PROJECT TITLE: Aussie Fans in Training (Aussie-FIT): Using sport as a vehicle to impact the health of men with or at risk of clinical conditions

FIELD OF RESEARCH CODE: 1701

PROJECT SYNOPSIS:

Our Aussie Fans in Training (Aussie-FIT) program addresses the urgent need for an innovative, feasible, appealing and efficacious weight loss program that appeals to men. Aussie-FIT capitalises on men’s passion for their favourite sport or team, using this ‘hook’ to engage them in a theory- and evidence-informed 12-week program that empowers men to improve their health behaviours, develop healthy habits, and self-regulate their physical activity and eating behaviours (see published protocol for details on our recently completed pilot). While most health initiatives struggle to engage men, our pilot study indicated that Aussie-FIT was highly appealing and effective in promoting outcomes critical to healthy aging (e.g., weight, diet, physical activity, mental health). The successful PhD candidate will contribute towards our efforts to broaden the program reach and improve sustainability, via adaptations to engage and benefit men experiencing, or at risk, of clinical conditions (e.g.,
heart disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer) and with the potential to explore online modes of program delivery.

The PhD candidate project details are preliminary at this stage but are likely to include 1) a systematic review of the literature to identify the nature of interventions found to be effective in improving men's physical activity, eating behaviours and weight, with a focus on mode of delivery (e.g., group vs individual, in-person vs online) and content (e.g., educational, theoretical underpinning, behaviour change techniques); 2) a qualitative study to explore barriers and facilitators to engagement in physical activity and healthy eating among men at risk of, or diagnosed with a clinical condition; and 3) a feasibility study of the Aussie-FIT program when adapted for delivery among men with cardiovascular disease. In so doing, the PhD scholar will develop a broad range of research skills (quantitative and qualitative) and knowledge of cross-disciplinary theoretical frameworks (e.g., intervention mapping for designing interventions) increasing their employability across an array of sectors.

FEASIBILITY AND RESOURCING – DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT THIS PROJECT WILL RECEIVE:

The successful candidate will register for a PhD in Psychology under the primary supervision of Dr Eleanor Quested and join the vibrant Physical Activity and Well-Being Research Group. The wider supervisory team will include Associate Professor Daniel Gucciardi, Professor Nikos Ntoumanis and Professor Cecilie Thogersen-Ntoumani. These study methodologies replicate those employed many times by the supervisory committee, so no feasibility issues are anticipated. The proposed PhD activities have been risk assessed and contingencies developed, including for COVID-19 associated disruption. The PhD will be associated with funded research projects (e.g., Heart Foundation funded research to pilot an adapted version of Aussie-FIT for men with cardiovascular disease).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT/ PROGRAM FOR THE ENROLLING SCHOOL OR INSTITUTION:

Since 2016, the Aussie-FIT program has demonstrated a promising trajectory of success exemplified by significant grant funding ($557k), quality publications (BMC Public Health, Plos Medicine) and media publicity (e.g., Channel 7 News, The West Australian double-page spread). The PhD candidate will become a valued member of this team and will contribute to the growth of this important area of research. Their work will have the potential to make an important difference to the health and well-being of men with chronic conditions in Australia.

PROJECT LEAD CONTACT:

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