UQ Summer Research Project Description

Project title:	**Cannabis use and mental distress in school-age children: a comparison of protective and risk factors in six African countries**
Project duration:	8-10 weeks (28/11/2016 – 11/02/2017)
Description:	Mental and substance use disorders account for a large proportion of disease burden globally. However, epidemiology is sparse in some regions, such as in Africa. This research project aims to investigate the epidemiology of cannabis use in adolescents in Africa. The approach will involve secondary data analysis of existing survey data. Factors for investigation include substance use, focusing particularly on cannabis use, symptoms of mental distress/disturbance, parental/carer involvement with the child and peer influence. The specific aims of the project are to: 1) estimate the prevalence of cannabis use; 2) determine the relationship between substance use with outcome factors, 3) compare the epidemiology across the different countries within the region.
Expected outcomes and deliverables:	Epidemiology estimates from the project will be used to inform the Global Burden of Disease for mental and substance use disorders. In addition, findings can form an evidence-base to inform policies for elucidating the risk and protective factors for cannabis use among school children in African countries, thereby helping to form a strong research base on which to build school safety programs and promote healthy lifestyles from an early age, particularly with parent and teacher support of the student, and student education on unsafe and unhealthy peer pressure. The student is expected to gain skills in: the formulation of a good research question and in preparation and implementation of research design; working closely and appropriately with relevant supervisors in a well-balanced "supervisor-guided and individual-driven" research role; secondary data analysis and interpretation, with skills developed in the use of widely utilised data analysis software packages (SPSS and Excel); skill development and enhancement in the use of research software (EndNote) and research databases (PubMed, Embase etc); and synthesis and discussion of results; as well as possible publication of a research paper in a peer-reviewed journal.
Suitable for:	- A strong interest in the epidemiology of mental and substance use disorders - Competent in data-analysis, Endnote, Excel, and Word - Strong academic oral and writing skills - Applicants who have completed PUBH 7026 Mental Health Across the Globe will be preferred.
Primary Supervisor:	Dr Janni Leung (j.leung1@uq.edu.au) and Professor Harvey Whiteford (h.whiteford@uq.edu.au)
Further info:	The successful applicant will be expected to travel to our office to conduct the work. Our office is located at The Park, Wacol.