



Michelle Courtney-Harris
Associate Lecturer, PhD Candidate
Graduate School of Health, Orthoptics
15 Broadway, Ultimo NSW 2007

T: +61 2 9514 7237
M: +61 (0) 408 415 580
Michelle.courtney-harris @uts.edu.au

PO Box 123
Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
www.uts.edu.au

UTS CRICOS PROVIDER CODE 00099F

Statement Summary: impact of the of research on Post stroke visual impairment carried out by Prof Fiona Rowe since 2013 at The University of Liverpool

This statement was written after the respondent consented to be interviewed, this was transcribed and summarised and returned to the respondent for corroboration of fact and to give an opportunity to add any omitted details

I lecture at UTS within the division of orthotics' I am currently doing my PhD and my thesis is around stroke. I recently completed the validation of a vision screening tool to be used by non-eye care health professionals to be used in Australia, and I've also developed an online learning module to go with it which I am currently evaluating. The vision screening tool was developed by Australian orthoptists who were concerned about stroke survivors who were not receiving timely and adequate visual assessments and or intervention. I have just recently been asked to be part of the Australian stroke society's living guidelines project. Where I provide input about new research and its impact on current care of stroke patients in Australia (ie is the research content relevant and does it change or affect current guidelines in place). Prof Rowe is one of my secondary supervisors on my PhD. I was introduced to her via my head of discipline. Fiona had come out to Australia and UTS as a guest speaker/invited lecturer which was when we met. My primary supervisor is not an expert in the area of stroke related visual problems and while we do have orthoptists with expertise in stroke and visual management, we don't have anyone in Australia with the extensive research background and qualifications that could help me at the level that I needed, so we formed an alliance. Fiona's in the past has talked at some our national conference, and local continuing education events with an emphasis on educating our clinicians.

In the process of completing this PhD a significant amount of my background reading has included papers where Fiona was either lead author or co-author. The work that has been done in the UK is to and extent being mirrored here in Australia. I was fortunate enough to spend 3 weeks with her in the UK earlier this year, which was a great opportunity in many ways, as not only was I able to sit in with some of her meetings / consultations for some of her other projects, I was also able to use the time to have Fiona's support and immediate input into my thesis writing. After the time spent in Liverpool with Fiona and learning how the UK health system assesses and manages their stroke population, I would like to emulate in Australia what is currently happening in the UK. Which includes a patient who's had a stroke needs to have their vision assessed by an orthoptist. We currently don't have that policy here in Australia. I am currently looking at implementing a similar pathway with an orthoptist as a

compulsory screener, they would then refer on to a tertiary centre as needed. A problem here in Australia is that we currently don't have enough orthoptists working in our public health system and not all hospitals have dedicated eye departments, therefore the value of an orthoptist is currently very undervalued, in order for this to change the value of the orthoptist needs to be proved. At the moment when a referral is made for a stroke patient to seek further assessment as per the vision screening tool. The patient is directed straight to an ophthalmologist or the ophthalmic department in the hospital (if they have one). Unfortunately here in Australia, especially in rural and remote areas those ophthalmic resources are quite stretched as we have a lot of fly in/fly out, we don't have permanent ophthalmologists in those areas so it can be quite stressful.

Fiona and I have talked about collaborative research with regards to looking at the stroke population here and the UK, and also about the services provided and how we can improve patient outcomes and care. It's reassuring to see that my research and implementation of the screening tool here in Australia is on the right track, as it had been done in the UK and it appears successful.

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Courtney-Hans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.