



Department  
of Medicine



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

# Trans Health Research Group

Annual Report 2023

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# Acknowledgement of Country

The Trans Health Research Group is based in Naarm (Melbourne), on the lands of Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples. Sovereignty was never ceded.



# Acknowledgements

We would like to take a moment to send our sincerest thanks to the over 2,000 trans and gender diverse (trans) people involved in our research during 2023 – without your willingness to give your time and share your experiences, none of this would be possible.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers, our Community Advisory Group, and our many collaborators, including community organisations, advocacy groups, fellow researchers, and scientists across the country, and to the breadth of clinicians treating trans people who we have the pleasure of working with.

We also want to acknowledge all the people who follow us and provide their support by showing their interest in our many activities.

Our research is only possible because of competitive grant funding, and we are so grateful for funding support from the National Health and Medical Research Council, Endocrine Society of Australia, Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Heart Foundation, Paul G Allen Foundation, Austin Medical Research Foundation and The University of Melbourne.

We see you, we celebrate you, and it is only together that we are able to work towards our goal to improve the health and wellbeing of the trans community on a global level. Thank you for sharing this journey with us and we look forward to working together to improve the health and wellbeing of the trans community in 2024 and beyond!

## Abbreviations

**AusPATH:** Australian Professional Association for Trans Health.

**GAHT:** Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy.

**ICU:** Intensive Care Unit.

**LGBTIQ+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Gender Diverse, Intersex, Queer and Questioning, Asexual, and other diverse sexualities and genders.

**PTSD:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

**RANZCOG:** The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

**RCT:** Randomised Controlled Trial.

## Contact Information

### Trans Health Research Group

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**Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/TransHealthResearch](http://www.instagram.com/TransHealthResearch)

## Image Credits

Michael Kai (front cover) ..... A lamp post displaying the University of Melbourne logo and the trans flag.  
Colton Sturgeon (page 2) ..... A trans person with the non-binary and rainbow flags tied in their hair.  
Casamento Photography (page 3) ..... An Indigenous person performing a Naarm Welcome to Country Ceremony.  
Cytonn Photography (page 8) ..... A person seated at their desk, typing on their laptop.  
Getty Images (page 12) ..... A person seated at their desk, writing on a sticky note.  
Michael Kai (back cover) ..... A University of Melbourne building displaying the LGBTIQ+ flag.



Trans Health Research Group staff, volunteers, and collaborators.

# About Trans Health Research Group

The Trans Health Research team are based in the Department of Medicine, at The University of Melbourne, Australia.

We conduct research with one goal: to **provide robust evidence to improve the health and wellbeing of the trans community**. Every research question we ask, every project that we do, every collaboration that we start, is aligned with our goal, and must translate to better outcomes for our community.

Our research covers **three priority areas – gender affirming hormone therapy (GAHT), mental health and wellbeing, and health care service delivery**. Our research findings have been translated into health and wellbeing programs, treatment guidelines, and health policy.

While research is our core focus, we are also advocates and passionate speakers, and routinely provide **consultation and trans health educational training** to health care professionals, government, and community organisations nationwide.

Trans Health Research place a strong focus on community-codesigned and trans-led research. Our team includes trans men, trans women, non-binary people, and cisgender allies.

## Team Members

<b>A/Prof Ada Cheung</b> <i>MBBS(Hons) FRACP PhD DipBus(Gov)</i> .....	NHMRC & Dame Kate Campbell Research Fellow
<b>Dr Sav Zwickl</b> <i>MSexol PhD</i> .....	Postdoctoral Research Fellow
<b>Dr Brendan Nolan</b> <i>MBBS FRACP PhD</i> .....	Postdoctoral Research Fellow
<b>Dr Ingrid Bretherton</b> <i>MBBS FRACP PhD</i> .....	Postdoctoral Research Fellow
<b>Kylie King</b> <i>RN</i> .....	Research Nurse
<b>Dr Lachie Angus</b> <i>MBBS FRACP</i> .....	PhD Candidate
<b>Dr Toan Tang</b> <i>BMedSci, MD, MPHTM</i> .....	PhD Candidate
<b>Tomi Ruggles</b> <i>BSN Nursing(Hons) MA Social Work</i> .....	Research Assistant
<b>Julian Grace</b> <i>BHSc/BAppSc (Osteopathy)</i> .....	Research Assistant
<b>Foster Skewis</b> <i>BBiomedSc</i> .....	Research Assistant
<b>Dr Alex Wong</b> <i>B-BMED, MD</i> .....	Research Assistant
<b>Leo Rhodanthe</b> <i>BSc (Psychology)</i> .....	Research Assistant
<b>Clare Headland</b> <i>B App Sc (Chiropractic)</i> .....	Speaker and Educator
<b>Dr Shalem Leemaqz</b> <i>MAppStats PhD</i> .....	Statistician

We also want to acknowledge the people who have volunteered their time and lived and professional expertise with Trans Health Research in 2023. Thank you for your passion and commitment to improving the lives of trans people through research.

# 2023 Highlights

Dr Lachie Angus, with his Bryan Hudson Clinical Endocrinology Award, accompanied by A/Prof Ada Cheung and Dr Brendan Nolan.



In 2023, Trans Health Research remained at the forefront of clinical research into the effects of GAHT on physical and mental health. In particular, we would like to spotlight two of our endocrinologists and PhD candidates: Dr Lachie Angus, and Dr Brendan Nolan.

As part of his PhD, Lachie has devoted the year to researching the effects of anti-androgens (medications that interrupt, slow, or stop the production and effect of testosterone in the body). He conducted a randomised controlled trial (RCT) to compare differences in breast development for people using cyproterone and spironolactone, two types of anti-androgens. Lachie was invited to present study findings at the Endocrine Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting, where he was awarded the prestigious **Bryan Hudson Clinical Endocrinology Award for 2023**.



Dr Brendan Nolan, at his PhD graduation, with PhD supervisor A/Prof Ada Cheung.

Brendan's PhD involved a RCT to assess the mental health impacts of immediate access to testosterone GAHT (skipping the waitlist), compared to a standard waitlist period. The study demonstrated very clear reductions in depression and suicidality after three months of testosterone treatment. As a world-first RCT on the impacts of initiation of gender affirming hormones, Brendan's study has gained **significant media and community attention internationally**, including articles by [CNN](#), [The Guardian](#), [Healio](#), [PinkNews](#), and [Endocrine Society](#).

Additionally, Research Fellow Dr Sav Zwickl was awarded the **QueersInScience Early Career Scott Johnson Memorial Award** for championing trans-led research and organisation of the inaugural [Emerging Trans Researchers Conference](#) in 2022. Sav also leads our [TRANSform](#) longitudinal project which marked its third anniversary in May. Since its launch three years ago, over 2,000 trans people from all over Australia have taken part, making TRANSform the largest ever trans research project in Australia.

To address the lack of guidance for researchers on how to accurately and meaningfully capture demographic data which includes trans people in any form of health or medical research, Trans Health Research led the development of **new Australian Research Guidelines - Including Trans People in Research: A Practical Guide to Collecting Data on Gender and Sex**. We were thrilled to share these with research ethics committees from many Universities and Hospitals across Australia at our online launch.

In 2023, Trans Health Research published **13 peer-reviewed research papers** and **13 research blogs**, and our research received **>6000 social media mentions** and was featured in **155 news stories by 90 unique news outlets in 12 countries**.

We have also had a strong presence at conferences. This included raising awareness of high rates of suicidality in the trans community at the National Suicide Prevention Conference in Canberra in May, and 12 oral presentations and 3 posters at the Australian Professional Association of Trans Health (AusPATH) Conference in Melbourne in November. Additionally, in June, two of our clinical researchers, A/Prof Ada Cheung and Dr Brendan Nolan, joined over 7,000 other attendees at ENDO 2023 in Chicago, the leading global meeting on endocrinology (hormone) research and clinical care hosted by Endocrine Society.

2023 has been challenging as the trans community face unprecedented levels of anti-trans discrimination and violence. With so much of the harmful rhetoric based in misinformation and disinformation, this year **we have prioritised science communication and have spent significant time and energy engaging with government, community organisations and other key stakeholders** such as sporting bodies, to ensure accurate, evidence-based information directs policies that impact trans people.

Most notably, A/Prof Ada Cheung, Trans Health Research lead, has continued her **science communication and advocacy in relation to trans inclusion in sport**, providing expert advice to numerous international, national, and state-based sporting bodies. This has included consultations with the International Olympic Committee, World Triathlon, Cricket Australia, and Football Australia. In addition to Ada's advocacy, she was the recipient of the **Allen Distinguished Investigator Award in Sex Hormones (USA) 2023** and was invited to join the **US Endocrine Society Global Leadership Academy and Committee for Diversity and Inclusion**.



Tomi Ruggles presenting at the LGBTIQ+ Women's Health Conference 2023.



Dr Brendan Nolan (centre) with international trans health colleagues at ENDO 2023 in Chicago.

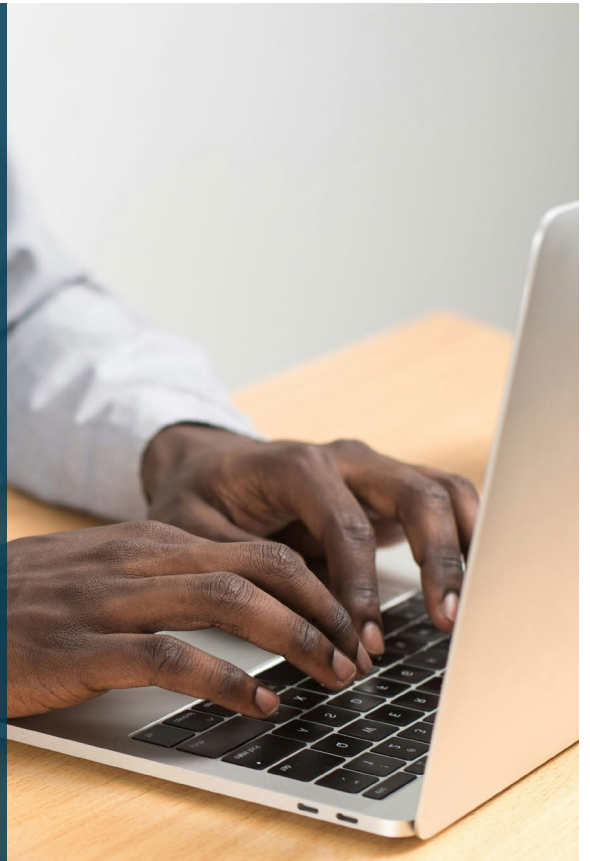


Dr Alex Wong presenting at the AusPATH Conference 2023.



Joël Murray and Dr Sav Zwickl, with collaborators Dr Asiel Adan Sanchez and Stevie Lane at the AusPATH Conference 2023.

# Peer-Reviewed Research Publications



In 2023, Trans Health Research published 13 peer-reviewed research papers, across three priority areas: gender-affirming hormone therapy, mental health and wellbeing, and health service delivery.

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## **Early access to testosterone therapy in transgender and gender-diverse adults seeking masculinisation: A randomised clinical trial.**

Observational studies have demonstrated improvements in gender dysphoria and depression following commencement of gender-affirming hormone therapy but there is a lack of randomised controlled trial data. A 3-month RCT was conducted, with participants randomised to either immediate testosterone commencement (intervention group) or no treatment ('standard care' with a wait list of 3 months prior to commencement).

**Compared to standard care, the intervention group had a significant reduction in gender dysphoria, depression, and suicidality** following testosterone commencement, compared with no treatment. Over half of the study participants receiving testosterone experienced resolution of "thoughts of hurting themselves or that they were better off dead".

Findings have been published in [JAMA Network Open](#) and we have also written an accompanying [blog post](#). There had been a lot of media hype and community interest in this study, including articles by [CNN](#), [The Guardian](#), [Healio](#), [PinkNews](#), and [Endocrine Society](#).

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## **Oestradiol concentrations and wellbeing in trans people using oestradiol hormone therapy.**

There is no consensus on optimal oestradiol levels for trans people using oestradiol GAHT. Over the last few years, we have observed an increase in trans people in Australia seeking high doses of oestradiol, while their doctors understandably have reservations about prescribing oestradiol GAHT well above levels recommended in [current Australian guidelines](#). A survey was conducted to explore associations between oestradiol levels, psychological distress, wellbeing, and risk of certain health conditions.

**No associations were found between oestradiol concentration and psychological distress, wellbeing, or gender dysphoria, nor thrombosis, malignancy, stroke, myocardial infarction, or migraine.**

Findings have been published in [Transgender Health](#) and we have written two accompanying research blogs based on this study: [Do Higher Oestradiol Levels Result in Better Mental Health and Wellbeing?](#) and [Oestradiol Implants in Australia](#).



## **The effect of gender-affirming hormones on gender dysphoria, quality of life, and psychological functioning in transgender individuals: A systematic review.**

The aim of this review was to systematically and critically assess the available literature on the influence of GAHT on improving gender- and body-related dysphoria, psychological wellbeing, and quality of life.

Most reviewed studies demonstrated that **GAHT reduces gender dysphoria, body dissatisfaction, and uneasiness, subsequently improving psychological well-being and quality of life** in trans individuals. However, as all current studies are of low to moderate quality, there is a real need for stronger, more robust science in trans health.

This review was published in [Transgender Health](#).

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## **Pelvic pain in transgender people using testosterone therapy.**

Pelvic pain is a common, yet poorly understood, issue in trans people using testosterone GAHT. A survey was conducted to explore testosterone use, menstruation (periods), pain experiences, relevant diagnoses, and effective and ineffective treatments for pelvic pain.

**Pelvic pain with testosterone GAHT was more common in people still experiencing periods, those who report pain with orgasm, and those with current or previous post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

These findings have been published in [LGBT Health](#) and we have also written an accompanying [blog post](#).

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## **Effect of gender-affirming hormone therapy on hair growth: A systematic review of the literature.**

GAHT leads to changes in the distribution and pattern of hair growth. A systematic review was conducted to explore the effect of GAHT on facial and non-facial hair as well as any treatment options reported in current literature.

Reviewed studies indicated that **effect of oestradiol on hair growth is unclear. In trans people using testosterone, an individuals' age, genetic predisposition, and duration of testosterone use may contribute to the onset and severity of hair loss.**

This review has been published in [Clinical and Experimental Dermatology](#).

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## **Dermatologic considerations for transgender and gender diverse patients: An Australian perspective.**

GAHT may result in acne, hair loss and changes in hair growth. Led by a team of dermatologists in collaboration with Trans Health Research, this review paper aimed to **educate Australian dermatologists to enable them to provide robust, patient centred health care** to trans people.

The paper provided an overview of medical gender affirmation in the Australian health care landscape and outlines dermatological considerations for trans patients including **acne and hair loss from the use of GAHT, hair removal and skin care post-surgery.**

This review is published in [Australasian Journal of Dermatology](#).

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## **The impact of gender-affirming hormone therapy on physical performance.**

The inclusion of trans people in elite sport has received considerable attention in recent years. This narrative review examined the impact of GAHT on physical performance, muscle strength, and markers of endurance.

Reviewed studies indicated that **within the first 12 months of using GAHT, fat and muscle content, haemoglobin, cardiovascular function, and VO2 max (a measure of total physical output) of trans people approached that of their cisgender peers.**

This review was published in [The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism](#).

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## **Implications of gender-affirming endocrine care for sports participation.**

As part of his PhD, Ethan Moreland from Victoria University, in collaboration with Trans Health Research, reviewed current literature that focused on trans people, changes to their bodies from GAHT, and sporting participation.

Findings of this review echoed the ones above, where **trans peoples' bodies, hormones, and sports performance all approach that of their cisgender peers**. The quality and type of studies in this area were criticized, and recommendations made for higher quality, robust data. There is a **huge need for studies that are long term, have good comparison groups, and adjustment for confounders**.

This review is published in [Therapeutic Advances in Endocrinology and Metabolism](#).

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## **Disruption of gender-affirming health care, and COVID-19 illness, testing, and vaccination among trans Australians during the pandemic: A cross-sectional survey.**

As little was known about trans people's experiences of health care in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic, a survey was conducted to assess rates of disruption of gender-affirming health care, discrimination in health care, and rates of COVID-19 illness, testing and vaccination.

Findings indicated that **trans Australians had higher rates of COVID-19 vaccination and higher rates of Long COVID** than cisgender Australians. It was hypothesised that these high rates of Long COVID may be due to high rates of chronic health conditions, disability, and mental illness that are present in the trans community – known risk factors for severe and long-term COVID-19 illness. This study also demonstrated that **health care discrimination and disruptions to gender-affirming care** were prevalent throughout the pandemic.

Findings have been published in the [Medical Journal of Australia](#) and we have also written an accompanying [blog](#) on Long-COVID in the trans community.

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## **Reversible effects of puberty suppression on bone strength, mass and body composition in adolescent mice after testosterone therapy.**

Sex hormones (testosterone and oestrogen) are known to play an important role in maintaining healthy bones, however, there is little research on the effects of GAHT on bone health. This study aimed to measure if there are any changes in bone health with the use of puberty blockers and then testosterone therapy, and any differences to bone health when testosterone is started later in puberty compared to earlier in puberty. To do this, the study used mice to measure the effects of testosterone on bone strength and health.

Results suggest that **starting testosterone earlier in puberty may result in better bone health** and that **trans people on 'full dose' testosterone are at no higher risk of fractures** than their cisgender peers.

This study was published in [Journal of Bone and Mineral Research](#).

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## **Gender-affirming hormone therapy for the trans, gender diverse, and nonbinary community: Coordinating World Professional Association for Transgender Health and Informed Consent Models of Care.**

Designed and run by a team of researchers from Monash University in collaboration with Trans Health Research, this study compared patient demographics and wait times for trans people initiating GAHT through the 'Informed Consent' model and the mandatory mental health assessment model of care.

Findings indicated that **people referred to the assessment model were more likely to have a binary gender identity, took longer to be assessed by mental health professionals, and had more mental health diagnoses**.

Recommendations include the need for more coordination between the two models of health care delivery, to maximise the outcomes for trans people.

The results of this study are published in [Transgender Health](#).

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## Epidemiology of intensive care patients classified as a third sex in Australia and New Zealand.

Led by critical care and public health professionals, in collaboration with Trans Health Research, this study explored sex categorisation within Intensive care units (ICU) in Australia and New Zealand.

Currently, when patients are admitted to ICU, there is provision for 3 sex options; Male, Female and 'Third Sex', and no data is collected on patient gender. This study gathered all the data for patients who were categorised as 'Third Sex' and compared their characteristics and health outcomes to patients who were classified as Male or Female. **Only 0.06% of patients were categorised as 'Third Sex' and there was no difference in outcomes when compared to Male and Female patients.**

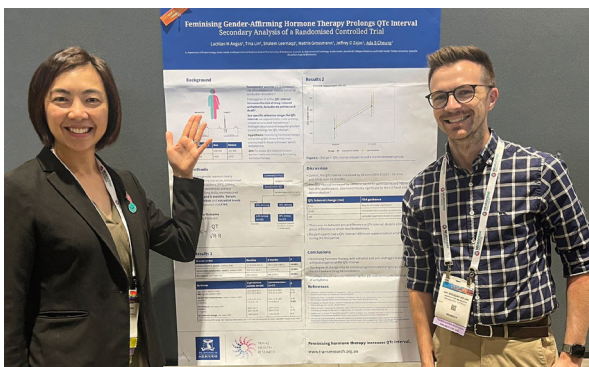
This paper highlights the **problematic and insufficient collection of data on sex and gender** in ICU's, with the 'Third Sex' category potentially including some people with variations of sex characteristics (intersex) and some trans people. There is a need to improve the recording of sex and gender in hospital systems, to ensure people with variations of sex characteristics and trans people are accurately captured in data, and have access to safe, appropriate health care.

The results of this study are published in [CHEST](#).

## Management of transgender patients in critical care.

To address the lack of knowledge of trans health in hospitals the United Kingdom (UK), this review led by health care professionals in the UK, in collaboration with Trans Health Research, focused on **specific health care considerations for critically ill trans patients**. The review highlighted aspects of care that clinicians should be aware of that may not be routine practice. Recommendations included **trans-specific training in both undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, and the development of national health care guidelines for trans and gender diverse patients in the UK.**

The review is published in [Journal of the Intensive Care Society](#).



A/Prof Ada Cheung and Dr Brendan Nolan with their research poster at the ENDO 2023 Conference in Chicago.



Tomi Ruggles (right) on a Q&A panel at LGBTQIA+ Women's Health Conference 2023.



Dr Sav Zwickl and Dr Alex Wong with their research poster at the AusPATH Conference 2023.



A/Prof Ada Cheung presenting at the ENDO 2023 Conference in Chicago.

# Ongoing Research



Trans Health Research have numerous active ongoing research projects at various points of research design, implementation, data collection, analysis, and publication. As outlined below, our research continues to be focused in our three priority areas: gender-affirming hormone therapy, mental health and wellbeing, and health service delivery. Research projects that are currently recruiting participants can be found on the [Trans Health Research website](#).



A research participant in the GAME Study.

## **Priority 1: Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy.**

- Fitness and Muscle Strength.
- Minoxidil for Hair Loss RCT.
- Cardiac Health.
- Immune Function.
- Low-Dose Testosterone RCT.
- Bone and Body Composition.
- Progesterone RCT.
- Anti-Androgen RCT.
- Troponin.

## **Priority 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing.**

- TRANSform Australian Longitudinal Health Study.
- Suicide Prevention.
- Gender Euphoria.
- COVID-19 Impact.
- Sport Participation.

## **Priority 3: Health Service Delivery.**

- Informed Consent Evaluation.
- Training Evaluation.
- Peer Support RCT.
- Rural Models of Care.



Collaborator Dr Angela Nicholas (left) with Dr Sav Zwickl and Leo Rhodanthe at the 2023 National Suicide Prevention Conference.

# Research Guidelines

Fin, a community participant in the *Including Trans People in Research* guideline video.



There has been a lack of guidance for researchers on how to accurately and meaningfully capture demographic data which includes trans people in any form of health or medical research.

To address this gap, Trans Health Research led the development of new Australian Research Guidelines - [Including Trans People in Research: A Practical Guide to Collecting Data on Gender and Sex](#).

These guidelines were created in partnership with [ACON](#) and [TransHub](#) and have been endorsed by [Thorne Harbour Health](#) and [AusPATH](#). The accompanying video was made in collaboration with trans content creator Rudy Jean Riggs, [Snack Drawer](#), and five trans community members.

Resources include:

- **Written guidelines.**
- **3-minute guideline video.**
- **30-minute webinar recording of the launch of the guidelines.**

The guidelines are now freely available to download from the [Trans Health Research website](#).



Bridget, a community participant in the *Including Trans People in Research* video.



Behind-the-scenes of the development of the *Including Trans People in Research* video.

# Research Blog Posts

In 2023, we published 13 research blogs on our [website](#), with a total of over 13,000 views.

This year we turned our attention to developing blogs to fill clear information gaps for the trans community. Prompted by common questions seen in trans social media spaces around how to access GAHT, the common changes experienced on GAHT, and the different forms of GAHT available in Australia, we published a handful of GAHT-focused blogs:

- [Accessing Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy in Australia.](#)
- [Options for Oestrogen, Anti-Androgen, and Progesterone Hormone Therapy in Australia.](#)
- [Oestradiol Implants in Australia.](#)
- [Do Higher Oestradiol Levels Result in Better Mental Health and Wellbeing?](#)
- [Options for Testosterone Hormone Therapy in Australia.](#)
- [Genital Changes, Periods, and Pelvic Pain in People Using Testosterone.](#)

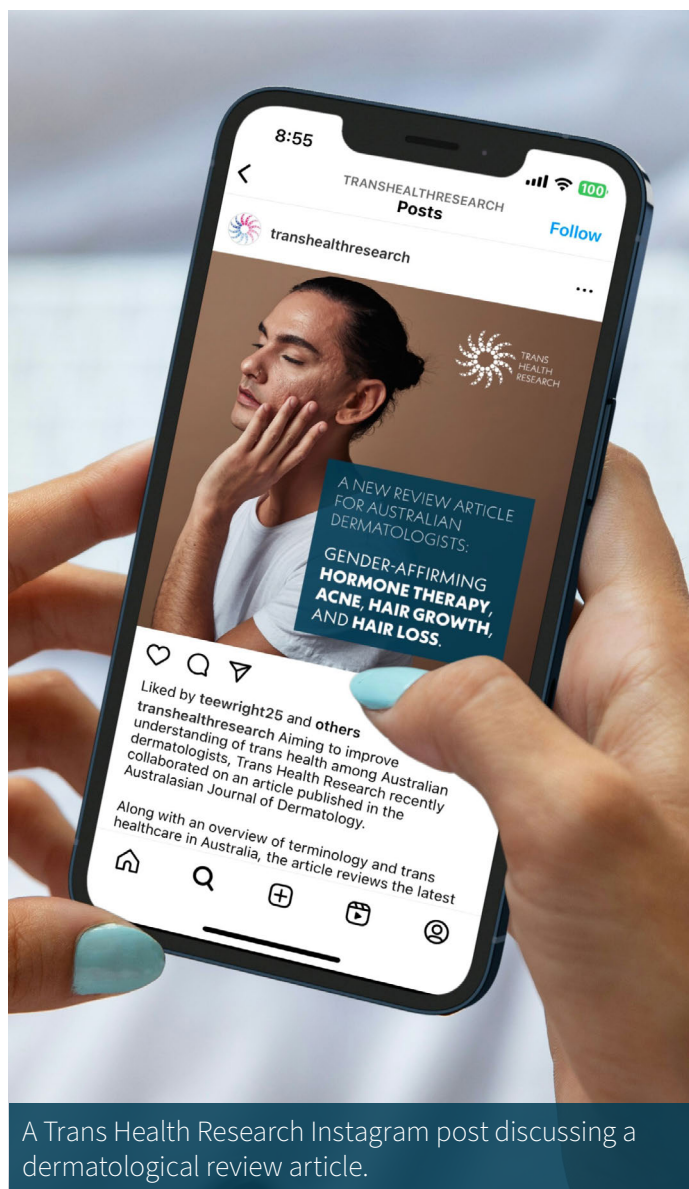
Additionally, we highlighted our world-first RCT, providing insight into the different levels of evidence in research (with RCTs one of the best), as well as presenting the key findings on significant improvements in depression and suicidality within three months of hormone treatment: [A World-First Trial on Fast Access to Testosterone.](#)

We also spotlighted the under-researched but highly important topics of trans people living with HIV and high rates of Long COVID in the trans community:

- [Trans People Living with HIV in Australia](#)
- [Why Are Trans People at Higher Risk of Long COVID?](#)

Additionally, to mark the three-year anniversary of our longitudinal project *TRANSform*, we published a blog highlighting major outcomes from the project, as well as wrap-ups from our attendance at three large conferences: the National Suicide Prevention Conference (Canberra), ENDO (Chicago, USA), and AusPATH (Melbourne).

- [What has TRANSform Achieved in its First Three Years?](#)
- [Spotlighting Trans Suicidality at the National Suicide Prevention Conference 2023.](#)
- [From Melbourne to Chicago: Sharing Our World-First Clinical Research at ENDO 2023.](#)
- [Trans Health Research at the 2023 AusPATH Conference.](#)
- [End of 2023 Review.](#)



A Trans Health Research Instagram post discussing a dermatological review article.

## Website and Social Media

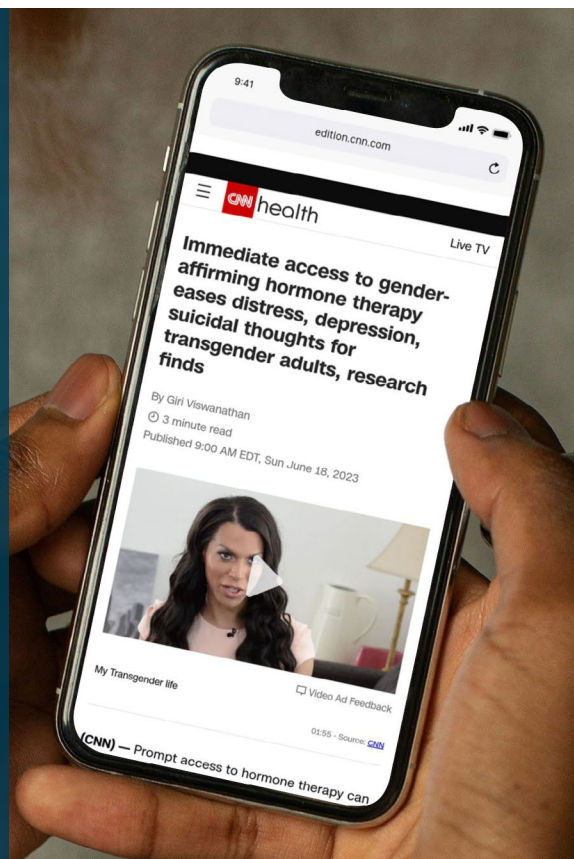
In line with our 'nothing about us without us' approach to trans research, engaging with the trans community and trans allies remains a high priority. Making our research more accessible through our website, and the publication of regular research blog posts and social media posts has been a key focus of our work.

At the end of 2023:

- The Trans Health Research website had **17,536** sessions.
- The Trans Health Research Facebook Page had **3,100** followers. We had an annual total of **2,800** interactions and annual reach of **18,900** Facebook accounts.
- The Trans Health Research Instagram Page had **2,100** followers, an annual total of **1,800** interactions, and an annual reach of **10,100** Instagram accounts.

# Media Engagement

A CNN article highlighting the findings of Trans Health Research's gender-affirming testosterone RCT.



Trans Health Research regularly engage with radio, television and print media, and our research is frequently referenced in news media regarding trans people.

While our research is primarily based on Australian trans people, our research findings have been featured, analysed, and discussed across the world, in relation to a range of topics including discrimination, mental health, health care access, health care equality and advocacy. In 2023, Trans Health Research received **>6000 social media mentions** and was featured in **155 news stories by 90 unique news outlets in 12 countries**.

Articles that feature our team members or utilise our research to promote trans equality include:

A/Prof Ada Cheung joined [The Latest in LGBTIQ+ Health and Policy Podcast](#) hosted by JOY 94.9 and LGBTIQ+ Health Australia to discuss the latest from Trans Health Research and national priorities in trans health. Ada, in collaboration with Dr Ken Pang from The Royal Children's Hospital, also addressed disinformation about trans health care with [AAP FactCheck](#).

Dr Brendan Nolan's [world-first RCT](#) that showed significant reductions in depression and suicidality with immediate access to testosterone GAHT, gained significant media attention globally, including [CNN](#), [The Guardian](#), [Pink News](#), [Healio](#), [Newswise](#), [Medpage Today](#), [Endocrine Society](#), [United Press International](#), [Mirage News](#), [Medical Xpress](#), [OUTinPerth](#), and [Truthout](#).

In a significant step towards improving accessing to gender-affirming medical treatments in Australia, an application was made to [add patient consultations and surgical procedure for gender affirmation to the Medicare Benefits Scheme](#). In the context of this development, [Dr Sav Zwickl spoke to ABC News](#) about the barriers that trans people face to accessing gender-affirming surgeries in Australia.

Drawing from findings from the TRANSform study, Sav also discussed trans mental health with various media outlets. This has included highlighting widespread discrimination and violence as key drivers behind high rates of mental ill-health in the trans community, in articles by [The Guardian](#), [The Age](#), and [Croakey](#). Additionally, following the release of a Four Corners program that highlighted concerns about research undertaken at Children's Hospital Westmead, Sav collaborated with national leaders in trans research to explore ethical conduct of research with trans young people and their families for [The Conversation](#).

# Stakeholder Engagement

To ensure maximal research reach and impact in policy, our team regularly engages with federal and state governments, community organisations, and sporting bodies. Additionally, we provide educational training to health care professionals and students, to improve their understanding of trans health.

In 2023, **our education and advocacy has largely focused on three main areas: trans mental health and suicidality, trans people in sport, and trans-affirming health care.**

## Trans Mental Health and Suicidality

Trans Health Research has emerged as a leader in trans mental health research. In previous years, our suicidality data was presented to the [House of Representatives Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) and the [Victorian Coronial Inquest into LGBTQIA+ Suicide Deaths](#). In 2023, we worked with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in highlighting [LGBTQIA+ suicidal thoughts and behaviours](#) and provided evidence to the [Victorian Coronial Inquest](#) into trans suicide deaths.

In May 2023, Trans Health Research joined forces with Dr Angela Nicholas from the Centre for Mental Health at The University of Melbourne, Teddy Cook from [ACON](#) and [Transhub](#), Joe Ball from [Switchboard Victoria](#) and Leo Rhodanthe from [DISCHARGED](#) to present a one-hour symposia event at the [National Suicide Prevention Conference](#). The conference provides a space for suicide prevention experts to showcase evidence-based solutions and robust discussion and is widely regarded as the premier event in the suicide prevention calendar.

Despite almost half of trans people attempting suicide at some point in their lives, trans suicidality has been notably absent from previous years' conferences. Described by ACON's Teddy Cook as "one of the biggest opportunities the trans community have ever had to talk to an audience of service providers and decision-makers", the panel provided conference attendees with insight into the experiences of the Australian trans community, and the barriers faced in accessing timely, trans-affirming mental health support.

In addition, trans mental health and suicidality research was also presented at the [LGBTQIA+ Women's Health Conference](#), the [AusPATH Conference](#) and the [Society for Mental Health Research Conference](#).



Leo Rhodanthe (far left) and Dr Sav Zwickl (third from left) with LGBTQIA+ researchers and community workers at the National Suicide Prevention Conference.



A/Prof Ada Cheung (far left) and Dr Alex Wong (far right) discussing trans health with the Australian Chinese Medical Association of Victoria.

## Trans People in Sport

Following her editorial in [The Sydney Morning Herald](#), A/Prof Ada Cheung has emerged as an international authority on the science of trans people in sport. She has educated sporting body decision-makers on the scientific evidence of the impact of GAHT on physical performance and provided advice around trans inclusion policies. This has included international sporting bodies such as the International Olympic Committee, International Cricket Council, and World Triathlon. More locally, Ada has worked with Cricket Australia, Football Australia, Swimming Victoria, and Swim Coaches and Teachers Australia.

## Trans-Affirming Health Care

Trans Health Research regularly provides educational training to health care professionals and students on how to provide trans-affirming health care. Trainings are catered to the knowledge and interests of the audience, including but not limited to key terminology, pronouns, trans-affirming intake forms, appropriate and inappropriate questions, and the impacts of gender-affirming hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgery. Trainings are typically co-facilitated by at least one clinician researcher and one trans team member, with trans facilitators often sharing their own personal stories as part of the presentations.





Dr Sav Zwickl and Julian Grace both served on the Board of Directors for AusPATH during 2023.



A/Prof Ada Cheung, Dr Alex Wong, Tomi Ruggles and Foster Skewis at AusPATH Conference 2023.

## Professional Leadership

Our team members are deeply committed to improving the health and wellbeing of trans people, including through professional leadership positions. As volunteers to board positions and advisory groups, Trans Health Research team members donate their time and passion to provide an informed voice in discussions that are important for trans health.

In 2023, our team members sat on the following boards, advisory and reference groups: AusPATH Board of Directors, AusPATH Research Committee, AusPATH Policy Committee, AusPATH Reference Group, as an AusPATH Conference Convenor, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) Consumer Network Working Group, Trans Expert Advisory Group for the LGBTIQ+ Commissioner, and Genwest LGBTIQ+ Advisory Board.

In addition to these, we donate our time and knowledge on an ad-hoc basis to various discussion groups, panels, and steering committees.

## Capacity-Building of Trans Researchers

Following the success of the inaugural [Emerging Trans Researchers Conference](#) that Trans Health Research hosted in November 2022; we have continued our commitment to the capacity-building of student and early-career trans researchers through two initiatives in 2023:

### University of Melbourne Science and Technology Undergraduate Internship

In 2023, we hosted two undergraduate student interns as part of the University of Melbourne Science and Technology Undergraduate Internship Program. In replacement of a standard unit, students completed 80-100 hour placement with Trans Health Research. During their time with us, students become a part of our core team of researchers, learning valuable skills in science communication, data analysis and co-author a manuscript for peer-reviewed publication.

### Trans Researchers in Trans Research Network

Trans Health Research founded the Trans Researchers in Trans Research Network which aims to facilitate connection between trans researchers in trans health research from across Australia. We held three online meetups for trans researchers in 2023.



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