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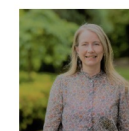
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The CNSA Research Pathway Mentoring Program

Dr Lauren Zarb

CNSA Research Standing Committee Co-Chair
University of Melbourne
Peter Macallum Cancer Centre

CNSA Research Standing Committee



**Lauren
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Zarb**

Co-Chair

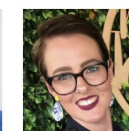


**Professor
Benjamin
Tan**

Co-Chair



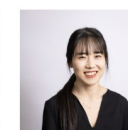
**Natalie
Williams**



**Ashlee
Stirling**



Carli Shaw



Dr Bora Kim



**Associate
Professor
Olivia Cook**



**Professor
Kate White**



**Dr Carla
Thamm**

**Our thanks to Dr Elizabeth Moore,
previous Chair of RSC**

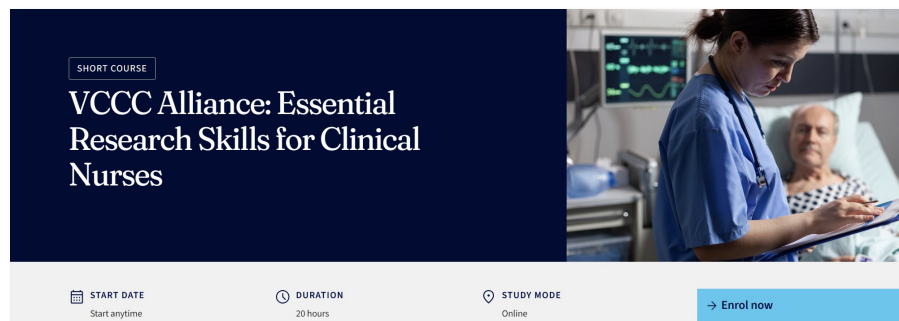


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CNSA Research Pathway Mentoring Program



Why: To strengthen research capability among cancer nurses with limited experience

How: Create an accessible, practice-oriented pathway into research

What: Online learning + peer support + mentoring to scaffold learning



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Program aims

1

Build foundational
research skills for
clinical nurses

2

Support
development of
participant research
questions/projects

3

Determine the
feasibility and
acceptability of a
blended model of
research mentorship

4

Inform design of a
sustainable, scalable
research mentorship
programme

Participant Selection

Expression of Interest (EOI) process:

- 11 applications for 5 places

Applicants provided:

- Clinical background, research experience, motivation, capacity to commit

Selection process:

- Reviewed and scored by Research Committee
- Scores averaged; research experience used as tie-breaker
- Top 5 selected; all applicants notified

Program Structure – Core components

Self-directed online course:
VCCC Alliance /
University of Melbourne
Essential Research Skills.

5 peer group meetings

3 individual mentoring sessions

Education Component – Online Course

Developing research
questions

Research methods:
qualitative, quantitative,
mixed/multi methods

Literature review &
critical appraisal

Data collection &
analysis

Implementation into
practice

Peer Group Meetings

Intended focus

- Peer discussion, applying course concepts to individual ideas
- Q&A and facilitator guidance

Format

- Informal, participant-driven, collaborative problem-solving

Realities

- Flexible sessions responsive to participant needs
- High reliance on facilitator expertise

Individual Mentoring

3 x ~30-minute sessions per participant between group meetings

Tailored support:

Developing research questions/projects

Problem solving & overcoming barriers

Career & research pathway guidance

Encouraged linking to local workplace supports/networks

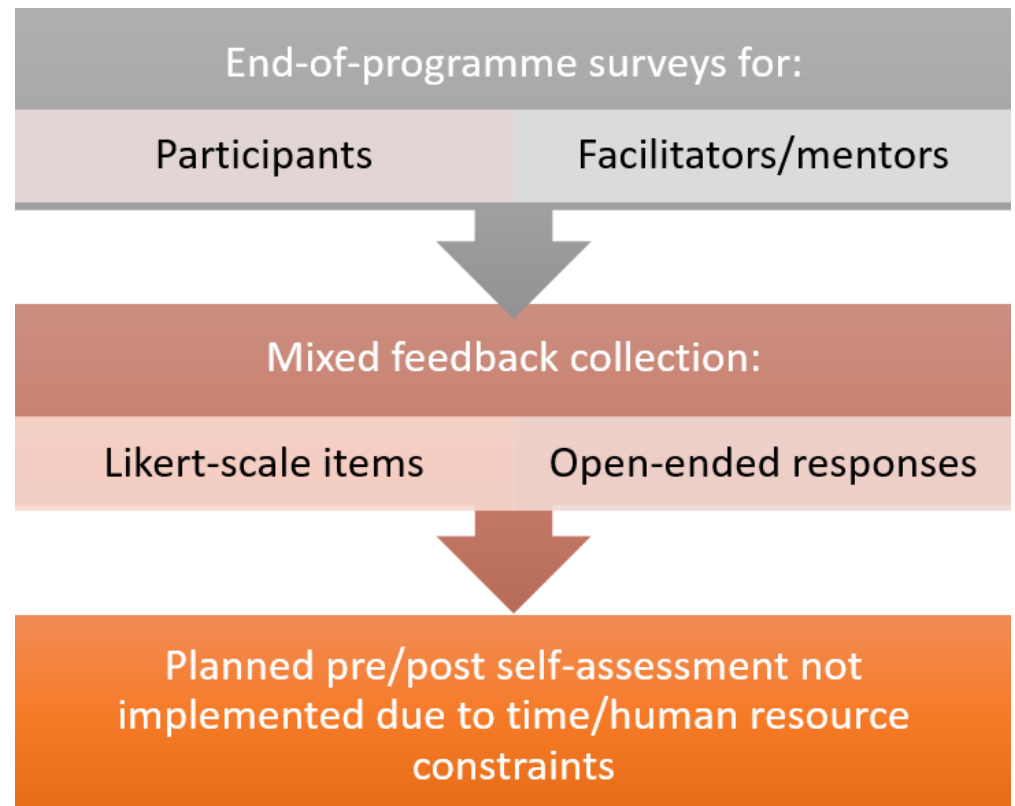


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Evaluation



Key Outcomes

Participant Feedback - High overall satisfaction

- Most valued:
 - Flexible self-paced learning
 - Alignment of course with group discussions
 - Access to experienced mentors
- Reported benefits:
 - Increased confidence in research concepts
 - Greater awareness of research opportunities
- Main challenge:
 - Time constraints from clinical workload; desire for protected/funded research time

Facilitator Feedback - High overall satisfaction

- Strengths:
 - Informal, flexible sessions
 - Guiding ideas into research questions
- Challenges:
 - Scheduling and participant availability
 - Limited mentor pool
 - Some role/process ambiguity
- Suggested improvements:
 - Larger mentor pool, shared leadership, extended timeline

Participant Feedback



"The program structure was great, the self directed learning meant we could get through modules at our own pace and re-visit the modules at a later stage. the mentoring helped open more opportunities and suggestions regarding where I saw myself in future research"



"Listening to some group discussions on what amazing stuff nurses are doing in the field of research just wowed me."



"Online learning at your own pace timed well with group meeting. Where we had the opportunity to discuss online learning in the setting of our own research ideas/projects. The mentorship provided the valuable opportunity to learn from experts in the field".



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Opportunities for Improvement

“Potentially for this to coincide with a research grant. At times I found it hard to quarantine time to dedicate to the research program. My workplace was supportive and I utilised a study day to complete aspects of the program. But potentially embedding study leave/grants for paid time to help facilitate quarantining time to the program”.

“Continue with the planned outline aligning meetings related to online learning topics. In between group meetings planned mentor sessions”

Conclusion

- The pilot demonstrated:
 - Overall acceptability and perceived educational value
 - Feasibility constraints (time, scheduling, mentor capacity)
- Blended learning + mentorship is a promising model that requires refinement for sustainability

Recommendations for the future

Address	Strengthen	Improve	Improve
Address feasibility barriers: • Consider protected/funded research time for participants • More flexible scheduling options	Strengthen capacity: • Expand mentor pool and distribute leadership responsibilities	Improve structure and clarity: • Clearer role descriptions and programme processes • Consider longer duration - deeper engagement and consolidation	Improve evaluation: • Implement pre/post measures and longer-term follow-up • Collect objective outcomes where possible (projects started, outputs)

Next Steps & Q&A

Suggested next steps:

- Review pilot learnings with stakeholders
- Secure resources for expanded pilot (mentor recruitment; protected time)
- Implement strengthened evaluation in next iteration

Please provide any additional feedback to lauren.zarb@unimelb.edu.au

