Two PhD Scholarships

Outcomes of early intervention programs for Autism Spectrum Disorders

The School of Psychiatry is offering two three-year full-time PhD scholarships to work with Professor Valsamma Eapen and Professor Rhoshel Lenroot on a study evaluating the effects of early intervention in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). These two PhD positions are being offered as part of a broad program of research under Program 1 of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

The Autism CRC is the world’s first national, cooperative research effort focused on Autism. The Autism CRC brings together a unique mix of partnerships - government, university, research and not-for profit organisations, and world class researchers. The Autism CRC will undertake highly innovative research to directly improve the lifetime prospects of Australians with ASD, provide much needed guidance, support and direction for their families, and enable medical practitioners, educators, therapists, support workers and employers to work effectively with people with ASD.


The Autism CRC program 1, a better start through early diagnosis, aims to harness existing knowledge of autism to improve diagnosis. These two PhD positions will conduct research at Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and the KU Marcia Burgess Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre. They will utilise clinical and behavioural data as well as neuroimaging technology including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and near infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) to evaluate the impact of early intervention in autism spectrum disorders. Note that the research projects will be discussed and modified accordingly based on the research interests and skills of the two candidates selected.

Candidates will be supervised by the project leader Professor Valsamma Eapen, Chair, Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Head of the Academic Unit of Child Psychiatry South West Sydney (for the clinical component) and Professor Rhoshel
Lenroot, Chair, Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Clinical Director, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (for the neuroimaging component). Co-supervision will be provided by Dr Debra Costley, Director Aspect Practice and Research Leader and Senior Lecturer UNSW and the Autism CRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow.

These two PhD scholarships will be provided under the guidelines and conditions of the Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) scheme for a period of 3 years, with a stipend rate of AUD $25,000pa. Students who successfully attract an APA can apply for a partial or top up scholarship to the value of AUD $5,000pa.

To be eligible for this PhD scholarship, the two successful candidates must start their PhD full time in January 2015.

Selection Criteria

1. Bachelor degree with honours in psychology, health sciences, science or a related field
2. An interest in or knowledge of autism spectrum disorders
3. Knowledge or interest in neuroimaging techniques
4. Previous research experience including literature reviews, coordinating research projects, data analysis, conference presentations and journal publications
5. Excellent organisational skills and demonstrated capacity to meet project outcomes and objectives
6. Demonstrated ability to work both independently as well as part of a multidisciplinary team
7. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
8. Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident or New Zealand citizen

Please contact Professor Valsamma Eapen v.eapen@unsw.edu.au if you would like to discuss this opportunity prior to submitting a full application. We encourage potential applicants to submit an expression of interest as soon as possible. Please note that the PhD can have either a clinical or a neuroimaging focus or a combination of the two components. Please attach your CV and a one-page summary demonstrating how you meet the selection criteria as well as some information on your skills and experience and research interests to the email listed above.

Please visit the Graduate Research School website: http://research.unsw.edu.au/postgraduate-research-scholarships for more information about the application process for entry to a PhD.