



**LAILAW UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME**  
**APPLICATION – 2023 COHORT**

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| Name                   | <i>Laura Ryan</i>  |
| Programme              | <i>Human Health and Disease</i>  |
| Year of Study          | <i>2<sup>nd</sup> year</i>   |
| Research Project Title | <i>Women’s experiences of accessing healthcare services to manage their perimenopause/menopause-related health issues in Ireland</i> |
| Proposed Supervisor(s) | <i>Dr. Deirdre Daly, Associate Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health Sciences, Trinity College Dublin</i>    |

Before completing this submission, you should review the [Laidlaw Programme Application Guide](#) sections and “Leadership-in-action experience proposal (Summer 2)”

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| <p><b>Research Project Proposal (750-1000 words max.)</b></p> <p><i>See Self-defined research project proposal (Summer 1) in the guidance for more information</i></p>   |
| <p><b><u>Introduction</u></b></p>  |
| <p>The Irish healthcare system is ever changing to better address the needs of patients. Given the current Irish population stands at approximately 5 million with 50% of such representing females, the specific needs of women must be taken into careful consideration when improving healthcare services [1]. Menopause is one of such natural biological processes’ women experience in their lifetime, and it has been identified as being a top priority for the Department of Health.</p> <p>According to the World Health Organization (<i>WHO</i>) [2] menopause is defined as the period of time in a woman's life that marks the end of her reproductive cycles. However, this naturally occurring process can lead to a wide range of health-related problems when appropriate care is inaccessible. This includes, but is not limited to, an increased risk of osteoarthritis, cardiovascular disease and urinary incontinence [3].</p> <p>A scoping review of the available research into the importance of optimal management of perimenopausal/menopausal symptoms revealed that adequate education and awareness surrounding menopause is not only a problem in Ireland but is a global issue. In order to enable policy makers to better target the specific health and health service-related needs of women, it is essential to understand women’s experiences of accessing healthcare services and both the enablers and barriers women may encounter when accessing such services. This project seeks to explore Women’s Experiences of Accessing Healthcare Services and Treatments to Manage Their Perimenopausal/Menopausal Related Health Issues in Ireland.</p> <p>Whilst two recent surveys were conducted on women’s experiences of perimenopause/menopause in Ireland, neither of these explored women’s experiences of</p> |



accessing services [4] [5]. This project has the potential to add essential information to the body of knowledge within Ireland and will contribute further to international literature.

[1] WorldOmeter 2023 live results <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ireland-population/#:~:text=The%20current%20population%20of%20Ireland,year%20according%20to%20UN%20data>.

[2] World Health Organisation 17 October 2022 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/menopause#:~:text=Natural%20menopause%20is%20deemed%20to,before%2040%20years%20of%20age>).

[3] Mayo Clinic 17 Decembre 2022 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/menopause/symptoms-causes/syc-20353397>

[4] Walsh K. Women's Health in Ireland: Evidence Base for the Development of the Women's Health Action Plan. National Women's Council of Ireland, Department of Health, Health Service Executive; 24 September 2019. [https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/womens\\_health\\_in\\_ireland\\_evidence\\_base](https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/womens_health_in_ireland_evidence_base)

[5] Department of Health 8 March 2022 - 'Women's Health Action Plan 2022 - 2023' <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/56ebc-minister-for-health-launches-first-womens-health-action-plan/>

### **Project Methodology & Timeline**

#### **Methodology**

This research study comprises quantitative and qualitative elements within a semi-structured survey design. After obtaining research ethics approval, and participants' declaration of consent, an anonymous survey will be administered online via Survey Monkey. The questions will be carefully constructed in order to address the research question regarding both the accessibility of both healthcare services and treatments with the aim to identify any enablers and barriers women experience when trying to utilise them.

#### **Recruitment**

Eligible participants include women aged 18 and over who have experienced/are experiencing perimenopausal/menopausal and have sufficient proficiency in English to complete the survey.

Hosts of women's health platforms will be contacted and asked if they would be willing to share the survey link with their users and via their social media sites i.e., Facebook, Twitter and blogs.



Quantitative data:

1. Socio-demographics data requested will include age, parity (number of children, if any), income (in categories), health insurance status (i.e., private or public), and their geographical location (urban/rural setting), onset of menopausal symptoms (i.e., age-related, surgical, chemotherapy-induced). Categorical data will be requested in order to ensure that no individual participant can be identified by their responses.
2. Participants will be asked to rate, on a scale of 1-5, their experiences of accessing healthcare services available (including the type of services sought), and their experiences of availing of the treatments offered (e.g., cost etc.)

Qualitative Data

1. Open-ended questions will be included after each Likert scale in the quantitative component and ask participants to comment on/explain their chosen score. These open-ended questions are designed to uncover opinions and specific thoughts surrounding the current healthcare facilities and treatments available.

| <u>Timeline</u> | <u>Aim</u>   |
|-----------------|--|
| Pre-Clearance   | Submit Ethics approval forms to 'The School of Medicine' for pre-authorisation to conduct an online anonymous survey.  |
| -               | Construct and disperse online anonymous survey in order to allow sufficient time to collect responses.   |
| Week 1          | Evaluate the data collected from the online anonymous survey with an emphasis on establishing a baseline of the current healthcare facilities available and the enablers/barriers women frequently encounter when trying to access them. |
| Week 2          | Critically examine current research surrounding available treatments in Ireland and the enablers/barriers women frequently encounter when trying to access them.   |



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| Week 3       | Compare and contrast the findings of the online anonymous survey with current international research.  |
| Week 4       | Determine the most efficient methods policy makers can implement using the findings of the survey in order to improve healthcare facilities available to women in Ireland experiencing perimenopause/menopause |
| Week 5 and 6 | Finalise the research findings including statistical analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected.<br><br>Draft research project manuscript and create project poster                          |

**Intended Outcomes**

The goal of this project is to explore *'Women's experiences of accessing healthcare services to manage their perimenopause/menopause-related health issues in Ireland'* in order to establish a baseline for which policy makers can better target the progression of the healthcare system towards the needs of women. This is done so by aiming to access the following.

1. Identify the positive aspects of the current healthcare services on perimenopause/menopause health in Ireland, and the aspects that work well/require improvement.
2. Analyse the current treatments available to women experiencing perimenopausal/menopausal symptoms.



3. Determine the enablers and barriers women encounter when trying to access such services and avail of the treatments offered/prescribed.

**Planning for pre-approval requirements (if relevant e.g., ethics approval, Garda vetting)**

Trinity College Dublin’s School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee (REC) approval will be sought prior to conducting my research project. Due to the length of time required for the committee to review each application (minimum 3 months) I will begin completing the application details now in order to ensure smooth running of the research project if I am a successful Laidlaw applicant.

**Planning for expected additional project costs (if relevant e.g., lab expenses, subscriptions, software, project-related travel)**

There are no costs associated with administering the survey online.

**Are there any other relevant details to your proposal e.g., interdisciplinary collaborations, potential for international travel, or links to existing projects or organisations?**

In order to conduct and complete my research effectively I plan to engage in both interdisciplinary collaborations and in the current international undergraduate biomedical conferences listed below.

Publication in the Trinity Access to Research Archive, Publication into the Trinity Medical Journal and podcast discussions on relevant talk shows to discuss research findings.

Participation in Leiden International bio (Medical) Conference, International Student Congress Of (bio)Medical Sciences and the International Conference for Healthcare and Medical Students.

**Leadership-in-Action experience proposal (500 words max.)**

See *Leadership in Action Proposal (Summer 2)* in the guidance for more information

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| <b>LiA Category</b><br>Insert x as appropriate | Category A: Central Laidlaw Foundation Project | <b>X</b> |
|  | Category B: Leadership Placement               |          |
|  | Category C: In-field application of research   |          |



## Introduction

For my second summer Leadership in Action project, I have selected 'Think Pacific - Health Promotion' in Fiji. This is a Central Laidlaw Foundation which has been set up with the aim to deliver community outreach projects in order to improve access to public healthcare advice in remote areas [1]. This project is unique as it will enable me to develop my leadership skills and deepen my cultural awareness skills through experiencing the Fijian culture.

## Leadership Skills

Having thought deeply about the leadership qualities I admire; I have identified skills I wish to develop further throughout the course of the project. These include my ability to adapt to challenging situations, refine my ability to make decisions effectively as an individual as well as part of a team, and further my own understanding of what it means to be a socially responsible/ethical leader.

One of the most admirable qualities I wish to develop as a leader is a readiness to learn from others and really understand and embrace the values of the people and communities around me. I believe that by interacting with marginalised communities in Fiji I will be able to develop and demonstrate such skills further and effectively, and progress towards becoming a socially responsible ethical leader.

## Objectives and Deliverables

The prospect of furthering my education of healthcare services in remote areas and more specifically in Fiji aligns with many of my current goals in furthering my skills as a leader. Think Pacific - Health promotion project will allow me to build new relationships with a diverse group of scholars from around the world. This in my opinion is an invaluable experience that will allow me to both share my learning and learn from this community.

Having reviewed the project's goals I can see that many align with my own. Some of these include.

- Engaging in topics previously thought of as taboo such as menopause.
- Appreciation of the diverse culture, enabling people to think critically.
- Creating a greater awareness surrounding healthy lifestyles and disease prevention
- Encouraging personal growth through leadership, team working, effective communication.

## Challenges



I think one of the most challenging parts of this project will be the length of time I will be spending away from home in an unfamiliar environment. This is very daunting as it will be set in a challenging environment. However, I believe that this will drive me to call on my own initiative to solve problems resulting in improvements in my leadership skills.

During this project I must also be mindful of the fact that I am coming from a high-income country and volunteering in a low-income country. I will learn from and work with Think Pacific team and other volunteers towards helping people become enabled and empowered within the limitations of their country's healthcare system.

#### References

[1] <https://thinkpacific.com/public-health-expedition/>

**Are there any other relevant details to your proposal e.g., interdisciplinary collaborations, potential for international travel, or links to existing projects or organisations, plans to apply to a Study Abroad / Erasmus opportunity?**

