



Katherine Elkin wins the Inaugural HSRAANZ PhD Student Prize

Katie Elkin has beaten 10 strong entries to win the Association's inaugural PhD Student Prize with her study "Risks of Complaints and Adverse Disciplinary Findings Against International Medical Graduates in Victoria and Western Australia".



The winner of the inaugural HSRAANZ PhD prize was announced at the Association's Annual General Meeting on Monday 10 December 2012. The winner, Katie Elkin, whilst based in Wellington, is completing her PhD through the School of Population Health and Law School at Melbourne University. Her thesis looks at the public protection mandate of those who regulate doctors, using complaints and disciplinary proceedings as a way of testing whether that objective is being achieved. As well as

completing her PhD Katie is also the Chief Legal Advisor at the Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner in New Zealand, a role that she has held for the past 18 months. Prior to joining the Commissioner's Office, Katie was a Senior Associate at Minter Ellison for a number of years, where she advised a number of health regulatory bodies on a range of issues, including bringing prosecutions in the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal.

Applicants for the prize, which aims to encourage and reward outstanding research by Australian and New Zealand health services research PhD students, were asked to submit a short paper (no more than 5000 words) related to their PhD. The papers were judged on authors ability to:

- Write clearly and concisely.
- Present ideas and arguments logically
- Use appropriate, sound methods: and
- Show how their results are relevant to policy and/or practice.

11 papers were received and the judges, Jackie Cumming, President of the Association and Professor of Health Policy and Management, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington, Dr. Gisselle Gallego, Research Fellow, Centre for Health Research School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney and Prof Jon Karnon (Health Economics) Department of Public Health, Adelaide University were very impressed by the quality and range of the submissions and it was a very close contest. **A full list of the finalist can be viewed at the bottom of this article.**

The judges commented that Katie's paper was excellent, very well written and well placed within the literature. The methods were good and the implications of the research were highly relevant to policy and practice.

Katie's winning paper (on which she was the lead author) "Risks of Complaints and Adverse Disciplinary Findings Against International Medical Graduates in Victoria and Western Australia", published in the Medical Journal of Australia ([Med J Aus 2012;197 \(8\):448-452 doi: 10.5694/mja12.10632](#)) found that international medical graduates (IMGs) are more likely to have complaints made against them than their Australian-trained counterparts. However results differed markedly depending on country of training. The research showed doctors who qualified in Nigeria, Egypt, Poland, Russia, Pakistan, the Philippines and India had higher frequencies of complaints than Australian-trained doctors.

The number of IMGs in Australian clinical practice have grown and now account for nearly 25% of doctors. Some high-profile cases featuring incompetent IMGs have ignited public concerns. But there is very little hard evidence about whether the quality of care delivered by this large section of our national medical workforce is better or worse.

The research analysed more than 5000 complaints resolved by the medical boards in Victoria and Western Australia between 2001 and 2010. "Overall, we found that international medical graduates had 24% higher odds of attracting complaints than Australia-trained doctors, and 41% higher odds of having adverse disciplinary findings made against them," Ms Elkin said. "But the big differences were among IMGs themselves. For example, complaint rates against doctors trained in some countries were more than five times greater than complaint rates against doctors trained in other countries." The conclusions of the research were that better understanding of such heterogeneity could inform a more evidence based approach to registration and oversight rules.

Finalists

- Alison Pearce - *Delays in access to affordable medicines: putting policy into perspective*
- Amie Steele - *Health effects of complementary and alternative medicine use on birth outcomes: An examination of a nationally representative sample of 1,835 Australian women*
- Bonny Parkinson - *Economic evaluations of trastuzumab in HER2 positive metastatic breast cancer: a systematic review and critique*
- Christine Campbell - *The impact of patient narratives on diabetes self-efficacy and self-care: a randomised controlled trial.*
- Danny Hills - *Personal, professional and work factors associated with Australian clinical medical practitioners' experiences of workplace aggression*

- Jody Church - *Deconstructing the positive feedback loop between depression and obesity: can stressful life events be used as an instrument?*
- Heni Wahyuni - *Mothers' Social Participation in Community Groups and Infant Health in Indonesia*
- Katherine Elkin - *Risks of Complaints and Adverse Disciplinary Findings Against International Medical Graduates in Victoria and Western Australia*
- Katherine Harding - *Reducing waiting time for community rehabilitation services: a controlled before and after trial*
- Nouran Ragaban - *Align, Share Responsibility and Collaborate: Potential considerations to aid in eHealth policy development*
- Susan Webster - *The Red Tape Waltz: where multi-centre ethical review can step on the toes of research integrity.*