

Title:**“Into the Thirties: persistence and social consequences of risky drinking”**

Principal Investigators of the Mater University Study of Pregnancy (MUSP) are seeking excellent PhD candidates to undertake research on the lifecourse epidemiology of alcohol disorders. This is a newly funded ARC grant which will investigate predictors and consequences of risky drinking in young people aged 30.

The Mater University Study of Pregnancy (MUSP) is Australia’s only large-scale, pre-birth, longitudinal cohort study, which began in 1981 at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital (MMH) in Brisbane, Queensland. The project began as an initiative between The University of Queensland and the MMH and has since continued to follow 6822 mothers and their children, with multiple follow-ups at the first obstetric visit, at birth, 6 months, 5 years, 14 years, 21 years after pregnancy; 30 years after pregnancy. In addition to obstetric data, over 2000 items have been collected across areas including socio-demography, lifestyle, wellbeing, physical health and anthropometry. The MUSP has used a wide of range indices and validated scales. Repeated measurements have been used at different follow-up points, making it possible to track patterns in the mother and child’s behaviour and substance use over time. Ethics clearance is current for the whole project.

The project will be undertaken at The University of Queensland’s School of Public Health at Herston campus in Brisbane, Queensland. The Candidate will be working with the CIs of the project and other MUSP team members.

Supervisor:

Please direct enquiries to Professor Rosa Alati: r.alati@sph.uq.edu.au. You will be required to provide a CV and academic record including GPA scores or equivalent grading scores.

The candidate(s):

We are looking at one, potentially two candidates. We welcome both Australian and international candidates with an excellent academic record [a First Class Honours degree (or equivalent)] and a background in epidemiology, biostatistics, psychology, and social sciences.

Funding: There is funding set aside for a PhD program. Preference will be given to candidates who can secure a University of Queensland scholarship (e.g. APA).

Top-up scholarships may also be available.

Student Objectives:

1. Understanding the role of alcohol in Australian society
2. Understanding the principles of epidemiology and causation
3. Developing knowledge of and becoming proficient in the statistical analysis of longitudinal data
4. Becoming proficient in the use of statistical packages such as STATA, SPSS or SAS
5. Develop skills to deliver oral and written presentations
6. Attend national and international conferences

Project Outline:

The phenomenon known as 'maturing out of alcohol' - understood as a decline in the prevalence of risky alcohol use between late adolescence and age 30 - has become one of the most established features in alcohol research literature. The main cause of this normative decline is proposed to be the transition into adulthood. However, the social dynamics thought to underpin this normative decline, such as gender roles and expectations inherent in traditional family structures, have fundamentally altered in recent generations. This means that risky drinking may persist into the thirties rather than spontaneously decline.

While much research has focused on the individual costs of alcohol use during the years of emerging adulthood, there is little understanding of societal level changes which may have contributed to the persistence of risky drinking and its associated social consequences into later adulthood. This project will address the critical gaps in the present evidence and provide some of the first evidence of the social consequences of persistent risky alcohol use between emerging and later adulthood.

Specific Aims:

"Into the Thirties: persistence and social consequences of risky drinking" has two aims.

Firstly we aim to examine the extent of persistent risky drinking into the thirties in a contemporary Australian cohort. Specifically we want to look at changes in gender roles, in social context of alcohol use and risk factors leading to excessive drinking in adults.

Secondly this project aims to investigate the social consequences of persistence of risky drinking beyond the third decade of life. For this second aim we will investigate the impact of intimate partner violence and relationship quality, the impact of antisocial behaviour and violence and the role of other additions in the development of problematic alcohol use into the thirties.

The PhD candidate(s) will be working on some of the areas detailed above.

Achievable Outcomes:

1. Well developed statistical skills
2. Proficiency in the use of statistical packages for the health science
3. PhD in Public Health or Epidemiology
4. Publications in high quality peer reviewed journals
5. Acceptance to present findings at national and international conferences