Centennial Award 2019 – 2022

The purpose of the Centennial Award has always been the promotion and encouragement of excellence and skills in some aspect of professional, commercial, technical or practical endeavour. Awards are made to researchers with at least three years’ practical experience after qualifying in their respective fields, and who wish to improve their skills by study or practical experience out of New Zealand.

In 2019, the Centennial Award recipient was Ms Sarah Candy BHSc (Physiotherapy),

BSc Waikato University and Post Graduate Diploma in Cardio respiratory Rehabilitation.

Sarah is currently working at Counties Manukau Health as the Senior Respiratory Physiotherapist & Pulmonary Rehabilitation Co-ordinator.

Having been associated with cardio respiratory physiotherapy for over twenty years, Sarah’s passion is in exercise prescription and working with people limited by breathlessness. In this field, she is widely acknowledged as one of New Zealand’s leading clinicians. Recently, Sarah has enrolled to complete her PhD through Auckland University of Technology.

The 2-year Centennial Award grant In 2019, was funding toward a 3-year research project designed to understand the needs, preferences and priorities of end users for the development of an adaptive mobile PR (mPR) support program, as an alternative means of delivering pulmonary rehabilitation for thousands of New Zealanders unable to access services, and so improve the uptake of this important intervention.

This year, the Centennial Award Committee approved a one-year extension of Sarah’s grant which enables the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of NZ to remain associated with this very important 3-year project through to its anticipated completion in early 2022.

Some facts:

COPD (or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) is incurable damage to the lungs. It may also be known as chronic bronchitis or emphysema. It affects almost 1 in 6 New Zealanders over the age of 45 – approximately 200,000 people or 14% of the adult population.

COPD is a progressive disease and follows cancer, heart disease and stroke as the 4th most common cause of death in NZ. And while there is no cure, COPD can be managed to improve quality of life. Yet less than 1%of those afflicted seek medication and rehabilitation, citing depression, transportation difficulties and interruption to daily routines. Those in remote areas claim access to health facilities are unattainable or unaffordable.

But non-treatment leads to premature hospitalization and places a heavy burden upon our Health system, both in cost and bed-space. High-risk groups include the rural, elderly and socioeconomically deprived, with Maori and Pacific peoples especially over-represented. Covid-19 is a frightening threat for these groups.

This project objective, in association with the Waitemata and Counties-Manukau District Health Boards, is to pioneer change and develop a dedicated and personalized mobile phone application to facilitate the delivery of advice, support, and education to COPD sufferers.

Due to the advent of Covid-19, this 3-year program has taken on even more significance, and we look forward to welcoming Sarah to our 2022 Convocation next March, with the COPD Health App; through a combination of technology and patient acceptance; beginning to deliver life-changing benefits for thousands of New Zealand COPD-sufferers, while simultaneously targeting high risk groups to improve equity and reduce the heavy cost burden associated with COPD.

Companions can feel justifiably proud that this particular Award is not only materially assisting the development of a vital personal health tool with the potential to become both life-changing and life-saving for thousands of vulnerable New Zealanders, but is also simultaneously supporting the academic career of a gifted and recognised authority in her specialised field of pulmonary disease management and mitigation. Both will benefit our community for many years to come.

The final words belong to Sarah: “Many thanks to the Royal Arch Masons for extending your support of my project for a further year. I wish to also thank you for inviting me to Masterton and allowing me to speak at your annual convocation.

Since we last met in Nelson, we have had an extraordinary year. This has been challenging for many people in a variety of different ways. From our perspective in the pulmonary rehabilitation service, the national restrictions required us to change the way we delivered care. This created challenges but also great learning opportunities.

Over the past year, I have focused on the content development for the mobile pulmonary rehabilitation app (mPR-app). This has involved extensive testing and trialing of home based exercise programs delivered remotely and creating content for a self-management education program. We have also worked closely with app developers to create a new clear, simple and usable prototype of mPR.

The later part of the year has been focusing on end user testing of the mPR-app to ensure everything from the colour, the font and the content is clear and effective.

We are now gearing up to test the mPR-app. The study protocol has been written and ethics applications submitted. This testing will allow us to examine if the app is able to improve access and adherence to pulmonary rehabilitation for people living with a chronic respiratory condition.

I wish to thank you again for your support and I look forward to sharing our study findings with you in 2022.

Kindest regards

Sarah