SUPERVISOR/S: Tania Blackmore
PROJECT TITLE: The decision-making process for women contemplating breast surgery
FIELD: Psychology, health
DIVISION/SCHOOL: HECS - School of Health
PROJECT LOCATION: Hamilton

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
Women diagnosed with breast cancer are faced with a number of treatment decisions at a time when emotional stress is high. New Zealand women do not currently get access to comprehensive decisional aids when making breast cancer surgery decisions. Consequently, little is known about the decision-making process for New Zealand women diagnosed with breast cancer. This study will adopt a patient-focused approach to investigate the decision-making process of women who have undergone breast surgery. Phase 1 will involve data collection and will retrospectively identify 50 non-Māori and 50 Māori women with stage I-II breast cancer who have undergone breast surgery in the Waikato region in the preceding 12 months. From this cohort, we will identify women who opted for surgery (breast conserving or mastectomy (with and without reconstruction)) and conduct interviews to assess current quality of life and level of satisfaction with surgical decisions. Data analysis will analyse questionnaire scores with reference to age, ethnicity, type of surgery etc. A kaupapa Māori approach, with guidance from the BreastCare kaitiaki, will be used to determine Māori women’s perspectives on breast cancer surgery and identify the support needs of this group. Phase 1 would ideally suit a female student with an interest in health/psychological and supportive care needs of women with breast cancer.

STUDENT SKILLS:
- Experience with Microsoft excel
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Attention to detail with data
- Ability to interact with, and be sensitive to, breast cancer participants

PROJECT TASKS:
- Establishing a dataset of potential participants from the National Breast Cancer Register
- Preparing study documents
- Phoning potential participants
- Data analysis using Microsoft Excel
- Possible participant interviews
- Draft a paper

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:
- Student’s Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the Scholarship regulations)
- Accurate identification of women who underwent breast surgery in the region within the preceding 12 months
- Presentation of data (e.g., tables)
- Delivery and analysis of questionnaire to measure participant quality of life post surgical treatment
- Draft report outlining the quality of life of women post their surgical treatment
- Possible presentation of results to the Waikato Clinical Campus Biannual Seminar Series