

TALL POPPY CAMPAIGN

Investing in Australia's Future

Young Tall Poppy Profile: Dr Rebecca Ivers

Name: Rebecca Ivers

Title (ie. Dr, Assoc Prof, etc): Associate Professor

Research Field: Epidemiology, Public Health

More Specifically: Injury prevention, particularly road traffic injury

In other words: Research to understand and prevent injury

Abbreviated Qualifications: Bachelor of Optometry, Masters Degree in Public Health, PhD (Epidemiology)

Current position: Director, Injury Division

University/Institution: The George Institute, The University of Sydney

What do you do? (in 100 easy-to-understand words or less)

I study road traffic injury and ways to reduce its impact, both in Australia and in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. My research includes studies that measure the prevalence of injury, studies to understand risk factors for injury and develop programs to prevent it. I also conduct work that evaluates the effectiveness of programs aimed to prevent injury. Some important topics for my research are young drivers, motorcycle and truck safety and road safety for Aboriginal people. I also work with researchers in China, India and Vietnam to improve road safety in these countries.

Why is this research important? How is it relevant to society at large?

Road safety is a major issue worldwide with 1.2 million losing their lives on the road each year. Injury is the leading cause of death in young people in Australia. Road safety and the resulting injury is important for everyone.

What's difficult about it?

Trying to get people to understand that their actions on the roads can have major consequences for themselves and others.

Why are you passionate about it?

I am really passionate about the need to find ways to communicate research findings to the wider community.

Why share your research with high school students?

Because high school students can think really imaginatively about how we can improve things for everyone. It is important that we work with young people to find solutions for major problems such as prevention of road traffic injury.

Why study sciences?

I have always been interested in science, because it helps explain why things happen. This is particularly important for understanding how injury happens – people often think that “accidents” are random events, but science helps us to understand that they are predictable and preventable events.

Is it what you've always wanted to do?

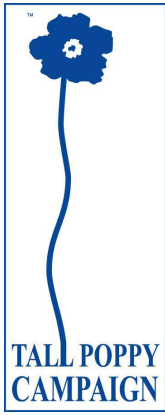
I always wanted to work in a field where I could make a difference to people's lives. I originally trained as an optometrist and spent 4 years working in clinical practice in the NT, both in cities and remote Aboriginal communities. I then studied public health and then epidemiology to help me make a difference at a population level, rather than just working with people one at a time. Working as an injury researcher allows me to work across a diverse range of projects from motorcycle helmets in Vietnam to Indigenous road safety in the NT.

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The Tall Poppy is a metaphor for excellence and endeavour and symbolises Australia's pride in its outstanding achievers – in all fields.

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What else are you into? (ie. What are your hobbies and interests when you're not researching)?
I go camping, bush-walking, mountain biking and kayaking with my family and friends.

Public profile (Please list the science promotion activities you have taken part in – incl. University Open Day activities, community programs, talks etc and media articles featuring you/your research):
I have communicated messages about my research via the media regularly over the past 5 years, and have even featured in Women's Day and Dolly Magazines! I have been interviewed on 60 Minutes, Sunrise, and have done multiple interviews for radio and print media, including writing an opinion piece in the Sydney Morning Herald. I have given 36 papers at scientific conferences and have also presented at 24 seminars to a range of audiences.

Your achievements - How did you get where you are today?

Your HSC subjects: 3U Maths, 3U English, 2U Chemistry, 2U Biology, General Studies

Degrees: Bachelor of Optometry (Honours) (UNSW, 1990), Masters of Public Health (U Syd, 1996), PhD (U Syd, 2001)

Some of your previous position/s:

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|----------------------|--|
| July 2001-April 2006 | Senior Research Fellow, The George Institute |
| 1996-2001 | PhD student, tutor, research assistant, School of Public Health |
| 1995 | Associate Lecturer, Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, The University of Sydney |
| 1990-1993 | Optometrist-Manager, private practice, NT |
| 1991-1993 | Consultant Optometrist, NT Aboriginal Eye Health Programme |

Current position: Director, Injury Division, the George Institute; Associate Professor, School of Public Health, University of Sydney

Relevant awards and prizes you have received as part of your studies/research/work:

- NHMRC Career Development Award 2008-2012
- Ian Potter Foundation Scholarship, Asialink Leadership Program, 2008
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Achievement Award (awarded December 2007 by Nicola Roxon, Federal Minister for Health)
- Team investigator – NHMRC Capacity Building Grant 2005-2008
- University of Sydney Sesqui Post-doctoral Fellowship 2002-2007
- Student travel bursary for Australasian Epidemiological Association Annual Scientific Meeting, 1997 and 1999
- Travel bursary, Student Workshop on Epidemiologic Methods, Society for Epidemiologic Research, Canada. June, 1997 (8 awarded to >100 applicants)
- NHMRC (Public Health) Doctoral Scholarship 1996-2000

Summary of published works:

I have published nearly 40 papers in scientific journals, coordinate a regular column "Cochrane Corner" to the key international journal Injury Prevention, and have written chapters on programme evaluation for three widely circulated good practice manuals for road safety practitioners published by WHO, World Bank, FIA Foundation and the Global Road Safety Partnership. I also wrote a chapter on road traffic injuries in the Encyclopaedia of Public Health published by Elsevier in 2008.

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