

South West

THRIVE

Leading care, healthier communities



Care

Patient focus

Top teams

Collaboration

Research

Leading experts

More news inside!

South Western
Sydney Local
Health District

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**South Western Sydney Local Health District
Strategic Communications and Media Unit**

Picture on cover: Allied Health multidisciplinary team members Savio Dankha, Julia Cheng, Millicent Cheetham, and Angela Cikarovska from the Brain Injury Unit, Liverpool.

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CE message

From before birth all the way to old age, allied health professionals help us to achieve the best possible quality of life.

You will see allied health professionals throughout the hospitals of South Western Sydney Local Health District, often sporting their teal uniforms and performing an integral role in the safe high-quality care we provide.

They work in the community supporting the people of our District in a range of ways.

Allied Health is inherently collaborative – and the most important collaboration is with the patient.

A dietitian might work with an expectant mother with gestational diabetes to safeguard her health and that of her baby, a physiotherapist may help someone recover from an injury or an occupational therapist might support an older person to enable them to stay at home for longer.

This deep multidisciplinary collaboration extends to impressive teamwork with their nursing, medical and mental health colleagues and is demonstrated across all services from intensive care to early childhood.

I hope this edition of Thrive gives you an insight into the fantastic work these dedicated professionals provide to people of all walks of life and across all ages.

Amanda Larkin
Chief Executive
South Western Sydney Local Health District



Best start



Mary Chatfield (left) and Joanne O'Brien help Pypah Scholes and Jayden Carr prepare for school.

Setting up the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at Oorunga Wandarrah Childcare Centre for a bright future is the key focus of a partnership between educators and allied health professionals at Primary and Community Health.

Taking shape over 17 years, the partnership began with regular visits from a speech pathologist and has expanded to include psychology and occupational therapy. There is now a similar partnership with Waranwarin Early Learning Centre.

Senior Psychologist Joanne O'Brien said the program had evolved over time in consultation

with educators at the centre, responding to children's needs.

"It's really making sure that the kids are going to get the best support," she said.

"The care is readily accessible and tailored to make sure no one misses out."

The team visits the childcare centres one day a week and works closely with the service, observing the children's behaviour and assisting with issues regarding speech and fine motor skills.

"It's important to really listen to what the services are saying and being responsive to what is being asked," Joanne said.

Centre Manager Mary Chatfield has seen the positive effect of the partnership over the years – on children, their families and even staff.

"We are all a team – just working together," she said. "Parents are starting to see the different stages of development and the kids carry on those benefits for life."

Care across the lifespan

From the months of gestation to the final days at the end of life, allied health professionals provide care across the lifespan.

Our team of clinicians support patients and consumers in our hospitals and community. Their clinical expertise, patient-centred focus and compassion enhances the wellbeing and function of thousands of people every day.



Perinatal Care

Allied health clinicians work in partnership with women and families before the birth of a baby. Social workers provide support through perinatal family conferencing and dietitians help women manage gestational diabetes.



New Life

Multidisciplinary teams of allied health professionals provide care for babies born prematurely as well as babies needing complex medical care at Liverpool Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Campbelltown Hospital's Special Care Nursery. Campbelltown Hospital Paediatric Allied Health Unit's team of speech pathologists, occupational therapists, dietitians and social workers support children from birth.



Toddler, preschool and school years

Helping children to reach their potential is the aim of allied health professionals working with these age groups. Speech pathologists help toddlers who are late to talk. Occupational therapists work with children to develop their fine motor skills to be ready for school. Psychologists support families with children who have emotional problems, anxiety and depression and dietitians help children achieve a healthy weight.



Youth

Social workers and counsellors support young people in many ways and according to their individual needs. They may work with youth who are homeless, living in out-of-home care, who are refugees or newly arrived to Australia or who have a chronic illness or disability.



Adult years

Occupational therapists, counsellors, social workers and psychologists work as part of multidisciplinary teams providing mental health, drug health, sexual assault and domestic violence services. Their work includes supporting recovery for mental health consumers, assisting youth with crisis care and providing ongoing counselling for children, young people and adults who have been sexually assaulted.



Aged care

Allied health plays an integral role in caring for people as they age. Clinicians are part of the Community Aged Care Team and provide a range of services to patients receiving palliative care.



Specialised services

Allied health teams are involved in many different services for adults, including inpatient, outpatient and community care. Patients may need rehabilitation from a car accident or help to retrain and adapt skills needed in everyday activities following a brain tumour, stroke, cancer or chronic disease.



Patient Sarang Choi receives care and support from dietitian Robyn Barnes.

Eating well

During her 15 years as a dietitian at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, Robyn Barnes has supported more than 7500 women with gestational diabetes.

"I find nutrition fascinating and I love helping people," the dedicated dietitian said.

"It is very rewarding to help women improve their health and the health of their babies."

Gestational diabetes is a form of diabetes which occurs during pregnancy.

Treatment includes healthy eating plans, regular physical activity and managing blood glucose levels to reduce the risks associated with the condition. These include delivery complications from high birthweight babies.

Robyn provides medical nutrition therapy for women with gestational diabetes and works closely with diabetes educators and endocrinologists as part of a multidisciplinary care team.

"Each woman receives individualised dietary advice to follow a carbohydrate-controlled, higher fibre and lower fat diet," Robyn said.

"Dietary plans are specially designed to cater for all cultures and include recommended timing of carbohydrate over three meals and three snacks.

“It is important women and their babies receive the right nutrition for themselves and their growing baby at the right time.”

Robyn, who will celebrate 25 years as a dietitian next year, recently completed her PhD investigating weight gain in pregnancy, which involved analysis of data collected over several decades.

"I love my job and I am privileged to make a difference in the health of women and their babies during this important window of opportunity in their pregnancy."



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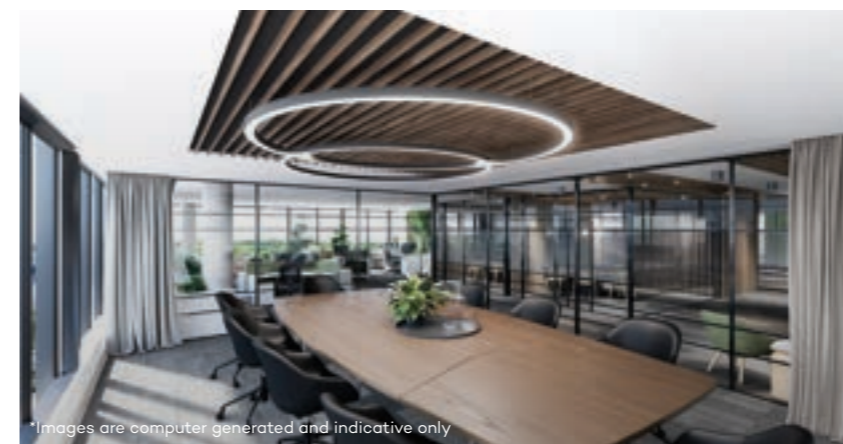
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Aim high

In February 2020, Olympic hopeful Kai Sakakibara crashed during a BMX race in Bathurst.

The head injury he sustained left him in a coma. He began his rehabilitation at the Liverpool Hospital Brain Injury Unit in April that year.

He achieved his goal to be discharged in time to travel to Tokyo to watch his sister Saya compete in the Olympics in 2021, and to take part in the torch relay for the Paralympics in Fuchu.

More recently, he appeared in commercials for the Department of Education.



Kai Sakakibara (centre) with some of the Brain Injury Unit allied health team.

Second chance at life

When Kai Sakakibara first stood on his own, months after his BMX crash, it was a defining moment in his life.

It was the first time he knew he would be able to keep improving after the accident that had landed the 25-year-old initially in intensive care, then in recovery at Liverpool Hospital's Brain Injury Unit.

"That's when I believed I could do it," he said. "I started to think, 'What else can I do?' and that's when I started to improve."

Inpatient Program Coordinator Carson Wong said the complexities of recovery from a serious brain injury required a team of clinicians working with the patient and their family.

"Everyone is focused on the patient with all their energy put into helping them achieve their goals," he said.

"It can be difficult for a patient and their family, they are often experiencing grief while adjusting to rehabilitation."

A clinical psychologist assists with adjustment, depression and motivation while a neuropsychologist will explore a person's cognitive function.

Physiotherapists will assess movement and what may be impeding that movement, then work on task-specific training.

"The aim is to be independent with everyday tasks, so the first step might be rolling in bed," Mr Wong said.

A speech pathologist will assess a person's ability to swallow safely and communicate. They will liaise with a dietitian to make sure the person gets the nutrition they need.

"For Kai, we slowly worked towards him being able to give a speech, but it might be something like being able to go and get a coffee," Mr Wong said.

Occupational therapists work on daily function, encompassing a broad range of tasks which may include setting a patient up with a wheelchair or other equipment, and helping the patient to feed and dress themselves.

"Later on it might be about going out - how to cross the road, not bump into people, go to the shops," Mr Wong said.

As patients improve, they broaden the tasks and the team begins to prepare them for the outside world. Social workers liaise with the patient and their family, providing emotional support and helping to link in with the NDIS and other services.

Diversional therapists help patients adjust to new interests and goals based on their capabilities as they leave the unit.

Kai has taken up golf and is thinking about trying canoeing. Recently he got back on the bike for laps in the velodrome.

"If it wasn't for the team at the Liverpool Brain Injury Unit, there is no way I'd be here walking up and down the corridor. I might be bedridden and they stopped that from happening. They really deserve big pats on the back."

What's next for Kai? "I'm not sure," he said. "I need to focus on the things I can do, keep working on getting better and keep setting new goals."



Kai Sakakibara and his father Martin. Kai's family have been heavily involved in his rehabilitation.

Putting families first

It might look like playtime with lots of toys and laughter but, in fact, it is a team from Campbelltown Hospital's Paediatric Allied Health Unit providing care and therapy to their young clients.

Working side by side with families, specialised clinicians help children with a wide range of health or developmental issues achieve their goals to enhance their daily activities.

"Teamwork is at the heart of our care, which has a family focus," Occupational Therapist Sarah Deeth said.

"Each child has a team of allied health professionals from the unit involved in their care.

"Parents and families, paediatricians and nursing staff are also all part of the team approach and by everyone working together the children make wonderful progress."

The ground-breaking unit, one of the first of its kind in NSW, was set up in the late 1980s to provide evidence-based wholistic, multidisciplinary allied health care for children and families.

From preterm babies in the hospital's special care nursery to older children with complex needs, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, dietitians and social workers provide individualised care for each child and support for their families.

"Parents have the whole team together for their appointments which saves each family a lot of time arranging separate appointments with each clinician," Dietitian Judith Pryke said.

"Families love it because they have the opportunity to see the clinicians at the one time, in the one place, ask any questions they may have and receive timely information.

"Decisions can be made quickly because the whole team is on hand and on the same page."

Physiotherapist Zané Erasmus said she had gained new awareness and knowledge about other health disciplines by working alongside clinicians outside of physiotherapy.

“It's a really satisfying way to work and it is great to be a part of an amazing team. I learn something new every day and it is so inspiring to see the children achieve the goals,” she said.

Paediatric Allied Health team members (from left) Judith Pryke, Sarah Deeth and Zané Erasmus.



Zané Erasmus and Sarah Deeth with Josh Warren (centre) and his newborn daughter Ariyah-Joyce at Campbelltown Hospital's Special Care Nursery.

Warm welcome

The door is always open for young people to seek help and support at three south western Sydney youth health centres.

"It can be quite daunting for a young person to actively seek help, so having an open door policy across the three centres is vital," Youth Health Services Team Leader Caitlin Boyd (pictured) said.

"It means we can connect with more at risk young people in the community who can come and see us when they need to."

South Western Sydney Local Health District operates youth health centres at Bankstown, Fairfield and in the Macarthur region, specialising in multidisciplinary primary health care services for marginalised and at-risk young people aged from 12 to 24 years.

The wide range of services offered include individual counselling, paediatric nursing clinics, health promotion and education groups and workshops, and needle and syringe exchange programs.

Caitlin said compassion and a safe environment were the keys to supporting young people.

"Young people can walk into any one of our sites to make a referral themselves rather than having to go through a GP and receive youth-friendly and confidential care," Caitlin said.

"What we provide is ongoing, we're able to offer longer term support for young people with complex psychosocial needs with regular evaluation along the way to ensure we are meeting the client's needs and goals for counselling."





Physiotherapists Belinda Boylson (left) and Caroline Walsh support patient Leslie Robinson in the new allied health spaces at Bowral & District Hospital.

Bright Future

The foundations of allied health care in South Western Sydney Local Health District are cutting edge research and partnerships with peers locally and across the world.

The District's Executive Director for Allied Health and Community Services Sue Colley said she was inspired and excited by a future of multidisciplinary allied health teams working in a culture of innovation and research.

"The District's allied health workforce showed incredible resilience and adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic," Ms Colley said.

"Our clinicians quickly pivoted to telehealth to ensure their patients continued to receive care and I am so proud of their dedication and agility.

"We established new research projects and partnerships with universities responding to the needs of our patients and community.

"Research and education are vital strategic priorities which are embedded into our work and shaping our future."

Ms Colley said transformative allied health research, coupled with the \$3 billion capital investment into the redevelopment of south western Sydney hospitals, was attracting the brightest minds to the District.

"We are excited to see the allied health spaces in Bowral & District Hospital's new \$55 million clinical services building to support therapy, rehabilitation and functional recovery," Ms Colley said.

"Staff are also eagerly looking forward to purpose-built spaces in the \$632 million stage two Campbelltown Hospital redevelopment, which is opening soon.

“Allied health has an integral role in our community’s healthcare, and with our growing team and a range of modern facilities set to open, the future is looking fantastic.”



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Caring vision

Two passionate orthoptists at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital have dedicated their careers to helping patients with vision problems.

Kate Thompson and Karen Pedemont are part of South Western Sydney Local Health District's Orthoptic Service, which specialises in the assessment, diagnosis and non-surgical management of eye disorders.

It provides orthoptic care for hospital patients, outpatients and residents of the community.

Kate, a Clinical Senior Orthoptist, was inspired to become an orthoptist after her father was diagnosed with a serious eye problem.

"I love being a part of a multidisciplinary allied health team that provides wholistic patient care for inpatient and outpatients," she said. "I particularly enjoy helping improve the experience of people who are blind or have low vision while they are in hospital."

Orthoptists work in partnership with ophthalmologists, nurses and other allied health professionals, providing care for people with conditions ranging from eye movement, systemic or neurological vision disorders to eye diseases such as cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration.

Karen, the District's Discipline Director of Orthoptics, said she enjoyed working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ensure they had access to eye services.

"I am also passionate about falls prevention research in our older population and the critical role of eye care in this area as well as empowering my staff to achieve the highest quality of care for all our patients," Karen said.

Orthoptists Karen Pedemont (left) and Kate Thompson.



Twins Edison and Erikson Nguyen and mum Jodie enjoy a therapy session with speech pathologists Brooke Fitzgerald (far left) and Brooke Butt (far right).

Every word counts

From their first visit to Liverpool Hospital's Early Communication Clinic to help their twin boys Edison and Erikson develop their speech and language, parents Jodie and Brandon Nguyen felt welcomed and supported.

"We feel like we are part of a team and that we are all working together to support our twins," Jodie, a mother of four boys, said.

"This teamwork and the efforts of the wonderful speech pathologists are helping our twins make such great progress."

Two-year-olds Edison and Erikson, who were born preterm and have a speech delay, were referred to the clinic last year.

"We are grateful we were able to continue our sessions during the lockdowns via telehealth but it is so lovely to be back to face-to-face sessions with the speech pathologists now," Jodie said.

"The sessions and strategies are fun and engaging and I think that's why our boys enjoy them so much."

The most rapid and critical time of talking development is the first 2000 days of life when the brain develops the foundations for future learning, relationships and employment.

Speech pathologist Dr Kate Short said the development of talking was one of the most

remarkable and important accomplishments of early childhood.

"Most children have developed sufficient skills from early childhood to begin school and learn to read but some children may need more help and support," Dr Short said.

"We work with families to develop the best strategies for their children, which may involve individual or group sessions with the child and their parents.

"We also explore any concerns about autism, challenging behaviours, hearing and other issues which may emerge at this key time of development and support families to access any other services they may need for their child."

Dr Short said she was incredibly proud of the clinic's work.

"I am inspired every day by our wonderful health professionals and their dedication to the children in their care."

Breaking barriers

Inspired by the experience of local consumers, a south western Sydney speech pathologist is leading major research to help people with communication disabilities have greater choice and control over their health care.

Dr Katherine Kelly has received a \$2 million grant from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to implement the Communication for Safe Care project across South Western and Western NSW Local Health Districts, in partnership with the University of Sydney.

"I have seen first-hand how people with a communication disorder often struggle to navigate the complex health care system and meaningfully participate in their care," Dr Kelly, South Western Sydney Local Health District's National Disability Insurance Scheme Coordinator, said.

"The research project will establish how to make public health services more accessible for people with communication disability.

"We want to improve the value and experiences of everyone involved - patients, carers and health professionals."

A communication disability may range from mild to profound and may develop at any stage of life.

One in three people who live with a communication disability report their access to community and health services is impacted.

"Communication is a key safety and quality issue, and is critical to support the delivery of safe, high-quality patient care," Dr Kelly said.

"Our research has the ability to change the lives of people with communication disabilities. We are so excited to be leading this important research to empower both our patients and our staff."

Quest for discovery

Allied health professionals are shaping the future of healthcare in south western Sydney through a flourishing research culture.

Under the expert guidance of the South West Sydney Allied Health Research Collaboration, innovative and impactful research projects across at least 30 clinical teams are underway to enhance quality of life and improve health outcomes for our local community.

The collaboration, which was formally established in 2021, is a strategic research and education partnership between South Western Sydney Local Health District, Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research's Injury and Rehabilitation Stream, The University of Sydney and Western Sydney University.

Professors of Allied Health, Sarah Dennis and Elise Baker, are the driving force behind the collaboration. Together with pioneering allied health researchers Professor Grahame Simpson, of the Liverpool Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit, and Associate Professor Justine Naylor, of the Whitlam Orthopaedic Research Centre, they are reimagining the future of allied health care informed by cutting-edge research and innovation. Associate Professor Naylor was a finalist in the 2021 NSW Excellence in Allied Health Awards' Educator and Researcher of the Year category.

"The leadership, expertise and collaboration between the partners is integral to the ongoing growth of the District's vibrant allied health research culture," Professor Dennis, of The University of Sydney, said.



Dr Katherine Kelly (left) with Communication for Safe Care research project team members Lisa Michelle and Karri Knebone.

"It aims to enhance the health of people in the south western Sydney community through patient-centred care, which is grounded in robust scientific research.

"We are inspired by the incredible research projects underway, which have the potential to transform care not only in our own community but the world."

From intensive care to community-based rehabilitation, allied health research covers a range of areas such as communication disorders, weight management, pain management, early childhood development, sports science, disability, dementia care and managing COVID-19 at home.

Associate Professor Baker, of Western Sydney University, said allied health would have an important role in the expansion of the Ingham

Institute with new research centres planned at the Campbelltown Hospital precinct and in the Bankstown area.

"Our research responds to critical health issues in south western Sydney and there are great advantages to having the opportunity to work directly with clients, patients and consumers right across the community," Associate Professor Baker said.

"It means we can attract the brightest minds and researchers to ensure south western Sydney is a world-leading centre of allied health research and care."

Right moves

Marilyn Reardon-Small feels stronger, more confident and almost back to her normal self after her recent hospital admission - thanks to the South Western Sydney Local Health District Transitional Care Program.

"I feel much better and have seen a lot of improvement," Marilyn said. "It has been wonderful to have the care program staff come to my home for one-on-one sessions. That has really helped. I am very happy that I can get back to my favourite hobby of crochet again."

The District's Transitional Care Program is a home-based community program consisting of a group of allied health clinicians including occupational therapists, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, dietitians and social workers.

They work collaboratively to help patients aged 65 in their home get back on their feet after their discharge from hospital.

"We want to help improve our patients' quality of life and help them to set goals and achieve them," Senior Physiotherapist Caitlin Brooks said.

"A goal could simply be walking outside to their mailbox and getting mail themselves independently."

Caitlin said the team provided all equipment needed for therapy sessions in patients' homes.

"It could be weights, peddles or mobility aides," Caitlin said. "We also have interpreting services available for our multicultural community."

“It is inspiring to see our patients living independently in their own homes with the help of the wonderful team involved in the program.”

Physiotherapist Caitlin Brooks helps Marilyn Reardon-Small recover after her hospital stay.



Amy Wilson (left) and Chloe Purvis



Sense of calm

A specially-designed sensory bag is helping mental health consumers relax in two emergency departments.

Consumer Chloe Purvis said the sensory bag helped her gain a sense of calm and peace during a stressful time.

"I was admitted to Campbelltown Hospital and was given a sensory bag. I was curious to see what was inside and have found the contents super helpful ever since," Chloe said.

"I have the power to change how I feel when I feel overwhelmed. The sensory bag makes me feel more settled."

Senior Occupational Therapist Amy Wilson and Clinical Nurse Consultant, Mental Health Rachel Culican developed the bags for consumers in Liverpool and Campbelltown Hospitals' emergency departments in 2019.

"The great thing about the sensory bags is they contain many items; there is a

stress ball, tea, hot chocolate, fidget spinners, bean bags and a picture frame to look at. Many senses are engaged to help distract and keep the consumer occupied," Amy said.

"Presenting to the ED can sometimes be a confusing and overwhelming experience, and it is not uncommon for consumers to feel emotional distress or anxiety."

“Rachel and I decided we needed to do something to help improve the experience for consumers and that’s how the idea of sensory bags was born.”

The aim of the bags is to help consumers regulate their emotions and feel a sense of calm while waiting in an unfamiliar environment.

"They are also offered to consumers who may not have arrived through the ED and can be taken home to support consumers in their recovery." Amy said.



Get to know our staff...

Name: Dr May Mak

Position: Head of Department, Dietetics, Liverpool Hospital

Why did you choose dietetics as your career?

I initially chose to study dietetics because I love science, especially biochemistry, human physiology and anatomy, and I also wanted to find something where I can help people and be practical. A dietitian is a perfect role for me - I can apply and translate science to simple and practical advice to help people improve their health.

Why is your role important? My job is a hybrid clinician-manager role. I am responsible for the daily operations of the department and to provide the best evidence-based care for our patients. I am also the dietitian for the palliative care ward at Liverpool Hospital. As part of the multidisciplinary team, I support the patients and their families with the most appropriate and patient-centred care. Nutrition may not be the priority of care and we often cannot reverse the disease progression, but food can often make people feel better.

What is a normal day like for you? There is never a normal day, especially in the last two years. My day starts with assessing any urgent issues and I then participate in my department morning meeting to assess what wards/patients need to be covered. I also do some mini-rounds throughout the day to check-in with different

members of the team. The rest of my day usually consists of a combination of providing direct patient care, attending meetings and catching up with my staff.

What do you enjoy most about your job? I love my job! I love seeing my colleagues grow and develop in whatever direction they want to. I am so lucky working with such a great bunch of people.

Greatest career achievement? Finishing my PhD (part time under five years) while working full time.

Really get to know our staff...

Interests or hobbies: Watching renovation shows.

Who inspires you: My dad - he teaches me the importance of work ethics and dedication, never giving up and seeing challenges as opportunities.

Tell us something about you that would surprise people: I don't like cooking - people often expect that dietitians love food and cooking, but that's not me.

What did you think you were going to be when you grew up: A scientist who works in a lab.