University of Western Sydney

Bringing knowledge to life

# RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

## Understanding persistent low back pain where it resides: In the brain

Applications are invited from talented and highly motivated graduates to undertake a PhD as part of a NHMRC funded project grant on the role of the brain in persistent low back pain.

This doctoral candidature, under the supervision of Dr Siobhan Schabrun and Dr James McAuley, School of Science and Health, will focus on the novel role of biological mechanisms, such as maladaptive brain plasticity and sensitisation of the brain and spinal cord, which may explain why some people get better after hurting their back while others do not. This is a longitudinal, prospective trial that will follow individuals with an acute back injury over 12 months as their back pain i) resolves or ii) becomes persistent. Measures of brain plasticity, sensitisation, genetics, endocrine function and psychosocial factors will determine whether these mechanisms predict low back pain outcome. The successful applicant will also undertake data collection at Neuroscience Research Australia (NEURA), University of New South Wales. There are excellent opportunities for collaboration with neuroscientists and clinicians associated with the research program at both institutions.

**Criteria**

Applicants should hold an Australian First Class Honours degree or have equivalent qualifications and evidence of research experience (including publications) in a related field such as neuroscience, allied health or biomedical science; have demonstrated excellent academic performance, a good understanding of quantitative methods and statistics and be highly motivated to undertake further study at advanced level.

Experience in neurophysiological techniques such as transcranial magnetic stimulation or electroencephalography, or in the collection and analyses of human blood and/or salivary samples would be an advantage.

**International scholarship applicants must have evidence of a high level of proficiency in the English language at the time of commencing studies. Please refer to the English language requirements.**

**What does the scholarship provide?**

All students receive support for conference attendance (domestic and international), costs relating to project work and additional costs as appropriate; access to state-of-the-art neurophysiology laboratories, exceptional mentoring opportunities, and research-rich environments at the Brain Rehabilitation and Neuroplasticity Unit (BRAiN-u) and NEURA.

Domestic students receive: A tax-free stipend of $25,392 per annum for up to 3 years and a funded place in the doctoral degree.

International students receive: A tax-free stipend of $25,392 per annum for up to 3 years and a tuition fee scholarship for up to 3 years. **International applicants must purchase a Overseas Student Health Care policy as a visa requirement, at $2,800.**

**The next step?**

- Contact Dr Siobhan Schabrun to discuss your eligibility, career goals and research interests: s.schabrun@uws.edu.au or +61 2 4620 3497.
- Contact the Office of Research Services to discuss enrolment and scholarships at hdrscholarships@uws.edu.au

**How to apply**

Download the application form at www.uws.edu.au/research/scholarships.

Submit the application form with the required evidence including your CV and details of 2 referees by **SEPTEMBER 19 2014.**