

Building research capacity at MCCC: The next three years – a strategic plan (2019 -2021)

Introduction

On Friday 23rd November 2018, a strategic planning meeting was held at MCCC’s Parkville office to develop a Research Strategy and Plan for the 2019-2021 triennium. Representatives from MCCC’s Communications Team, Medical Education portfolios (Education Integration, Research, and Education Development), Performance and Quality, Medical Educators, and the Board attended (Appendix A). Outcomes from the original visioning and planning day, held around two years ago, were used as a starting point for the meeting. The earlier meeting was also the origin of the organisation’s Research Unit. The report from that meeting, ‘Building a research culture at MCCC and improving the organisation’s research capacity’ was tabled at the MCCC Executive meeting in May, 2018 and provided a research vision and mission, and made seven recommendations for building MCCC’s research culture and capacity, some of which have been met.

Aim and Rationale

The aims of the meeting were firstly to review the recommendations from the previous meeting to see how far we had got in achieving these. The second step was to work on developing a strategic plan for the next three years. We wanted to keep the plan achievable and measurable, as well as be clear about what resources that would needed to complete the plan. The MCCC Vision and Mission statements regarding research were articulated following the first meeting and remain relevant (see Box 1). An important outcome of the November planning day has been an amendment to the Vision statement, which is underlined to highlight this inclusion.

Box 1. The MCCC research vision and mission
<p>Vision</p> <p><u>MCCC is recognised as a centre of research excellence</u>, where research is understood, valued, and encouraged at all levels of the organisation.</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>MCCC recognises that individual registrars, supervisors, medical educators, and employees have varied interests in research. These interests span a continuum from awareness of research to research leadership.</p> <p>MCCC expects all clinicians and medical educators to be research literate and able to utilise research findings in their practice.</p> <p>MCCC fosters, supports and encourages registrars, supervisors, medical educators and MCCC staff to undertake research training, design, conduct, and publish high-quality research.</p>

In addition to these statements, it was felt that it would be helpful to elaborate the reasons why research is important to our organisation, and why we want it to play a more significant role over the next three-year period.

MCCC is committed to providing high quality General Practice education. One of the cornerstones of this is to have a program that is informed by the research literature on best practice in medical education. We want our registrars to practice using an evidence-based approach, and we want our medical educators and supervisors to teach using an evidence-based approach. This means critically

questioning the way we deliver the program and using research to inform the work we do; altering our practices where appropriate.

We want:

- MCCC registrars and educators to be able to critically appraise information; that is, to be research literate.
- MCCC to be more focussed on research than it has been in the past, not as an end in itself, but as a means to inform best practice.
- MCCC to be involved in education research that is relevant to its ongoing mission.

The first two years – how have we gone?

Below are the seven recommendations and a summary of what has been achieved.

i. Ratify the proposed vision and mission statements for research at MCCC.

Ratified by MCCC Board on 14/10/16.

ii. Promote and celebrate research in MCCC marketing material.

There has been occasional reporting rather than a systematic targeting of research-related stories. Possibility for change with new Communications Manager.

iii. Employ an ongoing ‘senior’ GP researcher to be a ‘research champion’ at MCCC.

Appointment of Dr Duncan Howard as Education Portfolio Manager Research from 07/04/17.

iv. Establish ongoing funding for research.

Some monies have been provided for research-related activities, but there is a lack of clarity about the size of the budget, who controls it, and how to access it.

v. Establish and resource a research committee.

First meeting of the Research Committee on 28/07/17. (Subsequent meetings on 14/11/17 and 20/02/18.) The Committee is scheduled to meet quarterly. This Strategic Plan (2019-21) is the result of a planning workshop on November 23rd, 2018 and is a synthesis of material developed.

vi. Develop an education program in basic research skills for registrars, supervisors and medical educators.

Some steps have been undertaken by the Education Integration portfolio.

vii. Explore possibilities for the Evaluation (big ‘E’) of different elements of the education and training program (e.g. curriculum, assessment, workshops, in- and out-of-practice teaching and learning).

There is no particular project that meets this envisioned goal. There are some smaller Quality Assurance activities.

Although the achievements related to the seven recommendations are somewhat patchy, it was recognised that the research activity within MCCC is now more fully developed than it was. In 2017/2018 we were involved in one ERG project. In 2018/2019 we are involved in three ERG projects. In 2017 we had two academic registrars; in 2018 we had three; and in 2019 we will have six.

There is a recognition that although there has been increased activity, that much of this activity is temporary; that is, it is funded only for a year at a time, and if no more grants are successful, the activity will drop back again to the former low levels.

Funding has been made available for a half-time Senior Research Fellow, whose role will be to develop the ongoing research activities within MCCC. It was thought that we had employed such a person, but unfortunately this fell through, and we are now in the process of recruiting again.

An achievable and coherent plan

At the planning day, the large group split in to three working groups. The aim was that the categories under which these three groups worked would inform the development of the working plan. The three categories were 'Celebrating and promoting research'; 'Networks and Relationships'; and 'Education and training in research literacy/Evidence-based medicine (EBM)'.

Each working group created a draft strategic plan related to the over-arching category. The plan has been created in a modified version of the MCCC Strategic Plan template, to emphasise the outcomes wanted; the action needed to get there; how we know if we are getting there; and the resources and personnel needed to get there. Our aim was to create a plan that is practicable.

In re-drafting the strategic plan, the aim was to keep the outcomes to a minimum and not clutter the plan with a series of micro-steps that are better-suited to a more operational plan. As a result, some detail generated during and as a result of planning day actions is contained in endnotes or available in the meeting's archive material. The expectation is, therefore, that the personnel identified as responsible for actions will undertake additional planning to meet the related outcomes.

Financial implications of the strategic plan

Each step of the plan has some detail about the resources and personnel required to complete that step. Clearly there are significant financial implications for MCCC of committing to the plan. Detailed financial costs of each step will become cleared in the operational phase but currently we are asking for the organisational support that is needed for the plan to succeed.

There is also an assumption that employees will have the expected access to the requisite IT to fulfil their role.

Once the plan has been approved by the Research Committee, it will be sent to the Executive for consideration.

Dr Duncan Howard – 28th February 2019

Domain	Outcome	Action	Responsibility	Measurement and Evaluation	Resources/ Personnel
Networks and relationships	Established research networks and strong research relationships with external stakeholders.	Regular meetings, either in person or via IT, with key personnel at ACRRM and RACGP. ^{i, ii}	Research ME Team Leader	Contact record of meetings with Colleges' personnel. Reflections in annual research report of the status and utility of the research relationships with the Colleges.	Research ME Team Leader Senior Research Fellow Time for meetings and travel Travel budget
		Regular meetings with key personnel from Victorian Universities, PHNs, and Research facilities. ⁱⁱⁱ	Research ME Team Leader	Contact record of meetings with stakeholder personnel. Reflections in annual research report of the status and utility of the research relationships with Victorian PHNs, Universities, etc..	Research ME Team Senior Research Fellow Time for meetings and travel Travel budget
		Environmental Scan of past and current research conducted by relevant university departments (e.g. Departments of General Practice and Rural Clinical Schools) and PHNs in order identify common research interests and 'partnership potential'.	Senior Research Fellow	Written report and associated database. Number of new partnerships formed between MCCC and Universities, Victorian PHNs, and Research facilities.	Senior Research Fellow Time to undertake this piece of work

	Ethical and efficient processes in place for the management of requests from external parties to use MCCC's human and material resources in research projects	A fair and transparent process for managing external research requests is in place and accessible by the end of April 2019.		Research ME Team Leader Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research)	Policy available on the website. Number of research requests and number of requests granted.	Research ME Team Leader Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research) Research Committee time Communications Team time
Education and training in research literacy/EBM	Clinicians: Registrars, Supervisors, Medical Educators to be research literate and able to use research findings <i>effectively</i>	All	Create a working party to examine core curricula of both Colleges to identify EBM and research learning objectives to inform the teaching of registrars, supervisors and MEs.	Education Portfolio Manager – Curriculum Research ME Team Leader Supervisor and ME Professional development	Curriculum document	ME time Registrar ME time Senior Research Fellow Venue IT Travel
		Registrars	To design, deliver and evaluate educational programs about research and EBM to AGPT ^{iv} registrars appropriate to their level of knowledge and experience. (This includes a program for novices and an extension for those with research experience.) ^v	Education Portfolio Manager - Curriculum Medical Educator ^{vi}	Metrics about education delivered (e.g. hours, courses, and so on) to number of registrars. Evaluation report based on registrars' reactive evaluation data.	Medical Educator team time MCCC-wide educational planning group. May need teleconferencing licences (e.g. Zoom)

		Supervisors	Gauge interest, knowledge, and capacity of GP-supervisors in EBM/research both for their own practice and their teaching.	Senior Research Fellow Supervisor and ME Professional Development (Role title)	Descriptive written report	Senior Research Fellow Time. Supervisor time. ME time.
			Develop flexible training materials to support supervisors to practice and teach EBM/research. ^{vii}	Supervisor and ME Professional development Research ME Team Leader	Metrics about education delivered (e.g. hours, courses, and so on) to number of supervisors. Evaluation report based on supervisors' reactive evaluation data.	Supervisor PD ME team time Supervisor time Venue time Catering (if face-to-face) Research ME Team Leader
		Medical Educators	Develop flexible training materials to support Medical Educators to teach EBM/research. ^{viii}	Education Portfolio Manager – Curriculum Research ME Team Leader Supervisor and ME Professional development	Metrics about education delivered (e.g. hours, courses, and so on) to number of MEs. Evaluation report based on MEs' reactive evaluation data. >80%? of MEs to feel more confident and competent to incorporate teaching of EBM and research within their current practice after training. ^{ix}	ME time Registrar ME time Senior Research Fellow Venue IT Travel

			Develop flexible training for MEs to ensure that design and delivery of teaching and learning by MEs is evidence-informed.	Education Portfolio Manager – Curriculum Research ME Team Leader Supervisor and ME Professional development	Metrics about education delivered (e.g. hours, courses, and so on) to number of MEs. Evaluation report based on MEs’ reactive evaluation data. >80%? of MEs to feel more confident and competent to design and deliver evidence-informed teaching and learning after training.	ME time Registrar ME time Senior Research Fellow Venue IT Travel
			Four MEs to attend the RACGP ‘EBM train the trainer’ program in 2019 and be involved in activities which enable Registrars, Supervisors and Medical Educators to use research findings and to be research literate.	Research ME Team Leader Medical Educator	Certificates of completion. Discussion in annual performance review of past, current, and future involvement in ‘teaching’ research literacy.	ME time Course fees Travel
Celebrating and promoting research	Utilising the experience together with knowledge, skills, abilities and orientations (KSAOs) of Academic Registrars in MCCC research and the ongoing education of GP Registrar cohorts		Develop a database of past and current Academic Registrars; to include information about their interest and capacity to be involved in MCCC’s research and training activities. ^{x, xi}	Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research)	Up-to-date database of past and current Academic Registrars.	Senior Research Fellow time Project Officer (Research) time Academic Registrar time

	Publishing high quality Research	Identify and disseminate research funding opportunities.	Senior Research Fellow ^{xii} Project Officer (Research)	Up-to-date database of research funding opportunities. Percentage of successful grant applications. Revenue generated.	Senior Research Fellow time Project Officer (Research) time
		Compile a database of past and current research projects, including projects completed by previous component RTPs.	Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research)	Up-to-date database of past and current projects, including related artefacts (e.g. papers and presentations).	Senior Research Fellow time Project Officer (Research) time
		Undertake research and evaluation related to the current educational program ^{xiii}	Research ME Team Leader Education Portfolio Manager – Curriculum Senior Research Fellow	Number of research and evaluation projects related to the educational program per annum. Evidence of MCCC changing educational practices in response to research impact.	ME time Researcher time Internal or external funding Travel IT
	Research ideas are submitted from MCCC personnel for consideration and development.	To publicise and promote the ‘research ideas’ template. ^{xiv}	Research ME Team Leader Senior Research Fellow	Number of ideas submitted to the Research Committee Categorisation of range of ideas submitted to the Research Committee Number of ideas that were further developed (by category).	Senior Research Fellow time Research Committee time IT time MCCC personnel (for developing ideas)

	<p>Research is a standing agenda item on MCCC meetings^{xv}</p>	<p>The Executive to communicate this outcome to Chairs of meetings. Members of the Research Unit prepare an update of material relevant to the respective meetings.</p>	<p>CEO/DMET Research ME Team Leader Senior Research Fellow Chairs of meetings</p>	<p>Annual report from Chairs to Research ME Team Leader on the utility of research focus and discussion.</p>	<p>CEO/DMET time Research ME Team Leader time Senior Research Fellow time Chairs of meetings time Time and Cost of people doing reports or preparing for the meetings Meeting time</p>
	<p>Research is a standing item in MCCC communications</p>	<p>To engage the Communications Team in disseminating research news.</p>	<p>Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research)</p>	<p>Number of stories released each month. Metrics on who has accessed the news items.</p>	<p>Senior Research Fellow time Project Officer (Research) time Communications team time Time and cost for people to write the items.</p>
	<p>An annual series of research-related activities within MCCC</p>	<p>A proposal to be submitted to the second Research Committee meeting in 2019.^{xvi}</p>	<p>Research ME Team Leader Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research)</p>	<p>Report submitted to Research Committee and recommendations made to Executive. To include draft budget.</p>	<p>Research ME Team Leader time Senior Research Fellow time Project Officer (Research) time</p>

					Research Committee time
	Producers of research findings to present at external fora (e.g. conferences, seminars)	Producers of research findings to submit abstracts to external fora.	Members of research teams	Number of abstracts submitted. Number of external presentations delivered.	Research unit member time Financial support from MCCC to attend conferences (in addition to any monies in research grants)
	An engaging and up-to-date research portal within the MCCC website	The revised website to be released by the end of April 2019. Continuous updating of the website.	Communications Team Senior Research Fellow Project Officer (Research)	Metrics on who has accessed the website. Reflections in Research ME Team Leader's annual research report of the utility of the research website.	Senior Research Fellow time Project Officer (Research) time Communications Team time Research ME Team Leader time

Appendix A

Attendees at the strategic planning meeting

23rd November 2019

Greg McMeel

Dr Duncan Howard

Christine Bottrell

Dr Eldon Lyon

Dr Mark Burgemeister

Tim Clement

Dr Meredith Temple-Smith

Kyrillos Guirguis

Dr Jenni Parsons

Dr Alison Brown

Dr Paul Grinzi

Dr Manisha Fernando

Nevena Jelovac-Pavelic (minutes)

Endnotes

The Strategic Plan is a synthesis of multiple people's work from the strategic planning meeting. In the Endnotes we have saved some suggestions that we did not think fitted in the plan, and on occasion given a commentary. We refers to DH, CB and TC.

ⁱ One sub-group from the strategic planning meeting identified Immediate, Short-term and Long-term actions. We thought that this was too much detail for a Strategic Plan and would sit better in the related Operational Plan. Where some of that detail might prove useful for developers of Operational Plans, it has been put it in an endnote.

ⁱⁱ A suggestion was to invite College personnel to be part of MCCC's research Committee. We thought that it was inappropriate and unlikely that they would accept the invitation. Some suggested names to develop links with were: (ACRRM) Chair of Research Committee; (RACGP) Chair of the Expert Committee Research.

ⁱⁱⁱ Suggested names to contact: Prof. MTS, University of Melbourne; Dr. JMc, Deakin University.

One suggestion was for MCCC to liaise with the Universities to influence the undergraduate curriculum, so that registrars arrived in the AGPT program with core research knowledge, skills and abilities. We thought that this was overly ambitious in this Strategic Plan.

^{iv} This action excludes doctors on the PEP programme. Our understanding is that there is no current funding for teaching doctors enrolled on the PEP.

^v There are different ways of meeting this goal. This must be developed by the relevant MEs. One option is that it is woven into the existing curriculum, as is the intention with Aboriginal Health. This change to the curriculum would need to be communicated to the registrars.

^{vi} Where possible we have put role titles rather than individual's names. Is there a specific role title to put where this is not the case, as here?

^{vii} There are a number of existing resources, so it might be a question of curating these. E.g. Flinders EBM guide <http://flinders.libguides.com/EBM>; the RACGP train the trainer research material.

^{viii} As the earlier endnote. Utilise existing resources in the first instance see above.

^{ix} One group started to make suggestions for the syllabus. E.g. understanding of established referencing styles for citations, source documentation and recommendations, knowledge of EMB terminology.

^x One suggestion was for Academic Registrars to create small videos for MeL to talk and 'advertise' what they are researching. We thought that we had to be practical in asking Academic Registrars to take on tasks as they are full-time trainees and time limited. The suggestion support MEs and GP-Supervisors in MCCC research education and take on mentoring may be too much? As a first step we thought it better to look at individual capacity.

^{xi} One suggestion related to perceived responsibilities of Academic Registrars. It was proposed that on receipt of an Academic Post, an Academic Registrar has collegial responsibility in terms of research support to other Academic Registrars and the MCCC research program. We thought this was probably unreasonable. See the previous endnote.

^{xii} Identifying funding opportunities is a responsibility in the Senior Research Fellow's position description.

^{xiii} It has been repeatedly pointed out that there are many things that MCCC does in delivering education that could be evaluated as a small research projects to get started. E.g. the use of webinars, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health education, and the use and engagement with Moodle.

^{xiv} The research template could be presented at meetings under the research agenda item.

^{xv} Suggestions for agenda and newsletter content were: discussions of how research might inform the work of the specific meetings, information about current projects, articles on doing research; and ideas about possible research projects.

^{xvi} Some ideas for research activities were a research 'Open Day' or 'Research Week', where a variety of activities may occur, including: presentations from current researchers, academic registrars, and external researchers. Modes of delivery might include: asynchronous presentations, videos on the MCCC website. Such activities have significant budgetary implications.