



AGEING RESEARCH ONLINE NEWS

Volume 4, Issue 3

News and information on ageing policy and research initiatives

October 2007

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NEW DEMENTIA RESEARCH SECTION ON THE ARO

In recognition of Dementia Awareness Month we are pleased to announce the introduction of a dementia research section on the ARO. This section currently includes information on the:

- Dementia Research Mapping Project;
- Dementia Research Grants Program;
- Dementia Collaborative Research Centres; and
- National Dementia Network,

as well as a list of links to further information and projects on dementia.

We welcome any feedback or suggestions as to how this section can be improved. Please email aro@health.gov.au.

LAUNCH OF DEMENTIA AWARENESS MONTH

Contributed by Glenn Rees, National Executive Director, Alzheimer's Australia

The theme of the Month, which runs from 17 September – 17 October, is **No Time to Lose** in responding to the dementia epidemic. The Australian Government is the principal sponsor of the month and Pfizer has supported the event for the seventh year in succession.

The guest speaker of Alzheimer's Australia during Dementia Awareness Month is Dr Kenneth Rockwood, a leading Canadian Geriatrician. Dr Rockwood believes that although dementia research

has made great progress in the last 20 years, there is a long way to go in having the evaluative tools that assist clinicians in assessing the value of different treatments. In his own research Dr Rockwood has found that people with dementia and their family carers are able to set goals that can be evaluated in assessing the impact of treatment on the patient's health and well-being. He argues that making judgements about the benefits of treatments for individuals on the basis of small changes on a given scale is wrong for clinical decision making.

World Alzheimer's Day on 21 September was marked nationally by a celebration of Dementia, Art and Music at the National Gallery of Victoria. The event, which was attended by over 600 people and organised by Alzheimer's Australia Victoria, was opened by the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, AC. The event combined presentations by Dr Kenneth Rockwood and Dr Gerard Vaughan (Director, National Gallery of Victoria) with musical and artistic entertainment to illustrate the moving stories of people living with dementia.

The importance of creativity in the lives of people living with dementia was illustrated by the unveiling of the magnificent "Memories Mural". This extraordinary piece of work has been created by 93 people with dementia, who live at home or in residential aged care facilities.

A new publication in the Quality Dementia Care series, *Nurturing the Heart: Creativity, Art Therapy and Dementia*, has been released during the month. It explores the value of ongoing creative activity to people with dementia.

The National Gallery and National Gallery Victoria have both committed to programs that will encourage people with dementia to visit their galleries.



PUBLIC FORUM ON AGEING RESEARCH: THE ACT INTERGENERATIONAL FORUM 30 OCTOBER 2007

The ACT Student Branch of the Australian Association of Gerontology has organised a half-day event in Canberra which will see research students and keynote speakers discuss important themes in ageing from their areas of research and expertise. Postgraduate students will be speaking about their research on various topics in successful ageing. Topics will include:

- The nature of volunteering in retirement
- Friendships, family and relationships as protection against decline in later life;
- Prolonging safe driving;
- Technology recognising emotions in older adults;
- Lifestyle choices and successful ageing;
- Clinical gerontology: What it is and how it can help.

Dr Clive Hamilton, from the Australia Institute, will be giving a keynote lecture on *Baby Boomers' Attitudes towards Retirement* and there will also be two discussion forums, which will allow public input and the sharing of ideas.

This forum is kindly supported by the Research Network in Ageing Well, the Illawarra Retirement Trust, the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing and the Office for an Ageing Australia and will be held at the **Old Canberra House, ANU on 30 October 2007** from 10am – 2:00 pm. The forum is free, with lunch and refreshments provided.

REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL due to limited places. RSVP to Chris on 6125 1489 or email Christopher.Hatherly@anu.edu.au. For more information, please go to www.actintergenerationalforum.org.



ARC/NHMRC
Research Network in
Ageing Well



ILLAWARRA
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ACT Ministerial
Council
On Ageing

www.actintergenerationalforum.org

CONTINENCE NEWS

Incontinence affects around four million Australians. Despite the prevalence of the condition and the impact on people's lives it is estimated that only 50% of people affected seek help. In 1998, to tackle this health problem, the Australian Government established the National Continence Management Strategy (NCMS). This program aims to promote better bladder and bowel health through improved continence awareness, management and treatment.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, with funding from the NCMS, will run the Pharmacy Continence Care project until 2010. This project will offer specific continence training for up to 1,000 community pharmacists and pharmacy assistants, Australia wide. Through a national training program staff will receive information and skills to significantly raise community awareness of the issues of incontinence and to recognise and encourage help seeking strategies by customers. An assessment will be made of whether these interventions by community pharmacists and their staff result in a change in consumer behaviour in relation to continence management. For more information on the project contact Khin Win May at the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, National Secretariat on 02 6270 1888.

Further information on bladder and bowel health can be found on the new Australian Government continence website www.bladderbowel.gov.au. This website provides helpful information and advice on preventing and managing bladder and bowel problems.

LAUNCH OF THE DEMENTIA COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE: PREVENTION, RISK REDUCTION AND EARLY DETECTION

Contributed by the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre, Australian National University

The Dementia Collaborative Research Centre Number 2 (DCRC2): Prevention, Early Intervention and Risk Reduction was officially launched on 13 August 2007 by The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Ageing. The event took place at the John Curtin School of Medical Research, Australian National University (ANU), Canberra. The launch was well-attended by a wide audience including researchers, academics, government representatives, service providers and carers.

Professor Ashley Bush, Director of the Oxidation Disorders Laboratory at the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria, delivered the Inaugural Lecture entitled *Metals, oxidative stress and dementia: from biomarkers to prevention*. His speech included aspects of his teams' research into the interaction of biometals (copper, zinc and iron) with beta-amyloid that contributes to both oxidation damage and amyloid accumulation in Alzheimer's disease.

Associate Professor Marc Budge, Director of DCRC2, described the establishment of three DCRCs under the Australian Government's 2005 Budget Initiative *'Helping Australians with dementia, and their carers - making dementia a National Health Priority'*. The ANU has taken the lead in DCRC2, alongside Alzheimer's Australia Victoria, Edith Cowan University, University of Canberra, University of Melbourne and University of Queensland. By 2009, DCRC2 will deliver 26 projects across four main research areas:

- Understanding risks for dementia;
- Development of diagnostic tools and algorithms for early dementia;
- Development of risk reduction interventions; and
- Modelling impacts of risk reduction on dementia.

One of the projects highlighted was the Australian Normative and Dementia Imaging (ANDI) project.

The idea of ANDI was originally developed during a clinical Alzheimer's MRI project. Whilst scientific discoveries were made, there was very little correlation to the day-to-day problems faced by those at the coalface of dementia care. That is, "What type of dementia is this? How long has it been present? What would most benefit them right now?"

The ANDI collaborative network will enable the above via a co-ordinated and combined effort to:

- build infrastructure for large scale (n>10,000) dementia and older adult studies;
- build analysis capacity for existing research data;
- build the analysis and acquisition skill base for future data with yearly meetings of collaborators and biannual educational workshops; and
- build further linkages to techniques and individuals from international efforts in order to further develop national expertise and opportunity.

The above will provide a consequent ability to undertake novel analyses within the ANDI database.

ANDI's goal is not to collect more data but rather to provide the tools that are required to enable agglomeration of data from existing and future studies of the dementias and normative ageing.

Most large data sets are only exposed to a small number of analysis techniques before time or

interest wanes. With the database being an open resource, researchers with little or no access to data can test new analysis methods. The corollary is that researchers who submit data can get results for their own data using others' techniques with less effort than would be previously needed. Australia has limited internationally-significant image analysis and modelling capacity and yet, paradoxically, there is little sharing of knowledge between imaging centres regarding analysis. ANDI, alongside other brain imaging initiatives, should begin to address this circumstance.



Leaders of the DCRC2, left to right: Prof Colin Masters, Prof David Ames, Ms Lynette Moore, A/Prof Marc Budge (DCRC2 Director), Prof Ralph Martins, Dr David Lie and A/Prof Laurie Brown).

NHMRC-ARC
Ageing Well, Ageing Productively Research Program

OPTIMAL AGEING FOR PEOPLE WITH MULTIPLE CHRONIC CONDITIONS PROJECT

Contributed by Dr Gillian Caughey, University of South Australia

The University of South Australia's Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacy Research Centre, together with a multidisciplinary team from Adelaide and Flinders Universities, is examining the prevalence and effects of multiple chronic diseases in the elderly.

Medicines are used to prevent or manage the symptoms of chronic disease, and thus their appropriate use impacts significantly on the quality of life of the elderly. Multi-morbidity (the co-existence of multiple diseases in one individual) is a common and increasing issue in our ageing population. In Australia, 60% of 65 year olds have two or more chronic conditions, while 80% of 85 year olds have four or more chronic conditions. Multi-morbidity is associated with a decline in many health outcomes, including quality of life and functional ability. It can result in increased hospitalisations, use of health care resources and mortality. As a result of multi-morbidity, it is common for older patients to take multiple medications concurrently. With increasing numbers of concurrent medications, the risk of adverse drug events increases significantly. The increasing incidence of medication related problems and adverse outcomes in the elderly population is a growing concern.

Whilst clinical guidelines facilitate medical practitioners to make appropriate treatment choices for individual conditions, their relevance to the care of those with multiple chronic diseases, particularly the elderly, is questioned. Current

evidence based guidelines commonly rely on data that excludes the elderly population and often do not consider treatment recommendations in the light of multiple medical conditions. Following these guidelines may result in potentially very complex treatment regimens for the elderly with multiple morbidities.

The aims of this study are to examine two health databases to determine the prevalence of multi-morbidity of chronic diseases in the elderly and to determine current treatment patterns and their relevance to current clinical guidelines. This research will provide a better understanding of the consequences of current patterns of care for older people with multiple chronic conditions, and enable the development of improved approaches to care, including the development of more appropriate guidelines for older Australians with common combinations of chronic conditions. This will enable health care practitioners, in consultation with their elderly patients, to ensure the best possible health and quality of life outcomes for many older Australian patients who suffer from two or more chronic conditions.

The Project is in its first year of a five year study and was funded as part of NHMRC/ARC's Ageing Well, Ageing Productively Research Program. For further information, please contact the Project leader, Professor Andrew Gilbert (andrew.gilbert@unisa.edu.au) or the Project director, Dr Agnes Vitry (agnes.vitry@unisa.edu.au).

Research recently entered on the ARO

Objective wellbeing, life satisfaction and meaning in life as predictors of graceful ageing among senior Australians

The University of Sydney's GAP (Graceful Ageing of the Person) Project aims to investigate if there is a direct relationship between objective wellbeing, life satisfaction and meaning in life among the elderly. Through self-report questionnaires and interview data, the study will test the hypothesis that objective wellbeing, life satisfaction and meaning in life can significantly contribute to graceful ageing among senior Australians. The significance of this study is to develop an empirical definition of "graceful ageing" within the context of Australian life. Results will sit well in the National Research Priority area of "Ageing Well, Ageing Productively". Research findings will also provide a framework in rehabilitation planning for senior Australians thereby establishing the collaborative role of the Rehabilitation Counselling profession in promoting healthy ageing.

For further information please contact Edmund Talob at edramt@dodo.com.au or on 0425 283 286.

HAMMOND CARE'S 4TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DEPRESSION IN THE ELDERLY

Contributed by Hammond Care

Depression in old age is prevalent but relatively unrecognised as a problem. This Conference, the 4th of its kind organised by Hammond Care, intended to provide a forum for the dissemination of knowledge and opinion on the nature of depression in the elderly and how best to reduce it. It took place in Sydney's Powerhouse Museum on 28-29 June 2007 and was opened by The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Ageing.

The Conference program comprised 50 presentations and workshops plus a display of posters. The keynote address was provided by Professor Raymond Koopmans, Head of the Department of Nursing Home Medicine, Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, The Netherlands.

The Conference took a positive approach to the problem of depression in the elderly, attempting to balance presentations on depression with equally authoritative presentations on achieving potential and being happy. The focus of the first two sessions of the Conference was on the development of services that bring together the expertise of the mental health sector with that of the aged care sector. Professor John Snowdon presented an overview of the Australian approach and Professor Raymond Koopmans presented an international perspective highlighting the development of services in Holland, which is considered to be a world leader.

Three of the keynote speakers addressed issues of prevention of depression: one on promoting healthy organisations that support staff (Sarah Cornally); one on developing a healthy and positive approach to life (Dr Tim Sharpe); and one specifically on preventing suicide (Professor Brian Draper).

The majority of presenters gave permission for their presentations to be made available on the Hammond Care web site, www.hammond.com.au. The combination of papers on depression with papers on humour, happiness and healthy organisations helped to ensure that delegates left with a sense of optimism about what can be done to assist people to overcome the depressing aspects of old age.



Hammond Care's Chief Executive Dr Stephen Judd with The Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Ageing, at the Successful Ageing: Countering Depression in Old Age conference.

PRODUCTIVE AGEING BIBLIOGRAPHY

Contributed by the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre

National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre (NSPAC) has recently released its *Productive Ageing Bibliography*, which will save valuable time searching databases and journals. The bibliography provides fast and easy access to references, and summaries of over 800 Australian academic articles, reports and conference papers on productive ageing.



Productive Ageing
PASSION GROWTH EXPERIENCE

into a range of topics, including demographic information, cognition, education, employment, housing, income and living standards, law and legal issues, technology and communication and volunteering. It is an ideal starting point for policy makers, researchers and professionals working in areas related to productive ageing.

This is the first version of the *Productive Ageing Bibliography*, which will be updated regularly. Authors are invited to submit their abstracts or full papers from 2002 to the present for inclusion in the 2008 edition by 15 October 2007. The bibliography is available now on disk as a free resource. To order the first annual edition of the *Productive Ageing Bibliography*, please contact info@productiveageing.com.au or (07) 3233 9161.



6TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF EMERGING RESEARCHERS IN AGEING “DEFINING FUTURE DIRECTIONS”

Tuesday, 20 November 2007
Hilton Adelaide, Victoria Square, Adelaide, South Australia

Contributed by Roger Levi of the ERA 2007 Conference Planning Committee

The Healthy Ageing Research Cluster at the University of Adelaide is hosting the 6th National Conference of Emerging Researchers in Ageing (ERA). ERA 2007 aims to showcase the latest ageing-related research from PhD, Professional Doctorate, Masters and for the very first time this year honours students, from a range of disciplines. Previous ERA conferences have been organised by the Australasian Centre on Ageing at the University of Queensland and held in Brisbane annually since 2002. Last year the Conference moved away from Queensland and was successfully held in Sydney. Continuing to hold the Conference alongside the AAG National Conference, ERA 2007 is being held in Adelaide and future years will see the Conference move around Australia.

The theme for the Conference will be “Defining Future Directions” and this year’s keynote speaker is Professor Julianne Cheek. Julianne is a Professor in the Institute of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Oslo, Centre for Aged Care Studies at Helping Hand Aged Care, and the School of Health Sciences at the University of South Australia. She is Director of a performance based research centre - the Centre for Research into Sustainable Health Care - and has also held the university portfolio of Director of Early Career Researcher development with responsibility for postdoctoral development at the University of South Australia.

ERA gives the emerging researcher the opportunity to have their work published in a peer reviewed conference proceedings and to present their research findings to a diverse audience including students, academics, policy makers and practitioners. Students will have contact with prospective employers from the government, non-government and private sectors, and meet with other students researching ageing from a wide range of disciplines. They receive widespread media coverage as research work is disseminated through on-air and print media. One of the most important components of ERA is that the students learn more about the broader policy context of ageing. Previous conferences have put the work of emerging researchers on the radar of national policy makers. ERA 2007 gives the opportunity for novice researchers to become involved in developing the growing profile of this important area, while taking advantage of the professional networking opportunities offered by a conference of this calibre.

ERA 2007 is part of the emerging researchers initiative of the ARC/NHMRC Research Network on Ageing Well. The Network and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing are Gold Sponsors of the event, and the Healthy Ageing Research Cluster and the SA/NT Division of the AAG are Bronze Sponsors. For further Conference details, please visit <http://www.ageingwell.edu.au/era2007> or contact (08) 8222 5215.

Recent overseas research

The risk of dementia with increased body mass index

A recent systematic review has found that increased Body Mass Index (BMI) is independently associated with increased risk of dementia.

The review, undertaken by Emmanuel C. Gorospe and Jatin K. Dave, of the Division of Aging, Brigham and Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA, examined eight studies covering 1,688 cases of dementia from 28,697 participants.

After adjustment was made for age, smoking, comorbidities and other confounders, the researchers found four studies presented significantly increased risk of dementia with elevated BMI. They concluded that long-term studies are needed to examine the mechanisms underlying the relationship between obesity and dementia.

Further information can be found at <http://ageing.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/36/1/23>.

DVA RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

Contributed by the Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) held its third Research Seminar for 2007 on 14 September in Canberra, via video conferencing. This was the first time the DVA Seminar was able to be viewed by DVA personnel and external stakeholders at state offices.

The role of the series, which comprises four seminars each year, is to provide an opportunity for interested parties to gain an insight into the current research being undertaken into the health and wellbeing of the Australian Veteran community. It continues to attract a large cross-section of attendees.

The latest seminar featured three presentations.

The Intergenerational Health Effects of Military Service - Dr Peter Nasveld, Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH)

The CMVH has developed a sound and workable research protocol to enable further examination of the effects of military deployment upon the children of Vietnam veterans. The Vietnam Veteran Family Study is the next phase of the Intergenerational Health Effects of Military Service study. It will determine whether the health of children of Vietnam veterans is different to children of service personnel who did not serve in Vietnam and children of parents who have never served in the military. It is anticipated that this will allow an understanding of whether there are any differences in the health of children which are unique to Vietnam veterans or are a broader issue in all military personnel. The study will be undertaken in a tiered approach involving qualitative and quantitative research over an eight year period, beginning in 2008. A sample of 10,000 veterans and their families will participate and the Vietnam veteran will be the first point of contact for the survey. Wives, ex-wives and all children of the randomly selected veterans, including step children, will be invited to participate in the study.

Heat Injury Management - Mark Patterson PhD, Human Performance Science Team Leader, Defence Science and Technology Organisation

The heat stroke death of Trooper Lawrence in November 2004 resulted in Defence looking at ways to improve its policies and procedures. A variety of research activities were undertaken to provide sound scientific evidence to support the development of best practice policy and procedures. The research activities have included assessment of preparation

procedures (heat acclimatisation), assessment of risk management procedures (work-rest tables and measurement of environmental heat stress) and assessment of treatment practices (how best to cool heat injuries).

The ability to risk manage heat injuries in remote locations is a difficult process, with the greatest issue being the capacity to objectively assess the level of environmental heat stress in the work environment. A range of methods, including planning, monitoring and treatment procedures for heat stroke, were found to be invaluable in reducing heat injuries for service personnel. In addition, the Heat Injury Remediation Project has funded the development and implementation of a small environmental heat stress monitor to allow personnel to appropriately adjust their work intensity to reduce the risk of heat injuries.

Laughter is the best medicine: Evaluation of the Ex-Service Organisation's Victorian Day Clubs Program - Nerida Joss, Research Fellow, Department of Health Science, Monash University

A research evaluation project was conducted on the Victorian Day Clubs program. The evaluation examined the success and effectiveness of the program to improve the health and wellbeing of its members. The evaluation also provided valuable data to add to the evidence-base for mental health promotion programs for older people and further assist DVA to determine the impacts that the program has on its client group. 14 of the 28 Day Clubs existing at the time of data collection in Victoria voluntarily participated in the evaluation research. Surveys yielded quantitative data while focus groups with Day Club participants and semi-structured interviews with Day Club coordinators and unstructured interviews with Day Club Advisers yielded qualitative data. The response rate for the survey was approximately 75% and focus groups were well-attended.

The results revealed that the Day Club program has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of its participants with the majority of participants enjoying the social interaction that the Day Club environment provides. Members indicated that they made friendships as a result of attending their Day Club and reported positive feelings such as optimism after they have visited the Day Club. Members commented that the club gives them a day to look forward to each week, where they can laugh and generally enjoy themselves.

The next DVA Research Seminar will be held on Wednesday 14 November 2007 at the DVA Canberra office. All interested parties are invited.

AIHW NEWS

Contributed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

A new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reveals that arthritis and osteoporosis are the most common causes of disability in Australia and contribute to a wide range of physical and functional impairments that affect quality of life.

It is estimated that almost 3 million Australians (16%) have arthritis or a related disorder, such as gout, and almost 586,000 Australians (3%) have been diagnosed with osteoporosis. The report, *Impairments and disability associated with arthritis and osteoporosis*, shows that in 2003, arthritis was the main disabling condition for 546,000 Australians aged 35 years or over, while osteoporosis was the main source of disability for another 50,000 persons.

Almost 172,000 people with arthritis-associated disability and 10,000 with osteoporosis-associated disability have limitations relating to employment - for example, restrictions on what type of job they can undertake, problems in changing jobs or difficulty in getting a preferred job.

The report can be found at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10352> and further information obtained from Dr Naila Rahman on 02 6244 1057.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Gerontology Physiotherapy Group Conference

Cairns, QLD

7-8 October

<http://www.apaconferenceweek07.asn.au>

GeriAction National Conference

Brisbane, QLD

11-12 October

<http://www.geriaction.com.au/conference/>

Connecting people - An Intergenerational Forum - Ageing in the 21st Century

Canberra, ACT

30 October

<http://www.actintergenerationalforum.org/>

Psychology & Ageing Interest Group Conference

Geelong, Victoria

1-3 November

<http://www.groups.psychology.org.au>

DVA Research Seminar

Canberra, ACT

14 November

Email: Madeline.scerri@dva.gov.au

Dementia and Recreation National Conference

Melbourne, Victoria

15-16 November

http://www.totalagedservices.com.au/workshops_conferences.asp

Emerging Researchers in Ageing Conference

Adelaide, SA

20 November

<http://www.ageingwell.edu.au/era2007/>

Australian Association of Gerontology National Conference

Adelaide, SA

21-23 November

<http://www.aagconference.com>

Symposium: For-Profit Providers of Paid Care

Sydney, NSW

29-30 November

<http://www.paidcareresearch.net.au>

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

8th Asia/ Oceania IAGG Regional Congress of Gerontology

Beijing, China

22-25 October

<http://www.aog2007.org>

59th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America

San Francisco, USA

16-20 November

<http://www.agingconference.com/>

CONTACT US

Should you have any queries about this newsletter or the ARO, or suggestions for contributions please contact the ARO Site Administrator by emailing aro@health.gov.au or phoning 02 6289 5584.