



COOPER HIV/AIDS RESEARCH TRAINING (CHART) PROGRAM

2024 PROGRAM BRIEF

Background

The [Kirby Institute](#) at UNSW Sydney is a leading global research institute, recognised for its excellence in HIV research. The Institute has a long-standing commitment to strengthening HIV research capacity in the Asia-Pacific region.

The [Cooper HIV/AIDS Research Training \(CHART\) Program](#) is an initiative proposed by the late Professor David Cooper, founding Director of the Kirby Institute. An unconditional education grant provided by ViiV Healthcare has enabled this program to become a reality.

High quality HIV research is essential to inform and improve clinical care and programming. Equally important is that research is locally driven and investigates issues of greatest priority and relevance to local stakeholders.

In the Asia-Pacific region, there are an estimated 6.5 million people currently living with HIV, with 65% on treatment¹. The HIV epidemic in this region is complex, with significant differences between countries. There is a need to strengthen the capacity for countries in the region to undertake high quality HIV research. This is reflected in the relatively low rates of HIV-related publications in peer-reviewed journals and the Kirby Institute's direct experience collaborating on regional HIV research projects.

Purpose

The CHART Program aims to inspire and increase the number of skilled and experienced researchers in the Asia-Pacific region, and to address local HIV-related priorities. It will generate country-specific research findings to help ensure high quality scientific evidence underpins regional HIV-related policy and practice.

Course overview

The CHART Program includes three intensive skill-based workshops, each of 5 days duration. The workshops will take place at the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney, over a 12-month period.

A total of nine participants from countries in the Asia-Pacific region will be selected via a competitive entry process. Participants will be healthcare professionals with an interest in HIV-related research from a combination of low-, middle- and high-income countries (please refer below for the list of eligible countries).

Participants will be provided with close guidance and mentoring support from experienced mentors lecturers and facilitators, both during the workshops and in the periods between, through to when manuscripts are submitted for publication. Participants will be encouraged to present findings at regional conferences, including the Asia Pacific AIDS & Co-infections Conference (APACC) by Virology Education.

Having a diversity of participants from low-, middle- and high-income countries is intended to facilitate the establishment of a regional support network between countries, and opportunities for collaborative HIV research projects. CHART alumni will be encouraged to provide mentoring support to new researchers.



Target audience: Healthcare professionals with an interest in HIV related research who are:

- Involved in HIV-related prevention, care and management, or
- Working within the Ministry of Health at a national or provincial level with responsibility for HIV-related policy development, or
- University academics working in public health or clinical research with involvement in HIV-related research

Eligible countries from the Asia Pacific region

Cambodia; China; Fiji; Hong Kong SAR, China; Indonesia; Japan; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Papua New Guinea; Philippines, Republic of Korea; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Taiwan; Thailand; Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

Workshop 1. Research questions and protocol development

Duration: 5 days

Purpose: To develop a thorough understanding of research principles and to ensure that a draft research protocol and an ethics submission form is produced before participants return to their home countries. The teaching will take place through lectures, discussions, exercises and use of completed and published operational research. Most importantly, the participants will develop their research questions and written protocols during the week with the support of the course lecturers and facilitators.

Brief content overview

- Introduction to operational research
- Research terminology
- Asking the right research questions
- Aims and objectives
- Developing research protocols
- Patients and data
- Simple analysis
- Ethics

Output: Draft protocol and ethics submission form. Submission of protocol and ethical review form(s) within 3 weeks of completing Workshop #1.

Workshop 2. Data management and analysis

Duration: 5 days

Purpose: To ensure that participants understand the importance of good data quality and have the skills to produce an efficient electronic data entry form, based on principles adaptable to their specific needs and understanding of data analysis.

Brief content overview

- Importance of good data
- Designing an efficient data entry instrument (*Epi Data* or the statistical data management program that is used in the specific health programs/institutions)
- Making an efficient computer data entry questionnaire
- Entering and validating data entry
- Applying the knowledge to the specific needs of individual participants
- Introduction to data analysis
- Exercises



Output: Draft instrument for electronic data entry for each participant. Submission of the data documentation sheets within 2 weeks of completing Workshop #2.

Workshop 3. Writing a scientific paper

Duration: 5 days

Purpose: To support participants in performing a final analysis and interpretation of the results of their studies and turn these into a scientific paper for submission to a national or international peer-reviewed journal. The workshop also covers how to deal with online submissions and editors' and reviewers' comments.

Brief content overview

- Constructing tables and presenting figures for publication
- Learning the principles of writing a scientific paper in a step-by-step manner
- Writing a scientific paper (hands-on exercise)
- Learning how to deal with online submission and peer review

Output: Draft manuscript. Submission to a peer-reviewed journal within 3 months of completing the workshop. Manuscripts should be published within 18 months of submission.

[Approach to training](#)

This is a target-oriented training course, with defined milestones and expected outputs. Failure to fulfil the expected outputs linked to each workshop will lead to disqualification.

Participants will attend workshops at the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney, Australia, and undertake research projects in their home country. From this research, participants will produce a manuscript to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

Since a key objective of the CHART Program is to foster HIV evidence-informed decision making, research studies should be published within 18 months of submission to assess impact on the health policy and practice.

[Faculty for the course](#)

The course will be conducted by an experienced and reputed faculty comprised of lecturers and mentors with extensive experience in undertaking research and mentoring students.

The CHART Program is based on the successful Structured Operational Research Training Initiative (SORT IT). The Kirby Institute is a global partner of SORT IT, coordinated by TDR, the Special Programme for Research Training in Tropical Diseases, hosted at the World Health Organisation.

[What does the participant gain?](#)

- Practical skills for undertaking the entire operational research process from concept to publication
- Experience of learning and sharing knowledge within a team of motivated participants and skilled lecturers and facilitators from different technical backgrounds
- Manuscript and potential publication(s)
- Regional research network through the Kirby Institute and CHART participants plus alumni.
- Well placed to consider enrolment in a PhD

What does the participant's organisation or institution gain?

- A person who is well trained in operational research and can support and facilitate their program or institution to undertake relevant operational research to identify challenges and improve program performance in a sustainable manner
- The approach will strongly complement "innovation" within routine operations and contribute to critical reflection on program orientation and its impact over time
- The initiative will foster the retention of healthcare professionals, attract qualified staff and reduce turnover which may hamper continuity of research initiatives
- Local research mentor for future research candidates

Course follow-up

- Participants will be contacted intermittently after course completion to determine accomplishments and policy and practice impact of their studies. They will also become part of an operational research "alumni". A specific website exists to foster interaction
- Course lecturers and mentors will be available to provide advice upon request

Course costs

All travel-related expenses (return economy airfare, accommodation for the duration of the course, ground transportation in Australia, medical insurance and visas) are covered by the Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney. Participants will be paid a daily allowance while in Australia for meals and incidentals that are not provided during the CHART Program workshops. There are no tuition costs associated with the CHART Program.

Key dates and further information

Please refer [here](#) for dates and further information.

For further questions, please contact:

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1. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. (2023). *UNAIDS Data 2023*, accessed 6 December 2023, < <https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/resource/unaid-data-2023.pdf> >