The Centre for the Built Environment and Health (CBEH) has exciting research opportunities for highly motivated PhD research students interested in doing multi-disciplinary research that makes a difference. CBEH offers a highly productive team environment and the opportunity to develop research skills in mixed methods with a strong focus on the translation of research into policy and practice across health, urban design, town planning, sport and recreation, transport and other relevant sectors. Some projects are outlined below.

Physical Activity Minimal Intervention Targeting Dog Owners

There is growing awareness about the importance of pet ownership to physical and emotional health. Pets provide opportunities and motivation to participate in physical activity. Given that more than 60 per cent of Australian households own a pet and almost 70 per cent of these households care for one or more dogs, walking with a dog is seen as an under-utilised health promotion tool.

Funded by the Petcare Information and Advisory Service and Healthway, this project will work with local vets to design and evaluate a minimal intervention dog walking program that will benefit both the owner and the dog. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to work with a highly motivated industry partner, Petcare, and to develop skills in intervention research. Full funding for a 3 year PhD scholarship is available. For more details, please visit CBEH at www.sph.uwa.edu.au/research/cbeh or UWA Scholarships at www.scholarships.uwa.edu.au

Chief Investigator: Asst/Prof Hayley Christian: hayley.christian@uwa.edu.au

Built Environments and Health - Spatial Analysis and Land Use

Are you interested in exploring how aspects of the built environment and specifically land use, such as sports facilities and public open space, influence patterns of physical activity, sedentary, walking and cycling behaviours? Projects in this area build on the RESIDE project, a five year longitudinal study, and could explore the computations of land use, distribution of sporting facilities and public open space and their relationship with activity in different populations. Topics of interest include:

- Use of global position systems (GPS) and other wearable sensors as objective measures of the built environment
- Development of land use and land use mix measures as correlates of physical activity
- Examination of the influence of green space on physical activity with a focus on high resolution neighbourhood measures of vegetation

Chief Investigators: Prof Fiona Bull: fiona.bull@uwa.edu.au & Asst/Prof Bryan Boruff: bryan.boruff@uwa.edu.au

Can We Afford Interventions to Increase Physical Activity?

How much would it cost and how much would be saved by greater investment in different physical activity programs in Australia and elsewhere? If you have an interest in exploring the cost effectiveness of different interventions aimed at increasing physical activity...
consider applying for a PhD to work alongside our team. Our work is currently exploring the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of programs in collaboration with the World Health Organisation and OECD and there is an opportunity to extend this and explore different models and approaches.

Chief Investigator: Prof Fiona Bull: fiona.bull@uwa.edu.au

Physical Activity in the Early Years
There is growing interest in built environment interventions targeted at increasing children’s physical activity because of their potential reach and impact on the health and well-being of future generations. In the last decade there has been a 20% increase in the number of 0-4 year olds in Western Australia (WA) with 63% of WA 2-3 year olds attending some type of child care. The child care setting is where children spend a considerable portion of their time, thus this is an important setting in which children should have the opportunity to accumulate physical activity and other forms of unstructured physical play. This PhD project would involve qualitative research with children, parents, staff and key stake holders in the childcare setting, objectively measuring the physical activity behaviour of young children and the physical, policy and social environment of childcare centres. This research will form the basis for an intervention study.

Chief Investigators: Asst/Prof Hayley Christian - hayley.christian@uwa.edu.au & Prof Fiona Bull - fiona.bull@uwa.edu.au

Perceived Child Injury Risks – What is the Evidence?
Restrictions in children’s independence to attend local parks and play spaces have arisen mainly due to concerns from parents that children are at risk from abduction and playground injury. However, there is also some evidence to suggest that perceptions of risk and injury far exceed the reality, and that children are increasingly leading a ‘cotton wool childhood’. This project will include a review of the literature relating to children’s injury from playgrounds, pedestrians, cycling, assault and other causes and examine WA data related to safety and injury and playground related litigation. This will assist with developing strategies to provide education about considered risk, including the benefits of risk and appropriate risk assessment and interventions educating parents/schools about real risks for children.

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Nature Contact and Children’s Mental Health
Evidence suggests that contact with nature is beneficial to adults’ health and, while more scarce, research is beginning to link nature contact and children’s physical and emotional wellbeing. This program of research would explore the relationship between children’s mental health and time in nature and lead to the development of interventions to increase time in nature into children’s lives

Chief Investigators: Assoc/Prof Lisa Wood: lisa.wood@uwa.edu.au & Asst/Prof Karen Martin: karen.martin@uwa.edu.au

Other research opportunities
Is Higher Physical Activity During School Breaks Related to Bullying Within the Primary School Setting?
Chief Investigator: Asst/Prof Karen Martin - karen.martin@uwa.edu.au

Intervention to Decrease Screen Time and Increase Physical Activity in Adolescents
Chief Investigator: Asst/Prof Karen Martin: karen.martin@uwa.edu.au

There is considerable scope for other PhD projects relating to the Centre’s areas of research. Please contact us to discuss your potential idea. For more details please visit us at www.sph.uwa.edu.au/research/cbeh

Applications for the current Australian and University Postgraduate Awards round close 31st Oct 2011 www.scholarships.uwa.edu.au

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