



## RACP Foundation Research Awards

### YEAR 1 PROGRESS REPORT

<b>Project / Program Title</b>	Gender equity as a social determinant of health: consolidating the evidence base. An analysis of gender equity and maternal mortality in lower income countries.	
<b>Name</b>	Dr Catherine Bateman-Steel	
<b>Award Received</b>	2016 RACP NHMRC JJ Billings Award	
<b>Report Date</b>	1 February 2017	
<b>Chief Investigator / Supervisor</b>	Prof Anthony Zwi	
<b>Administering Institution</b>	University of New South Wales (UNSW)	
<b>Funding Period</b>	Start Date:	1 January 2016
	Finish Date:	31 December 2018

#### PROJECT SUMMARY

Globally over a quarter of a million women die annually as a result of pregnancy and childbirth. Evidence suggests that the vast majority of these deaths would be preventable if women were able to access appropriate health-care and social support. Based on this evidence global development targets have been set, and a growing global movement has increased financial support, to improve access to life saving interventions. This thesis is based on the notion that global movements and development targets require an equally strong policy focus on gender equity, as they have on community and health care interventions, if maternal mortality is to be adequately addressed. The aim is to provide a detailed analysis and critique of how gender equity has been considered and measured within the maternal mortality field globally, and to further explore evidence for a link between gender equity and maternal health outcomes in lower income countries.

The thesis will begin with a meta-narrative review to explore theory, concepts and narratives of gender equity within the field of maternal mortality. Subsequently a critical review of current composite measures of gender equity will be undertaken. Building on these earlier stages an ecological analysis looking at measures of gender equity and their relation to progress in reducing maternal mortality at national level will be carried out.

#### PROJECT AIMS / OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research thesis is to explore the concept of, and evidence for, gender equity as a social determinant of health, with a specific focus on maternal mortality as a health outcome.

Main question: Using maternal mortality as an indicator, can the hypothesis that global health targets cannot be met without attention to gender equity be supported by evidence?

This question will be explored via inter-related sections, each with a set of sub-questions.

1. What are the main theories, narratives and constructs of gender equity that have been operationalised for health analyses and target-setting? (Meta-narrative review chapter to consider the conceptual and theoretical basis for the analysis)
2. What is the evidence base for gender equity as a determinant of maternal mortality? (Epidemiological quantitative analyses)
  - a. What composite measures of gender equity currently exist and how well do they perform, particularly in relation to understanding health outcomes? How has gender equity been conceptualised in creation of composite measures and how might this affect the way the measures perform? (Critique of gender equity measures to establish a basis for measurement of gender constructs for health analyses)
  - b. What associations can be demonstrated between measures of gender equity and health outcomes (maternal mortality) at a country-level? (ecological analysis of inter-country variability in maternal mortality to extend the evidence base for gender equity as a determinant of health)

### **SIGNIFICANCE AND OUTCOMES**

As the world enters a new era of global development, in which SDGs were implemented from 2016 onwards, it is vital that carefully considered, scientifically sound, and policy relevant, evidence is generated to critique and build on the prior era of the MDGs. Social determinants and equity, especially in relation to gender, have gained a central place on the development agenda but these factors need to be well understood theoretically and practically, effectively measured to encompass real-life nuances, and be presented in a manner that facilitates strong policy engagement. This thesis is timely as it coincides with the first phase of the SDG agenda and aims to apply rigorous scientific techniques to extending the evidence base around a key social determinant. It has the potential to make an important contribution not only to the SDGs but to other global health strengthening and gender equity initiatives.

### **PUBLICATIONS / PRESENTATIONS**

An article considering gender aspects of Zika virus was published in The Conversation in November 2016.

No formal publications at this stage as first year of six-year part-time PhD