



FMHS Postdoctoral Society

End-of-Year Report

2019

COMMITTEE

Committee as of November 2019:

Co-Presidents: Brya Matthews (*SRF, MMP*) & Catherine Tsai (*RF, MMP*)

Secretaries: Bobbi Laing (*RF, Nursing*) & Jacelyn Loh (*SRF, MMP*)

Treasurer: Erika Freemantle (*RF, Anatomy*)

Committee: Tomoko Aoyama (*Visiting Scholar, Liggins*), Cherie Blenkiron (*SRF, MMP/O&G*), Ben Curran (*RF, MMP*), Rhea Desai (*RF, MMP*), Ben Dickson (*RF, ACSRC*), Jennifer Hollywood (*RF, MMP*), Rashika Karunasinghe (*RF Physiology*), Andrea Kwakowsky (*RF, Anatomy*), Sandy Lau (*RF, O&G*), Kate Lee (*RF, MMP*), Renita Martis (*RF, Physiology*), Lola Mugisho (*RF, Ophthalmology*), Anita Muthukaruppan (*RF, O&G*), Rosica Petrova (*RF, Physiology*), Raewyn Poulsen (*RF, Medicine/Pharmacology*), Anassuya Ramachandran (*RF, MMP*), Haruna Suzuki-Kerr (*RF, Physiology*), William Schierding (*RF, Liggins*), Samantha Simkin (*RF, Ophthalmology*), John Sluyter (*RF, Epidemiology and Biostatistics*), Jie Zhang (*RF, Ophthalmology*).

Outgoing 2018/19: Shikha Pundir (departed UoA for industry job, August 2019); Mitchell Nye-Wood (departed for postdoc in Perth, WA in early 2019); Jordan McIntyre (stepped down due to more clinical commitments); Carol Greene (departed the university for a medical writing job)

Subcommittees

Professional Development (led by Catherine Tsai)

Grants (Jie Zhang and Raewyn Poulsen)

Events/networking (led by Sandy Lau and Haruna Suzuki-Kerr)

Communications/website (led by Ben Dickson and Jie Zhang)

SUMMIT organising committee (led by Brya Matthews)

Lobbying (led by Brya Matthews and Catherine Tsai)

Committee meets once a month to strategically plan all events and subcommittees or event committees meet as required to run individual events and brainstorm. Charter established for the organization in 2015.

AGM held in July (40 attendees) and new Committee Leadership elected.

ACTIVITIES in 2019

Scientific Events:

1. "SUMMIT Postdoc Symposium" showcasing FMHS Postdoc research took place 11 July 2019.

The Summit organising committee consisted of: Brya Matthews, Anita Muthukaruppan, William Schierding, Erika Freemantle, Jacelyn Loh, Samantha Simkin, Catherine Tsai, Jie Zhang.

We used a similar model to the meeting the previous year and were able to capitalise on much of the work put in by the previous team. The program included two invited guest speakers: Prof Juliet Gerrard, Prime Minister's Science Advisor opened the symposium, and Prof Cather Simpson of the Photon Factory also presented and was a judge for the elevator pitches. Both presented compelling stories of their career trajectories and experiences as female scientists who relocated to New Zealand. The programme also included an invited speaker from the faculty, Dr Helen Petousis-Harris who was recently awarded the Dean's Fellowship, 9 short presentations, and 7 elevator pitch presentations. We were fortunate to receive sponsorship of a \$3000 travel award for the winning talk from AMRF (awarded to Caroline Walker, Population Health), a \$1000 consumables grant from In Vitro Technologies for the second place talk (awarded to Jacelyn Loh, Molecular Medicine), and a \$1500 consumables grant from Mediray for the winning elevator pitch (awarded to Alex Muntz, Ophthalmology). The event was well-attended, with at least 100 attendees during the event, and feedback from attendees was extremely positive. The event concluded with a networking session involving drinks and nibbles which was also well-attended.

2. International invited speaker Associate Professor Katie Hinde

A/P Hinde gave two talks in October 2019 following a Meet-and-Greet morning tea with FMHS postdocs, one on breastmilk research "Mother's milk: how an adaptation older than dinosaurs underlies the success of the human species", and one about developing her successful research career, "Land of milk and honey: Navigating academia on one's own terms". We also hosted lunch with a small group of postdocs to encourage closer interaction with the visitor in a more formal sit-down setting. This was successful with good feedback from attendees who don't always have the confidence to approach a visitor with questions in a more casual setting. After the presentations, A/P Hinde also offered four individual meeting sessions with FMHS researchers.

3. Imaging workshop

We hosted 3 afternoon events in conjunction with the BIRU and NOBIAS network this year. The first, in April, was a seminar on super resolution microscopy including stimulated emission depletion (STED) microscopy. STED microscopy is the technology selected by the super-resolution microscopy working group as best for a core facility and it is now under consideration for purchase in 2020. The other two were on optimizing the image analysis workflow using open source software (Fiji/Image J) which featured a mix of lecture segments and practical hands-on time for image analysis guidance, colocalization analysis, and machine learning. The super resolution seminar had around 30 attendees who provided valuable feedback to the working group. The image analysis workshop proved very popular so we expanded the initial event to a second event to accommodate everyone with approximately 35 attendees per session. Survey results and feedback about the events were very positive with 95.7% saying they would attend another workshop. We are in discussions based on the feedback for next year how to tailor future events and the BIRU are very keen to collaborate again.

Professional Development Events:

1. "Academic Writing Workshop" full day joint event with the Maurice Wilkins Centre Early Career Researcher Group. Grant writing and publication writing skills are key to academic progression. As these skills have much overlap we offered a comprehensive event to cover both. The event included a morning session featuring presentations on strategies to "super-charge your publications" and "craft your grant applications". There was also a panel discussion with well-published mid-career researchers to share tips and tricks for increasing research output. The afternoon consisted a hands-on workshop led by the awarded author Professor Helen Sword on "Stylish academic writing", and an interactive session led by the seasoned academic writer Veronika Sander. This joint event attracted more than 70 attendees mostly from our Faculty (early career researchers including research fellows and PhD students).
2. "Navigating a successful postdoc" half day event providing knowhow for less-discussed aspects of an academic research career development. Specifically, we covered "project management and collaboration", "supervision", and research proposal essentials such as "biostatistics" and "responsiveness to Maori". The interactive programme provided an opportunity for researchers to share and discuss challenges and tips in navigating a successful career. The event was concluded by the inaugural FMHS postdoc forum, where the results of FMHS research fellow employment survey were reported, and the submission of MBIE Research, Science and Innovation Strategy Draft consultation was presented, with a panel consisting of postdocs on Faculty/ University committees and Associate Dean of Research Andrew Shelling. This session proved popular, and the registration exceeded the capacity of the venue with around 55 attendees.
3. "IP commercialisation" workshop series consisted of three sessions (in July/ August 2019) provided by UniServices and tailored for FMHS. The topics covered resources and procedure in commercialising research in University of Auckland, ownership of IP and the "do's and don'ts" of commercialising your research, the opportunities and challenges facing scientists and IP professionals as they seek to develop and protect new technologies. The workshop series was specifically tailored for FMHS and was opened to all staff and students.
4. Summary and supplementary documents of these events have been compiled and uploaded on the PDS website.

Grant Awards:

1. Two funding rounds were held for travel grants (in February and July). Round one had 2 domestic and 7 international applications, and four international (\$1,000) awards were made. Round two had 7 domestic and 6 international applications. One domestic (\$500) and four international (\$1,000) were awarded. In total \$8,500 was awarded for travel grants to support 9 people.
2. Publication grants were awarded on a rolling basis. In 2019, 4 grants were awarded at up to \$1,000 each (total \$4000).

Communication Activities:

1. The FMHS PDS [website](#) was revamped and restructured in 2018, and has increasing importance as an active platform for promoting our events and providing useful resources aimed at postdoctoral researchers. It now appears as the first item in Google searches.
2. Monthly newsletter – distributed to the FMHS Research list.
3. Facebook group for updates on events relevant to FMHS postdocs.
4. Twitter account to raise profile of the society within the social networking arena. We will call for a new avatar for the social media account next year as part of the 5 Year Anniversary milestone.

Networking Events:

1. Coffee Mornings at Superfino Cafe have become a popular monthly event for FMHS postdocs to mix and mingle. This year we tried alternating the session between Mondays and Wednesdays and proved this helps making the event accessible for more postdocs with varying work schedules. These sessions have consistently attracted about 25-30 people, with people from all over the faculty represented, and different people attending each month.
2. FMHS Postdoctoral Society 4th birthday celebration was held in April in conjunction with a coffee function.
3. Annual FMHS PDS vs PGSA Quiz night held at Superfino Café in September (over 100 attendees, 4 postdoc teams). Postdoc teams took out 1st, 2nd and 3rd place and retained the trophy.
4. Halloween Social for postdocs was held at Outhwaite Park in October. This lunch event attracted at least 30 postdocs, who enjoyed paella, games, treats and sunshine in the park.

- A Christmas celebration for all Faculty members was held on 9 December in collaboration with FMHS PGSA. We once again had excellent turnout of postdocs, students and other academic and professional staff for ice cream, donuts, pizza and socialising in the sun.

Other events/activities:

- Sponsorship and judging for HealthX Elevator Pitch prize in September.
- Representation on Faculty Research Committee.
- Representation at Faculty Meetings.
- Independent submission to MBIE Research, Science and Innovation Strategy Draft consultation focusing on questions most relevant to early career researchers. A summary of the submission was presented during the FMHS Postdoc Forum in October to audience including Associate Dean of Research, Professor Andrew Shelling.
- Conducted a survey in July to capture and analyse the employment situations of RFs/SRFs in FMHS. The survey results were analysed, discussed and presented, and the Faculty of Science PDS indicated interest in conducting similar survey at their Faculty and will share results with us next year.

BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE

Budget

- Funding of \$30,000 received from the Dean's Strategic Fund for 01 Jan 2019 to end Dec 2019, actual and projected spending is documented in the table below.
- Expenses have been carefully planned by self-catering smaller events, and completing some events with little or no cost to the society, and using the more costly University approved caterers only for the larger events. Changes to the price structure for holding events with alcohol service at Superfino made it much easier and more attractive to fund social events such as the quiz on site.

Event Type	Allocated	Actual
Networking Events		
Coffee club (x10 @ \$120)	\$1,200	\$1,177
Birthday party	\$300	\$108
Postdoc vs Student Quiz	\$1,200	\$1,228
Postdoctoberfest/Halloween event	\$1,200	\$1,096
Christmas Party	\$1,200	\$1,368
Total allocated	\$5,100	\$4,977
Scientific Events		
Half day research symposium	\$5,000	\$4,245
International speaker		
Travel	\$3,500	\$2,546
Catering	\$1,000	\$519
Method workshops	\$500	\$474
Total allocated	\$10,000	\$7,784
Professional Development		
Careers (academia and otherwise) event	\$500	
CV & promotions workshop	\$800	\$325
How to be a SMART postdoc	\$400	\$445
	\$1,700	\$770
Grants		
Publication grants	\$4,000	\$3,950
Travel Grants	\$8,500	\$8,668
	\$12,500	\$12,618
Admin/ Other		
Printing, gifts, prizes, miscellaneous	\$700	\$918
	\$700	\$918
TOTAL	\$30,000	\$27,067

We have stayed well within budget for all items, and underspent in some areas. Primarily this has been due to savings on catering costs. Unfortunately due to challenges with accounting delays we were unable to reallocate funds in time to award

extra travel grants. Coffee events remain popular, however we limited these to 9 events in order to stay within budget and due to proximity of the July event to our Summit symposium.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR 2020

Scientific events: We will repeat our flagship event, SUMMIT, in a similar format to previous years. We will extend the number of speaking slots available if we receive enough abstracts, and hope to target areas of the faculty who were under-represented. We hope to receive continued support from AMRF and commercial sponsors, and will approach additional organisations such as Maurice and Phyllis Paykel Trust to establish additional sponsored awards. We plan to include an award for best abstract if sufficient sponsorship is attained. Proposed invited speakers for the 2020 symposium include Professor Lesley McCowan (Gluckman Medal winner for 2018), Distinguished Professor Jane Harding (Royal Society Rutherford Medal winner for 2019) and the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Auckland Professor Dawn Freshwater. We also plan to organise at least two lunchtime method-focused sessions/Meet the Expert sessions.

Professional development: The topics of professional development event alter every year. We will draft the programme of next year's event based on feedback and suggestions collected this year. Where possible, we will continue to collaborate with other groups inside or outside the university (such as events held with the MWC and UniServices this year). We will seek similar opportunity to hold joint events in 2020 for enrichment and wider engagement. In addition, we plan to organise an ethics information session (human & animal, may also include a session on tissue banking). We will also engage the Research Office in the organisation of some of these events.

Grants: Publication grants will be awarded on a rolling basis with advertising throughout the year. We will also run two rounds of travel grants (February and July). We have refined our selection criteria and application forms to streamline applications as much as possible.

Communication activities: Our website is now highly functional and regularly updated. In 2020 we aim to engage wider communities within the University, including the Schools/Departments that have just relocated from Tamaki Campus, the Faculty of Science Postdoc Society, and the nearby ABI and Engineering Departments. In addition, we will continue our current newsletter, and social media presence to advertise upcoming events and other information relevant to our members. We will also continue using online surveys to gather feedback and comments about our events.

Lobbying: In order to best serve our members we hope to do a better job of engaging with faculty and university committees to ensure that early career researchers get a voice in university decisions and planning. This year we have completed submissions on both university and government policies relevant to us, and will continue to seek out opportunities to contribute in this way. We will also explore means of providing feedback to funding bodies on policies and funding mechanisms relevant to emerging researchers.

Networking events: We expect to retain our current schedule of social/networking events which continue to prove popular. Postdoc Coffee Mornings will continue to alter between Mondays and Wednesdays to allow more postdocs to attend. Our 5th anniversary celebrations will include a series of activities including a competition for new social media avatar and a birthday party. We also plan to run a welcome event for the new residents of 507 with a speed networking type format to encourage interaction. We will also retain our popular social events such as Postdoctoberfest/Halloween in October, Postdoc vs Student Quiz night during August/September and a Christmas event in December.

New initiatives:

Invited speaker grant: Choosing and organising an international speaker has proved challenging over the past few years, so we have decided to redesign this initiative into a grant-in-aid to assist with funding a visitor. This person would not necessarily have to come from overseas (as we have had excellent local speakers whose familiarity with the New Zealand research environment has a certain appeal), and could be co-funded through other mechanisms if travelling long distance, but would be expected to engage with postdocs from the faculty in the form of a career focused presentation and morning tea or lunch. We would certainly like to continue the sit-down lunch model with a group of 10-15 early career researchers. Whoever was awarded the funding would be responsible for organising the speaker's schedule in collaboration with the society, and can include it in their CV. We will call for proposals early next year.

Collaboration competition: This is dependent on confirmation of additional funding from the faculty. This would likely be held in two stages, an initial networking event with 'speed networking' type format (possibly overlapping with the 507 welcome function) to give an opportunity to meet new potential collaborators. We will then hold an event where applicants submit a short proposal and present an elevator pitch of their idea. The collaboration should be new, involve 2 emerging researchers (RF/SRF or equivalent) in different fields (may still be from the same department). We will request a budget of \$10,000 for this initiative and award 1 or 2 projects.

Regular small networking events: Some newer members of the committee have suggested hosting regular get-togethers to allow informal networking. We will pilot fortnightly events starting early next year. These may be as simple as lunch in the domain, bioinformatics discussions, walking groups etc. We envision that these will involve minimal financial contribution from the society (maybe contribution of snacks or leftover drinks from larger functions in some instances) but will allow more opportunities for people to meet colleagues in different settings.