Welcome to the 2020 edition of the ASQ-TRAK newsletter. In this bumper issue we will be sharing some exciting research and training news for ASQ-TRAK and the development of ASQ-STEPS, including our recent funding success and record sales for the kits.

**ASQ-STEPS AWARDED MRFF FUNDING**

In June 2020, Anita D’Aprano was awarded Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) funding to build on the ASQ-TRAK developmental screening tool with a three-year MRFF Preventive and Public Health Research Grant.

The grant will support the development and validation of the *ASQ-STEPS for Measuring Aboriginal Child Development* (ASQ-STEPS).

The ASQ-STEPS will bridge a gap in the assessment of Australian Aboriginal children’s development.

A culturally appropriate *developmental outcome measure*, ASQ-STEPS will be used to:

1. Assess an individual child’s developmental progress, and
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of early child development programs for Aboriginal children.

This will be an important resource to demonstrate what works for Aboriginal children and ensure investment in those supports with a clear impact on early learning and development.

Key to the funding success was the strong engagement from the Aboriginal community and stakeholders through our Indigenous Reference Group (more about the IRG in the story below). This demonstrated the project was a Community priority which will support uptake of the tool.

You can read more about the funding announcement and view a presentation from Anita [here](#).

While COVID has put some of our research plans on hold, engagement work and ethics processes are ongoing.

**WE ARE HIRING**

We are seeking an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Research Assistant and PhD Candidate to join our team for the ASQ-STEPS project.

If you, or someone you know would like more information about these exciting opportunities get in touch at [asq-trak@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:asq-trak@unimelb.edu.au)

Only Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are eligible to apply.
ASQ-STEPS INDIGENOUS REFERENCE GROUP

As highlighted above, the ASQ-STEPS Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) was key to our MRFF funding success. Established in 2019, the IRG will ensure this research is conducted in a culturally respectful, meaningful and appropriate way.

The IRG helps to make sure our work makes a difference to children, families and communities.

Current members are Aboriginal health and education practitioners from urban, regional and remote Aboriginal communities across the NT and SA.

The IRG meets twice a year to keep the research on track and advise on engagement, research design, implementation, and community feedback processes.

In 2020, we've continued to meet online through Zoom, but are looking forward to our next face-to-face meeting once it is safe to do so and travel restrictions are eased.

ASQ-TRAK RESEARCH: NEW PUBLICATIONS

We have had two recent publications about the acceptability of ASQ-TRAK with caregivers and clinicians in the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health.

The first study undertaken with practitioners compared their experiences using both the ASQ-TRAK and the original ASQ-3 tools with Aboriginal children.

All said that ASQ-TRAK was more acceptable and easier for parents to understand, and rated it as more respectful, culturally relevant and engaging than ASQ-3, making ASQ-TRAK the preferred tool for health practitioners working with Aboriginal children.

The second study sought feedback from caregivers in urban, regional and remote settings and again found it was highly acceptable, easy to understand and use, providing them valuable information about their child’s development through a strengths-based approach.

These two studies highlight the importance of cultural adaptation of these tools to ensure they are acceptable, appropriate and culturally safe for use with Aboriginal children.

You can read the full articles here and here (copies can also be provided on request).
**ASQ-TRAK RESEARCH: TRIALLING NEW AGE INTERVALS**

In other research news, trials are underway of the NEW 4, 10, 14, 20, 30 and 42 month ASQ-TRAK questionnaires with the Northern Territory Department of Education and Nunkuwarrin Yunti Aboriginal Community Controlled Aboriginal Health Service.

These age intervals have been identified as important for the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (4, 10, 14 and 20 months) and for early education programs like Families as First Teachers (30 and 42 months) as they fill gaps in culturally appropriate developmental screening at key ages. We hope to be able to share these results in 2021.

**NEW WEBSITE**

We’ve been busy developing a new website for the ASQ-TRAK and related projects (like the ASQ-STEPs) in the Department of Paediatrics. The website is now live and we will continue to add additional information, including videos, to it in the new year.

Don’t forget to add the new website address to your bookmarks!

https://asq-trak.medicine.unimelb.edu.au

**ASQ-TRAK DISTRIBUTION NEWS**

Since the ASQ-TRAK developmental screening tool first became available in 2015 more than 500 ASQ-TRAK kits have been purchased by almost 80 organisations.

The University of Melbourne have teamed up with the Royal Children’s Hospital shop to streamline the distribution of the ASQ-TRAK.

If you or someone you know is interested in purchasing the ASQ-TRAK or an ASQ-TRAK Toy Kit head over to the RCH shop website: https://shop.rch.org.au

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**Where is ASQ-TRAK being used?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Government Health Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>University/Research Institute</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Alison presented on the process of developing the ASQ-STEPS and the key activities for successful cultural adaptation including: Aboriginal guidance, Aboriginal researchers, authentic engagement, collaborative partnerships and adequate time.

This was an excellent opportunity to share our research with others working in Indigenous child health and development and highlight the importance of the tool. We hope that this conference will return in 2021.

Get in touch!
Get in touch with the ASQ-TRAK and ASQ-STEPS team
We want to hear from you! Do you have any feedback on using the ASQ-TRAK or are you interested in being involved in the validation of ASQ-STEPS?
Get in touch by emailing: asq-trak@unimelb.edu.au

We wish you all a safe and happy holiday.