family-centred care in rehabilitation following paediatric ABI</p> <p>Many children with acquired brain injury (ABI) experience long-term physical, cognitive, academic, emotional-behavioural and occupational difficulties. Secondary psychosocial effects are often profound, including mental health problems, parent and sibling distress, social disadvantage, and general family dysfunction. It is clear that treating children who have sustained an ABI and their families requires a family-centred, interdisciplinary approach. This project is part of a larger program focused on the lived experiences of rehabilitation for children and their families following ABI. In particular, this project will focus on technological advances designed to enhance family-centred care. It is relevant to both clinical psychology and clinical neuropsychology students</p>	<p>1</p>

		<p>some combination of Dr Leonie Simpson, Royal Melbourne Hospital and Drs Brooke Davis and Catherine Meade at St Vincent's Hospital.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Performance validity in post-traumatic amnesia.</u></p> <p>Performance validity is thought to be a critical explanatory variable in cognitive assessment in many clinical settings. The assessment of performance validity using so-called performance validity tests (PVTs) is a major focus of neuropsychological practice. However the impact of acute conditions such as post-traumatic amnesia (PTA) on PVT scores is not well understood, despite the assessment of PTA being a widely-used predictor of recovery and long-term disability. This project aims to evaluate the impact of PTA on PVT scores in the post-acute phase in a clinical sample. Co-supervisors will include some combination of Dr Leonie Simpson, Royal Melbourne Hospital and Drs Brooke Davis and Catherine Meade at St Vincent's Hospital.</p> <p><u>Project 4: Meta-cognition training for older people with subjective cognitive decline.</u></p> <p>This project aims to evaluate an intervention for subjective cognitive decline in otherwise healthy people, using either a smart phone app (currently under development), or adapting an existing CBT-based game-like app to deliver</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>psychoeducation. Design will involve a brief two-week intensive intervention compared to wait-list or active control.</p> <p>Co-supervision would be provided by Dr Alex Bahar-Fuchs. https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/profile/28810-alex-bahar-fuchs</p> <p>Project 5: Evaluation of a pilot olfactory-focused cognitive training program on olfaction, mood and cognition.</p> <p>This project aims to evaluate structured training with graded difficulty of the following olfactory processes: discrimination, identification, episodic recall. The target sample would be older adults with mild cognitive impairment and confirmed olfactory decline (recruited from the community – using our register of interested people). The design involves potentially, single-case experimental design with multiple baselines. Outcomes include olfactory performance (standardized and functional), objective and subjective cognition, and mood.</p> <p>Co-supervision would be provided by Dr Alex Bahar-Fuchs. https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/profile/28810-alex-bahar-fuchs</p> <p>Other projects may be available by negotiation.</p> <p>Project 6: Establishing classification accuracy of cognitive screening for youth with mental illness.</p> <p>The aim of this study is to establish the criterion validity (i.e.,</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>
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		<p>sensitivity, specificity, positive (LR+) and negative (LR-) likelihood ratios) of alternative cognitive screening tools (e.g., MoCA and SCIP) in detecting cognitive impairment as defined by neuropsychological assessment in youth with and without mental illness. There is currently no established cognitive screening tool that has been adequately validated for use with adolescents and young adults. Results of this study will provide the first evidence for a valid screening tool that can be recommended for use in youth receiving mental health treatment. May involve travel to Headspace sites for data collection. Co supervised with Dr Kelly Allot at Orygen.</p>	
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<p>Prof. Rob Hester (Internal supervisor)</p>	<p>hesterr@unimelb.edu.au</p>	<p>Project 1: Contingency Management to Foster Cigarette Smoking Cessation in Young People with Borderline Personality Features: Predictors of Outcome</p> <p>Youth with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) features smoke cigarettes at high rates, with 63% of clients at Orygen’s BPD program smoking daily. Contingency Management (CM) is an intensive treatment that pits financial incentives against smoking. CM is efficacious for smoking cessation in hard-to-treat groups. The MYSS study is an open-label pilot study of the feasibility, safety, and initial efficacy of CM for smoking cessation in smokers (15-25 years old; N=40) with 3+ BPD features. Students will assess predictors of response to CM (i.e. impulsivity etc.) in this population. Student authorship is guaranteed on any publications resulting from their project (but not the project overall), with ranking based on relative contribution.</p> <p>Dr. Gill Bedi (external supervisor) gill.bedi@unimelb.edu.au</p> <p>Project 2: Methamphetamine use in young people Sub-anaesthetic Ketamine Open-label Trial (MASKOT): Predictors of Outcome.</p> <p>Stimulant use disorder, methamphetamine type (Methamphetamine Abuse; MA) is a chronic, relapsing condition that typically onsets in early adulthood. To date there are no efficacious medications for MA. The MASKOT study is a pilot open label trial (N=20), testing the</p>	<p>2</p> <p>1</p>
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		<p>safety, feasibility and initial efficacy of two sub-cutaneous doses of ketamine – a widely used dissociative anaesthetic – to reduce methamphetamine use and craving in young people (16-25 years old) with MA. Students will investigate predictors of variability in therapeutic response to ketamine. Student authorship is guaranteed on any publications resulting from their project (but not the project overall), with ranking being based on relative contribution.</p> <p>Dr. Gill Bedi (external supervisor) gill.bedi@unimelb.edu.au</p> <p><u>Project 3: Predictors of cannabis use problems and poor functional outcomes in adult cannabis users</u></p> <p>While most people who smoke cannabis do not develop problems, a substantive minority of regular users do experience cannabis-related issues resulting in them seeking treatment. Factors determining which individuals experience negative outcomes related to cannabis are poorly understood. This project will use data from a study being conducted in the USA to assess predictors of</p> <p>cannabis-related problems and functional (i.e. social and role) outcomes in regular cannabis users. Student authorship is guaranteed on any publications resulting from their project (but not the project overall), with ranking being based on relative contribution. Students will gain experience collecting data as part of other projects being conducted by Dr. Bedi's group.</p> <p>Dr. Gill Bedi (external supervisor) gill.bedi@unimelb.edu.au</p>	1
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<p>Prof. Kim Felmingham</p>	<p>k.felmingham@unimelb.edu.au</p>	<p><u>Project 1: The Impact of Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms on Conditioned Avoidance</u></p> <p>Avoidance symptoms are a key clinical characteristic of PTSD and most anxiety disorders, but surprisingly, avoidance has received relatively little empirical investigation. In the context of trauma, avoidance is theorized to lead to impaired extinction learning in individuals who have recently experienced trauma and go on to develop PTSD. This experimental study examines the extent and impact of avoidance on subsequent fear extinction in an adapted fear conditioning and extinction task (in which electric shocks will be delivered). In this project, participants with PTSD and healthy controls will be recruited and will complete a fear conditioning and extinction task (which has an additional avoidance phase, in which participants can press a button to avoid a shock). The extent of avoidance and the impact of avoidance on later fear extinction will be compared in patients with PTSD and Controls. This project has ethics approval, and over 40 healthy control participants have been collected to date.</p> <p><u>Project 2: The Impact of Intra-theta Burst Brain Stimulation on Fear Extinction in PTSD and Controls</u></p> <p>Key neurobiological models of PTSD reveal a pattern of hypofrontality (including impaired activation in frontal networks involved in fear extinction learning), which is thought to lead to impaired inhibition on threat-related limbic pathways. Recently, there has been extensive interest</p>	
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		<p>in brain stimulation technologies (repetitive TMS, intratheta burst) as an adjunctive treatment for PTSD, aiming to correct this hypofrontality pattern. Increasing interest lies in combining brain stimulation over frontal regions with exposure-based therapy. This project examines the mechanisms and science underlying this proposed intervention, by exploring whether a course of intratheta burst brain stimulation prior to fear extinction learning will facilitate fear extinction in PTSD patients and controls. In this project, participants with PTSD and healthy controls will be recruited for an experimental study in which they will receive either intratheta burst stimulation (or sham control), prior to completing a fear conditioning and extinction task (involving the delivery of mild electric shocks). This project has not yet gained ethics approval – collaborating with Phoenix Australia.</p> <p><u>Project 3: Developing a More Objective Diagnostic Process for PTSD?</u></p> <p><i>Supervisors: Dr Rahul Kanna (Psychiatrist), Prof Meaghan O'Donnell (Phoenix), Prof Kim Felmingham</i> <i>Location: Repat Hospital (PTSD Unit)</i></p> <p>Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is currently diagnosed entirely on self-report which has some limitations. Prior research has demonstrated several differences between sufferers and healthy traumatized and non-traumatized groups that transcend self-reported symptoms. Building on</p>	
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		<p>these findings, we are creating a digital diagnostic paradigm that uses psychophysiological, attention, biological, voice, EMA and gaze data to inform a machine learning classifier. We aim to demonstrate that a classifier built on such data can accurately distinguish veterans and police suffering from PTSD from controls. The diagnostic labels for the classifier will be based on the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale. This project will assess the EMA data and will be part of this larger study examining the psychophysiological/infrared photography technology.</p> <p><u>Project 4: Qualitative experiences of PTSD treatments.</u> Supervisors: Prof Meaghan O’Donnell, Prof Kim Felmingham Location: Phoenix Australia (Traumatic Stress Research Clinic)</p> <p>This study aims to conduct a qualitative study into patient’s experience of PTSD therapy. Participants involved in one of four PTSD interventions will be interviewed following completion of treatment to identify which aspects of therapy worked for patients and what aspects were not useful. This study will provide useful information about what participants think are the key ingredients of treatment, and what aspects may be potential barriers to engagement with treatment. This study will be based at the Phoenix Australia Traumatic Stress Clinic and will run along- side two established randomised controlled studies.</p>	
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		<p>Project 5: Qualitative Study of an intensive treatment for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Supervisor: Dr Chris Mogan, Prof Kim Felmingham</p> <p>Location: Melbourne Anxiety Clinic This study is nested within an open pilot trial of the efficacy of an intensive (10 day) exposure and response prevention treatment for OCD. This project will be a qualitative study in which the student will deliver SCID assessments as part of the trial and conduct interviews with clients about their experiences of the intensive therapy.</p>	
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<p>Dr. Genevieve Rayner</p>	<p>raynerg@unimelb.edu.au</p>	<p>Title: Improving the clinical utility of measures of confrontation naming</p> <p>Supervisors: Dr Chris Tailby, Dr Charles Malpas, Dr Genevieve Rayner</p> <p>Confrontation naming ability is affected in a number of neuropsychological conditions. Popular measures of confrontation naming ability suffer from a number of shortcomings, including use of dated and culturally biased stimuli (Boston Naming Test) or normative data that is limited in terms of <i>n</i> and sample demographics such as age (SydBat).</p> <p>The current project aims to improve the clinical utility of measures of confrontation naming, specifically with reference to their use in the cohort of adult patients considered for surgery for focal epilepsy (i.e. age ~18-45). To this end, the project involves collection of normative data from a representative sample of the Australian population in this age bracket, using established measures of confrontation naming: the Boston Naming Test (Kaplan, Goodglass, & Weintraub, 1983), the SydBat (Savage et al., 2013), the Graded Naming Test (McKenna & Warrington, 1980) and an auditory naming task (Hamberger & Seidel, 2003). There is also scope in the project to consider developing a new naming test set [for instance based on the picture set of Snodgrass and Vanderwart (Snodgrass & Vanderwart, 1980)].</p>	
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		<p>Dyslexia is a developmental disability defined by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and spelling despite adequate instruction and intelligence and intact sensory abilities (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003). Over the past decade or so we have noted the presence of comorbid reading disorders in an unusually high proportion of patients examined in the Comprehensive Epilepsy Program (CEP) at Austin Health (Tailby, Weintrob, Saling, Fitzgerald, & Jackson, 2014). Sporadic reports in the literature also suggest an association between epilepsy and reading disorder, with elevated rates of dyslexia reported in studies of children (Beghi, Cornaggia, Frigeni, & Beghi, 2006; Sillanpää, 1992) and adults (Schachter, Galaburda, & Ransil, 1993) with epilepsy.</p> <p>To date, however, the “cognitive and epilepsy factors associated with these reading difficulties have barely been examined” (Lah, Castles, & Smith, 2017). A better understanding of these factors is likely to have significant clinical and treatment implications. For instance, our previous work showed that the functional organisation of language in the brain is altered in epilepsy patients with comorbid dyslexia (Tailby et al., 2014). Here, we seek to advance our earlier work by examining further the epileptological, brain imaging and neuropsychological characteristics of individuals with epilepsy and comorbid dyslexia. This will allow us to address a number of questions, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Are patients with particular epilepsy syndromes at greater risk of dyslexia than others?	
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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Does dyslexia provide useful lateralising and/or localising information in focal epilepsy? 3. Does dyslexia compound the cognitive and psychosocial burden of refractory epilepsy? 4. Is dyslexia associated with other signs of neurocognitive dysfunction (e.g., diminished naming abilities, verbal fluency, and/or verbal memory) and how might interpretation of a patient's psychometric profile need to be modified in light of these associations? 5. Is dyslexia associated with certain structural brain abnormalities in epilepsy? 6. Are patients with younger age of onset of epilepsy more vulnerable to dyslexia? 7. Is dyslexia important prognostically in terms of surgical outcomes (e.g. seizure freedom)? <p>A better understanding of these matters should substantially improve clinical management.</p> <p>References</p> <p>Beghi, M., Cornaggia, C. M., Frigeni, B., & Beghi, E. (2006). Learning disorders in epilepsy. <i>Epilepsia</i>, <i>47</i>, 14–18.</p> <p>Lah, S., Castles, A., & Smith, M. L. (2017). Reading in children with temporal lobe epilepsy: A systematic review. <i>Epilepsy & Behavior</i>, <i>68</i>, 84–94.</p> <p>Lyon, G. R., Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, B. A. (2003). A definition of dyslexia. <i>Annals of Dyslexia</i>, <i>53</i>, 1–14. (ISI:000187117300001).</p>	
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