



Early Childhood Educators' Well-being Project (ECEWP)

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Introduction

Welcome to the first newsletter from the Early Childhood Educators' Well-being Project (ECEWP). Our research uses a holistic approach to examine the psychological and physiological aspects of early childhood educators' well-being within the context of their work environments. Our twice-yearly newsletter will keep you informed of the latest news and findings arising from this research.

About ECEWP

Over 900,000 Australian children attend early childhood children's services. The 153,000-plus early childhood educators working with these children need to be well in order to provide stable, stimulating, supportive, effective learning environments for these children. However, relatively little is known about early childhood educators' well-being. As part of our research we are assessing:

- **Psychological well-being** through a range of psychometric assessments
- **Physiological well-being** through health screening; biometric measures of height, weight, flexibility and blood pressure; salivary cortisol measures; cardio-respiratory activity and physical effort using [wearable technology](#)
- **Organisational context** through an online survey and interviews with early childhood organisations

By taking this holistic view, we hope to provide a more comprehensive understanding of early childhood educators' well-being that can then be used to inform interventions to better support and sustain the workforce.

Meet our research team

Early childhood researcher **Associate Professor Sandie Wong** (Macquarie University) co-leads the multidisciplinary research team investigating early childhood educators' well-being. Sandie is particularly focused on physiological well-being.



Co-investigator **Dr Tamara Cumming** (Charles Sturt University) is researching the emotional demands of early childhood work and the politics of their impact on educators' well-being.

Dr Helen Logan from Charles Sturt University is exploring the role of early childhood organisations in educators' well-being.



Assisting ECEWP's multidisciplinary team of researchers are Dr James Crane, Mr Alexander (Sandy) MacQuarrie, Dr Caroline Robertson, Dr Tegan Hartmann, Ms Salima Yeung and Ms Natalie Gorgioski. Project Assistant Kim Woodland also supports the research team.

ECEWP IN 2018

In the field

The ECEWP pilot study was completed in October and we are now collecting data from a further six sites across Australia. We would like to thank the 60 early childhood educators who have participated in the research so far. In addition, interviews with early childhood organisations on the topic of educator well-being have been completed and we appreciate their involvement in the project.

Innovative use of wearable technology



View video of the Hexoskin wearable technology

In a world-first, [ECEWP has piloted the use of Hexoskin wearable technology](#) to collect physiological well-being data from early childhood educators as part of our holistic assessment of their well-being. Hexoskin “smart shirts” are worn by the educators to monitor and record cardio-respiratory activity and physical effort at one-second intervals.

Using Hexoskins allows us to measure educators’ heart and breathing rates, their number of steps and activity intensity over the course of a day’s shift. This data is combined with general health checks, tests of salivary cortisol levels to determine stress levels, and a survey of the educators’ psychological well-being and work environment quality.

Our innovative and holistic data collection approach allows us for the first time to quantify how hard educators work during their day and what the particular stresses are on their bodies. Having this data will allow us to best target our efforts to find effective interventions.



Using Hexoskin wearable technology to collect data

Publications and presenting findings

In addition to our literature review on educators’ well-being, this year we published our theoretical approach to early childhood educators’ well-being in *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood: [Towards a holistic conceptualisation of early childhood educators’ work-related well-being](#)* (if you don’t have access to scholarly journals please contact us for an authors’ final copy). Preliminary findings from our research have also been presented at practitioner events with early childhood educators and at sector conferences.

ECEWP IN 2019

In early 2019 the whole team will meet to conduct multidisciplinary analysis of our data set and plan for academic and practitioner-oriented publications. We will be presenting on our methodological approach, and findings from our organisational stakeholders’ interviews, at Early Childhood Australia’s [AJEC Research Symposium](#) in Melbourne from 14–15 February.

Stakeholder roundtable event

Save the date: early April 2019

In early April 2019 we will hold an event in Sydney to consult with stakeholders about future directions for our research. We will present on findings, then use the [World Café Method](#) to help us understand what the pressing issues are for our sector. For further information please email Kim Woodland (kwoodland@csu.edu.au).

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