

Advanced Training Project

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Rationale for the ATPOA Project

- To ensure that every POA advanced trainee undertakes a piece of research or scholarship relevant to POA prior to completing their certificate of advanced training
- To ensure the development of critical appraisal skills in relation to the scientific literature in POA (study design, measurement, statistics, etc)
- To encourage publication of research findings in POA

Various Ways of Finding a Topic

- Approach an established researcher for an “off the shelf” project
- Use data that have already been collected (local, statewide, national, international databases)
- Consider an unresolved clinical issue that you have been thinking about
- Consider a recent series of clinical cases
- Brainstorm with colleagues
- The topic must be directly relevant to old age psychiatry

Recent Topic Examples

- Neuropsychological profile of older alcohol-dependent hoarders
- Is death our business? A philosophical inquiry
- Body image and low mood in older women
- Ethics of withdrawing medical treatment in advanced dementia
- Psychological reaction to driving cessation
- Use of depot antipsychotics in older people
- Impact of personality on health and longevity
- Psychotic depression in older people – a case series

Finding a Research Supervisor

- A research supervisor should preferably be someone who knows something about the research topic and method you have chosen
- Academic departments are a potential source of supervision, but not the only source
- Your research supervisor can be your clinical supervisor, but can be someone else
- You can have more than one research supervisor
- You can use a piece of research that you are also undertaking for an MPhil or PhD

Types of Projects

Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed Methods

- Experimental studies (RCTs)
- Observational studies (cross-sectional; case-control; cohort)
- Case studies (case series; single case study)
- Clinical audit (usually retrospective case-based, but other approaches possible)
- Literature review (systematic & critical)
- Philosophical essay (must be sophisticated)

The Standard

- Similar to a final draft for submission to *Australasian Psychiatry*
- Methods, including sample acquisition and statistics, should be fully disclosed
- For a data-based study, the discussion section should be critical & place the findings within the scientific literature; the limitations of the study must be discussed
- Literature reviews should be scholarly & critical; it is not acceptable to uncritically report what the literature says; the literature search strategy must be fully described, including the databases used, the search syntax and the number of references acquired at each step
- Case reports should contain a *critical* discussion of the relevant literature; considerable sophistication is needed
- Clinical audits should place the findings within the scientific literature; audits should employ formal audit procedures and this must be made explicit in the report

Ethical Issues

- Project reports that do not explicitly deal with the ethical issues inherent in almost all research projects will be returned to the trainee unmarked
- All projects using human data must have ethical approval and most will also need informed consent
- In some jurisdictions, audits based on clinical file reviews are not required to undergo full HREC review; in such cases, the trainee must submit a scanned copy of the letter from the HREC to this effect
- Literature reviews do not require ethical approval
- Case reports must be de-identified & the project report text should indicate where this de-identification occurs

Acknowledgements

- All project reports must acknowledge the contributions of others, where relevant
- This will include supervisors, biostatisticians, clinical personnel who helped collect data, funding bodies, etc
- Joint projects must provide a detailed account of who did what



Statistical Issues

- Not all projects require statistical analysis
- **Do not use statistics if they are not needed**
- Get help with statistics
- Preferably address statistical issues *before* collecting any data
- Do NOT use techniques you do not understand
- Explicitly deal with the assumptions underlying the statistical techniques you use
- Be aware of Type 1 and Type 2 errors

Technical Aspects

- MS Word file; A4 page size
- **3,000 – 5,000 words of main text** (*mandatory from 2015*)
- Preferably left justified
- At least 2cm margins on all four sides
- At least 1.5 line spacing
- At least 12 point print size
- Preferably Times New Roman
- Page numbers



Technical Aspects

- Use appropriate software to generate professional looking tables & figures
- Label all tables & figures (meaningful legends/captions, informative axes with measures and units, abbreviations in a footnote at the bottom)
- All abbreviations (acronyms & initialisms) must be spelled in full the first time they appear in the text
- Photographs and diagrams must be referenced
- Please have your draft project report proof-read

Technical Aspects

- Use a recognised referencing style, Harvard or Vancouver
- Make sure that all main points and contentious statements are referenced
- Check that all text citations also appear in the reference list
- Check that all references also appear as text citations
- Ensure that you provide a complete & accurate reference
- References to books or book chapters should include the relevant page numbers
- References to websites must contain the full web address and the date accessed
- Ensure that all quotations are within quotation marks
- Avoid plagiarism – paraphrasing the work of others without attribution is plagiarism

Scholarly Project

- SATPOA is happy to consider a project report that has also been submitted as an SP under the 2012 regulations (when you apply to your Branch training committee to have your SP project approved, please also let them know that you are planning to submit the project report for POA AT)
- To be eligible as a POA AT project, it must be on a topic related to old age psychiatry and conform to the requirements in the regulations (see Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age research project guidelines)

Scholarly Project

- If you submit your Scholarly Project as your ATPOA project they will be independently marked
- Please note that it is quite possible you could pass your ATPOA project and fail your Scholarly Project, or vice versa

Problematic Project Reports

- No or inadequate ethics → project report returned to trainee unmarked
- No or inadequate de-identification of patients → project report returned to trainee unmarked
- No or inadequate acknowledgement of the roles of others → project report returned to trainee unmarked
- Topic not relevant to old age psychiatry → project report returned to trainee unmarked
- Main text exceeds 5,000 words → project report returned to trainee unmarked

Problem Project Reports

- Plagiarism -> FAIL
- Poorly written reports (grammar & syntax)
- Reports that have not been proof-read (typos)
- Reports damaged by cut & paste errors
- Reports in which track changes has not been turned off
- Reports in which embedded macros have not been removed, making the files difficult to open
- Reports that are insufficiently critical
- Poorly referenced reports
- Un-understandable figures & tables (usually because of poor labeling)
- Incomprehensible statistics (usually because the trainee is using statistics they don't understand)

Project Marking

- Projects are marked by an experienced old age psychiatrist from another RANZCP Branch
- Most project pass
- If a project is failed, it is sent to another marker who is unaware of the mark allocated by the first marker
- If the markers are in agreement, the project fails
- If the markers disagree, the SATPOA Chair has the casting vote

Other Potential Difficulties

- With an upper limit of 5,000 words of main text, you must be succinct – ruthlessly eliminate redundant or repetitive words
- Most published authors do multiple drafts before being happy with their manuscripts – I generally do about 10 drafts before I send a paper to a journal or a book chapter to an editor
- If English is not your first language, ask someone whose first language is English to proof read the manuscript; check your prepositions and conjunctions; check your use of tenses

Help for the Novice Researcher

- On the RANZCP website there is a [Research In Psychiatry](#) webpage, which has excellent resources to assist the beginning researcher, including hypertext links to useful papers

Project Feedback

- Advanced trainees receive a mark out of 10 and brief comments from the marker (the comments may be moderated by the Chair)
- The results are sent to the Branch DOAT and to College HQ

Project Prize

- There is a prize for the best project!

