2014 has been another busy year in the project. We started by welcoming A/Prof Bernadette Richards from the University of Adelaide onto the project as a CI with expertise in health law, and a special interest in consent. Bernadette will lead on legal issues for the project. The main focus of our work this year has been the qualitative study at West Sydney Local Health District, where Katrina Hutchison has interviewed 22 clinicians, managers and nurses about their views on surgical innovation. Katrina’s research questions focus on the definition of innovative surgery and how it is recognized and managed, the kinds of ethical questions that it raises, and issues around patient information and consent. The data are currently being analysed by Katrina and Swantje Lorrimer-Mohr, and we plan to publish our results over the next twelve months. Preliminary results were presented at a workshop at the Australian Association of Bioethics conference in Perth, and at our own workshop on consent.

Our main event for the year was a workshop on Consent to Surgical Innovations, held at Macquarie University. The workshop included presentations on participants’ views about consent from our qualitative research (Katrina Hutchison and Swantje Lorrimer-Mohr), practical issues in seeking patient consent (Prof Henry Pleass, Westmead) and legal viewpoints on consent to innovative procedures (A/Prof Bernadette Richards). Dr Kim Hill (Westmead) and Ms Blaise Lyons (Principal Legal Officer, NSW Health) provided commentaries. The workshop was well attended by individuals from academia, the Ministry of Health and practitioners, leading to productive discussions.

In August we hosted a workshop with Prof Robert Frodeman (University of North Texas). Bob is an expert in ‘philosophy in the field’, which is a way of doing philosophy grounded in practical projects and problems arising from the ‘real’ world. Our project very much fits this model as the challenge of supporting responsible innovation is a practical one facing health services around the world.

In September, Katrina and Wendy Rogers were invited to present our tool to identify surgical innovation at a clinical risk seminar for directors of clinical governance. The tool is based upon our definition of innovative surgery and provides a simple way of identifying when a procedure is innovative and so trigger appropriate supports. We received very positive feedback with 85% of participants noting that our session met their learning needs:

“I really enjoyed learning about innovation and the screening tool”

Finally, our project was “Highly commended” in the 2014 Mq research excellence awards for Humanities and Social Science research, and Wendy Rogers won the inaugural Faculty of Arts award for Research Leadership and Mentoring for her role in the project.
2014 Activities and Outcomes

Publications


Myerson D. Is there a right to access innovative surgery? Bioethics (Article first published online: 3 SEP 2014: DOI: 10.1111/bioe.12111)


We have further papers under review/in preparation on the innovation identification tool, regulation of innovation, justice and the Da Vinci robot, and consent.

Presentations


Rogers WA.’ Challenges in identifying innovation and potential ways forward’, Medical Grand Round, St George Hospital, Sydney, 3 July 2014.


Hutchison K, Lorrimor-Mohr S. ‘Health professionals’ views on consent to innovative surgery’. Consent to Surgical Innovations workshop Macquarie University October 31st 2014


Johnson J. 'The problem of conflicts of interest in surgery'. Health Services Research Unit, Aberdeen, UK, November 24th 2014.


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