

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Catherine Butterfield, Media and Communications Consultant, Mercy Health

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Associate Professor of Allied Health to lead improvement in women's and neonatal health

A new joint role has been announced by the Melbourne School of Health Sciences (MSHS) at the University of Melbourne, the Royal Women's Hospital (the Women's) and Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW) to help improve the lives of women and babies in Victoria.

Associate Professor Helena Frawley will commence in the new role of Associate Professor of Allied Health in mid-May. She will work closely with women's health, neonatal and allied health researchers and clinicians across the Women's and MHW to deliver health improvements for women and babies.

Associate Professor Frawley will provide leadership to support high-quality clinical research with the aim of identifying effective, evidence-led allied health interventions for women and babies in the fields of physiotherapy, pharmacy, social work, nutrition, speech therapy, radiology, psychology and more.

"Allied health professionals sit alongside medical staff, midwives and nurses as an integrated multidisciplinary team in clinical settings," Professor Linda Denehy, Head of MSHS said.

"They work closely with patients and families by actively promoting their engagement during recovery and rehabilitation, often acting as the link between hospital-based care and community-based care."

Four out of five of the departments at the Melbourne School of Health Sciences are allied health disciplines; Audiology & Speech Pathology, Physiotherapy, Social Work and Optometry and Vision Sciences, together with Nursing.

"Appointing Associate Professor Frawley to this position will allow us to develop research-supported interventions that improve outcomes for women and babies," Professor Denehy said.

Both the Women's and MHW are at the forefront of breakthroughs in women's and infants' health. The Women's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Sue Matthews said she is looking forward to building on the collaborative relationship between these two hospitals.

“Allied health professionals play a critical role in our care model at the Women’s,” Dr Matthews said.

“We hope to now encourage even more of them to pursue excellence through clinical research. Our Centre for Allied Health Research will benefit enormously from this partnership and Associate Professor Frawley’s appointment will help us translate research outcomes into evidence-based practice that benefits all our patients.”

Mercy Health - Health Services Chief Executive Jason Payne is also anticipating great things from the collaboration.

“I am excited to welcome Associate Professor Frawley to this new role,” Mr Payne said.

“We are very pleased to be working alongside an allied health researcher of her calibre to advance the pursuit of high-quality clinical research focused on the health and well-being of women and babies.”

An experienced and passionate health clinician, researcher and mentor, Associate Professor Frawley has worked in women’s health for nearly 30 years, founding the first women’s health dedicated private physiotherapy practice in Melbourne in 1992. She was the recipient of a [Victorian Cancer Agency Mid-Career Fellowship](#) earlier this year to improve pelvic floor outcomes in women following gynaecological cancer treatment, and is also engaged in an MRFF-funded research project on endometriosis and pelvic floor pain being undertaken at the Women’s and MHW.

Her vision as Associate Professor of Allied Health is to improve the health of women through clinical mentorship and research.

“When I started my research career in 2001, my area of research was in its infancy in Australia, and I did not have an allied health supervisor or mentor in women’s health,” Associate Professor Frawley said.

“I strive to leave a legacy of research supervision and mentorship in women’s and babies’ health, so that my students will lead future generations of clinicians and researchers in Allied Health and contribute to improved outcomes in the health of women and babies in society.”

Associate Professor Frawley will divide her time between the two hospitals and is looking forward to cementing the relationship across the university and partner hospitals.

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

Catherine Butterfield
Media and Communications Consultant
Mercy Health
M: 0490 429 457
Email: CButterfield@mercy.com.au