

Ageing Mind Initiative

Issue 9, September 2011 Newsletter

www.uq.edu.au/ami

Inside this issue

Early diagnosis of
dementia Seminar 2

How do you manage
your health? 3

Exercising the Brain 4

Neck pain research
Results 5

Looking for Research
Participants 6

This month's edition is crammed with interesting articles and research. Alzheimer's Australia is proudly rolling out Dementia Awareness Week from the 16 - 26 September 2011 so be sure to look at page 2 to find out what you can attend.

We also have research updates and a range of exciting new projects desperate for participants. We hope you all find something you enjoy.

New AMI Member

In previous AMI newsletters we have run features the benefits of pet and horticultural therapy. It is always important to practice what you preach so we are also proud to announce a new edition to the AMI team.

Meet Scozia, a 7-year old female stray from the Torre Argentina Cat Sanctuary in Rome. AMI staff have pulled together to sponsor this beautiful feline from afar.

The Torre Argentina shelter is home to about 250 feline friends, sheltered amongst the oldest temples in Rome (400-300 BC). Seven days a week volunteers from different countries feed, clean and look after them.

ISSUE QUOTE:

Ageing seems to be the only available way
to live a long life



Dementia Awareness Week 16 - 26 September 2011

National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500

Early diagnosis of dementia: Can we and should we?

This year Dementia Awareness Week is aimed at informing people who believe they may have memory problems to seek information and help.

During the week Alzheimer's Australia (Qld) will be promoting early diagnosis and will feature international speaker Professor John Breitner MD in Brisbane at a public seminar entitled *Early diagnosis of dementia: Can we and should we?*

The seminar is open to the public and is relevant for family members and carers, community care and residential care providers, general practitioners and other health care professionals.

Prof Breitner will provide an overview of:

- What research tells us about the progression of Mild Cognitive Impairment and dementia
- Strategies for identifying those at risk or those in the earliest stages of the disease
- The possibilities for modifying progression and in what timescale.
- The need for action on dementia risk reduction, enhancing diagnostic skills of GPs, medication trials and investment in research?

Tickets for the seminar are \$15 each. Places are strictly limited and bookings are essential. Download a booking form from the website, www.alzheimers.org.au or register online now. RSVP by 16th September

Thursday 22 September 2011

9.30am - 11.00am

Auditorium, Sir Llew Edwards Building (#14)

The University of Queensland

St Lucia Campus, Brisbane



Professor John Breitner

Canada Research Chair in Prevention of Dementia

Director of Centre for Studies on Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease

Director of Douglas Mental Health University Institute Research Centre

Professor of Psychiatry at the McGill University, Faculty of Medicine

Professor Breitner is a geriatric psychiatrist and epidemiologist who has devoted his career to Alzheimer's disease (AD), its risk factors and their implications for its prevention. He has worked extensively in diagnosis and treatment of patients with dementia but is better known as a researcher. His work began with studies on familial aggregation in AD and evolved to twin studies of heritability and environmental risk factors.

Prof Breitner also founded the Cache County Study of Memory in Aging, a longitudinal investigation of genetic and environmental antecedents of AD, which has produced over 100 scientific papers. More recently he has been Chair of the Alzheimer's Disease Anti-inflammatory Prevention Trial (ADAPT), a randomized controlled trial to evaluate nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs as agents for the primary prevention of AD in healthy elderly people.

How do You Manage your Health?



The aging population is changing the face of health and healthcare. Increasingly it feels like a new anti-aging movement has swept Australia and we are seeing products and services that are marketed as being able to slow down or even reverse the natural aging process.

The aging population has also brought a shift in disease patterns. Chronic diseases like obesity and type II diabetes are replacing the previously common infectious and parasitic diseases of the past like pneumonia and measles.

With this change we are seeing a shift in the way people manage their health. It is more and more unlikely that individuals can go to a doctor and get a prescription to “cure” their ailment. With conditions such as arthritis, there is not magic fix and treatment is often an ongoing process of trial and error.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is an umbrella term used to describe a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine e.g. massage therapy, acupuncture, dietary supplements and naturopaths.

CAM offers a different approach to the traditional biomedical model and studies have shown it can provide a prevention-focused, flexible health care model for chronic and degenerative diseases.

Research has shown an increase of CAM use across all populations showing that between 43% to 87% of older adults (65 years and older) having used CAM in the last year. This trend is not only evident in Australia, but also more globally including countries such as China, Japan, India, Europe, South Africa and the United States.

CAM use has been identified as being particularly high in older adults from ethnic minority backgrounds, older adults living in non-urban and rural areas, in women and individuals with a poorer health status, a higher education and higher income. While these patterns have been identified, research with Australian populations is lacking.

Regardless of whether or not CAM approaches work, people are using it widely, including older adults. While there are currently a range of clinical trials testing the efficacy of different types of CAM, research into the social and cultural dimensions of its use is virtually non-existent.

Help us Understand CAM use

Audio-recorded focus groups will be run at The University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus throughout October (see page 10).

If you were born between the years of 1946-1951 or 1921-1926, come and share your thoughts on CAM and help us understand this issue better.

For more information, please contact Research Officer Emma Poulsen at emma.poulsen@uqconnect.edu.au



Exercising the Brain

Increasingly research is being done on how to keep your mind active and healthy as you age. One of the most common pieces of advice that emerges from this hot pot of research is that “if you don’t use it, you lose it”. Continuing to challenge and exercise your brain is one sure way to prolong a healthy mind. Indeed, “mental fitness” has been shown to be just as important as physical fitness in the healthy ageing process.

The ways in which people stay mentally fit are vast and varied. Learning a new language or studying new skills and subjects are often quoted as being excellent ways to expand and test your mental aptitude. However formal learning certainly is not everyone’s cup of tea. Fortunately, there are a myriad of different things you can try to give your brain the much needed exercise it deserves.

AMI member and amateur inventor James (Jim) Reddyhough wrote a short piece on his experiences solving card tricks and other mental puzzles. Jim described his philosophy when approaching a new problem.

“In thinking about an artificial problem you must consider that objects cannot think or move about on their own accord. Some clever person has thought of an illusion, practiced it, refined it and practiced it some more before presenting it for public entertainment. Your task is to read that

person’s mind which is quite a challenge. Before you reject some problem as trivial, if you solve it quickly, or if you already know the answer to, first ask yourself if you could have devised the problem yourself”.

“My philosophy on solving problems is that it is not just the final solution which is important, although reaching it is akin to Sir Edmund Hillary arriving at the summit of Everest! I am most proud of the fact that I try to employ proper reasoning and deduction to solve problems, even if it sometimes takes days to do so. I am also fascinated by the human brain’s ability to stew over a problem it has been presented with”

“Sometimes you limit the possibilities by jumping to a conclusion, and then refusing to budge from it. I always think of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s words which he put into the mouth of Sherlock Holmes; “when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

Jim’s approach to solving problems sums up some excellent principles that can guide your own mental fitness program. Specifically, to keep all possibilities open for as long as possible, even when a solution has apparently been found, and to take it slow if you have to. The important thing is to keep trying and hopefully, give your brain a good workout in the process.

How quickly is Australia's population ageing? Are Australians becoming less religious? Are Aussies increasingly choosing a city lifestyle?

Check out this cool interactive graph about Australian demographics.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-09/interactive-infographics-census-2011-australia-transformed/2829132>



Results from the Neck Pain and Sensorimotor Function Study!

Sureeporn Uthaikhup, Gwendolen Jull, Somporn Sungkarat & Julia Treleven,

The aim of the study was to investigate the influence of neck pain on sensorimotor function in elders. Twenty elders with neck pain (12 women and 8 men) and 20 healthy elder controls (14 women and 6 men) aged 65 years and over were recruited from the general community, which included those who volunteered from the 50+ registry.

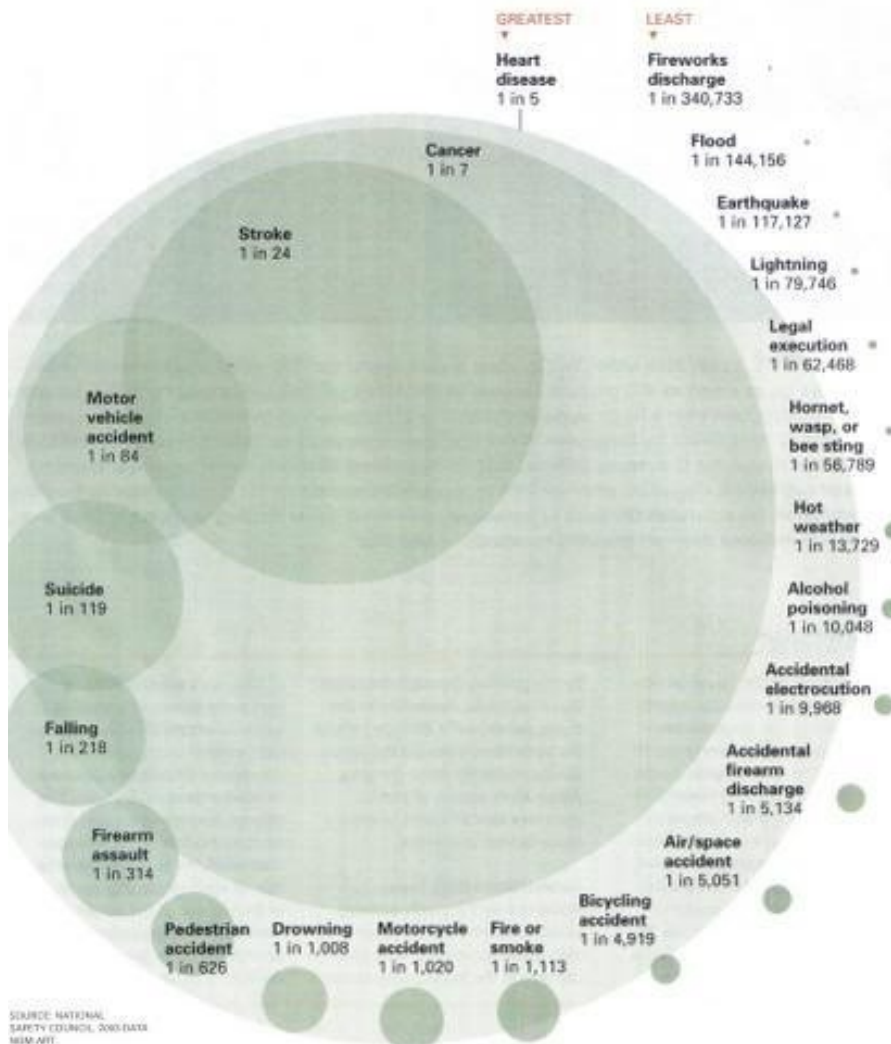
The participants completed tests for sensorimotor function which included; cervical joint position sense (JPS); computerised rod-and-frame test (RFT); smooth pursuit neck torsion test (SPNT); standing balance (under conditions

of eyes open, eyes closed on firm and soft surfaces in comfortable stance); step test and 10-metre walk test with and without head movement.

The results showed that elders with neck pain had greater deficits in the majority of sensorimotor function tests after controlling for effects of age and comorbidities.

From this it was concluded that elders with neck pain have greater sensorimotor disturbances than elders without neck pain. The findings may inform falls prevention and management programs.

The researchers would like to acknowledge and thank all the members of the 50+ registry who participated in this study.



The National Safety Council (USA)

released the following image on the risks for injury, death and fatality.

As you can see, the greatest risk to individuals is currently heart disease with a 1 in 5 change of it happening to any one individual. The lowest risk is fireworks discharge with only a 1 in 340,733 change of it happening.

The image covers a range of other risks including earthquake (1 in 117,127), Hornet, wasp or bee sting (1 in 56,789) and legal execution (1 in 62,468).

Unfortunately we could not get an image in clearer resolution but we hope you still enjoy seeing how at risk you are of these common and rare dangers.

Current Ageing Research

The following projects are looking for participants. Make a difference in Ageing Research today. Sign up now!

Language Recovery After Stroke

We are seeking healthy participants over 65 years of age who are right handed, have English as a primary language, no history of neurological disease, mental illness, or head trauma and have no metals present in the body which are not safe in an MRI scanner.

The aim of this study is to investigate how acute stroke patients with communication impairment recover language function following a stroke. We want to determine how brain activity differs between healthy adults and stroke patients during a basic language task.

Participation in the research will involve two brain scanning (MRI) sessions, carried out six months apart at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Herston. An additional assessment session will be carried out at the University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research, Herston. Participants will be reimbursed \$30 for their time and effort.

If you live in Brisbane and would be interested in finding out more about the study (or know of anyone who may) please contact:

Tracy Roxbury on **33466110** or **0409652447** or t.roxbury@uq.edu.au

Attitudes towards Ageing among Older Adults

You are invited to take part in a research project being conducted by Edward Helmes from the Ageing Mind Initiative at James Cook University and the University of Queensland.

The study explores the attitudes of older adults towards other older adults and their own ageing. If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be invited to complete four short questionnaires that should only take approximately one half hour of your time.

These questions cover different features of older adults, the changes that occur with increasing age, and how people feel about being older and other older people.

The study is being conducted via mail, so the questionnaires can be completed at your convenience. Reply paid envelopes are provided with the surveys for their return. There is no attendance required at any university or institution.

If you would like to participate or have any questions in regards to this study, please feel free to contact us via email at:

Attitudes.to.ageing@gmail.com



Ageing and Cognitive Inhibition: An ERP Analysis

How do you stay focused when you are trying to concentrate on a task? Maybe there are people talking in the background, phones ringing, or even other pressing issues weighing on your mind. One of the important functions of your brain is the ability to ignore and block out such distractions.

Unfortunately this ability seems to decline with age. More importantly, it could be the root of other problems that are commonly experienced with ageing such as memory loss and a reduced ability to concentrate.

Measuring brain activity is a really important part of understanding WHY our brains change with age. Understanding these changes may affect the way we deliver services to older adults

and help them to stay independent in their own homes and in the workforce for happy and healthy older years.

We are looking for healthy adults over 55 years of age. You must not have had a traumatic brain injury or be currently diagnosed with a psychiatric illness. If you are not sure if this includes you, please call Tara to discuss further (3735 3348).

Being part of this research involves coming into Griffith University at Mount Gravatt. Your brain activity will be measured using non-intrusive EEG caps, a little like a swimming cap which records the electrical activity of your brain. There are a number of different activities, some using a computer, and some paper questionnaires. These should take approximately 2 hours in total. You will be compensated \$20.

Please call Tara Spokes on 3735 3348 or email on t.spokes@griffith.edu.au

Men, would you like to know more about the health of your bones?

Osteoporosis is a serious skeletal disease and a major public health issue for both men and women. Unfortunately, osteoporosis often results in an osteoporotic fracture, which impacts considerably on the individual's health, level of independence and quality of life. Previous research has shown exercise to be a particularly effective and safe means to improve bone health in children, adolescents and women. However, the effect of exercise on the bone health of middle-aged and older men has received less attention.

We are calling for men (aged 50 years and older) who would like to participate in a study to examine the effects of exercise aimed at strengthening your bones. This study involved twice weekly small group exercise sessions (30 mins) at The UQ School of Human Movement Studies gym over 9 months (holiday breaks

permitted). Testing will involve bone density scans (free of charge) at the beginning and end of the study.

Eligible individuals must not have any medical conditions/ injuries which may prevent participation in exercise sessions. If you are unsure of your eligibility, please contact Kate (details below) for clarification. Car parking will be free of charge during the hours of exercise and testing sessions.

To learn more about the exercise study please contact:
Kate Bolam, Ph: (07) 3346 9710
Email: k.bolam@uq.edu.au





Seeking healthy older adults for participation in research on financial capacity.

Managing your finances is important throughout life, but particularly in later life when you may be retired or no longer working full time. However, some disorders associated with older age (such as dementia) can impact on our ability to make sound financial decisions. Research investigating financial capacity is currently being conducted at The University of Queensland.

Participation involves one assessment session where brief interviews and questionnaires are completed, as well as a practical financial task. We will also ask a family member or friend of your choice to participate in an interview. The session takes about 90 minutes to complete and is conducted conveniently in your own home.

If you are over 55, do not have memory problems and are interested in participating, please contact:

Bronwyn Massavelli
Telephone **(07) 3365 5050**
Email **b.massavelli@uq.edu.au**

A Parenting Program for Grandparents

UQ researchers are on the lookout for grandparents who need assistance or would like to fine tune their parenting skills to take part in a new program.

Grandparent Triple P is a nine-week group program that runs at the University of Queensland's St Lucia campus. Early sessions will focus on refreshing parenting strategies with the emphasis placed on working with parents to form a positive parenting team. The latter part of the program will be conducted by telephone to help grandparents develop these techniques further.

To participate in Grandparent Triple P you need to provide at least 10 hours of care per week to a grandchild who is aged between two to nine years. There is no cost to take part. More information is available at <https://exp.psy.uq.edu.au/grandparents/>.

For more information contact
Project Coordinator
James Kirby on
(07) 3365 6207 or
j.kirby@psy.uq.edu.au



Seeking Toowoomba participation in the Watermemories Swim Club

The University of Queensland is starting up a Watermemories Swim Club for people with dementia. The project is funded by the Dementia Community Support Grants Program – an Australian Government Initiative. The club aims to rekindle positive memories of swimming in people with dementia who enjoyed swimming through their lives, and get them involved in active swimming again. There is nothing about dementia that should stop this wonderfully healthy, fun and social activity. It is a pleasure-based swimming club supported by specially designed aquatic exercise program so the benefits of swimming will be enhanced.

When and where

Eight 45-minute sessions will be conducted each week over 12 weeks. The sessions will be conducted between 1pm and 3pm – a quiet period at the heated, indoor Milne Bay Aquatic Centre, Herries St, Toowoomba. We would like new club members and volunteers to assist in the water.

The program, commencing early September, will run for 10-12 weeks (with a break over the school holiday period). You do not need to volunteer for every session – one session a week would be a great help. Each session will be led by a trained Watermemories Program instructor, and an exercise physiologist will regularly attend sessions to assist with supervision.

If you are interested in participating or volunteering or require more information please contact **Karen Clifton**, on 07 3720 5302 or email Karen at k.clifton@uq.edu.au.



Do you have Knee Osteoarthritis ?

We are looking for people aged over 50 years with osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee who have had knee pain on most days for the past month to participate in a clinical trial.

We are comparing the effectiveness of three treatments for knee OA delivered by physiotherapists: The treatments are 1. Treatment involving a combination of exercise and pain coping skills training; 2. Treatment involving exercise alone and 3. Treatment involving pain coping skills alone.

All eligible volunteers will be randomly allocated to receive one of the three treatments under

investigation from a trial physiotherapist located in your region. You will receive 10 physiotherapy sessions over 12 weeks at no personal cost.

Participants must be willing to: Have a knee xray to ensure that you are eligible to participate (no cost), Attend the Division of Physiotherapy at the University of Queensland for baseline and follow up testing (3 times over a 12 month period), Undertake a home based program for your knee OA over the trial period and Keep a diary of activities and answer questionnaires at three time points

To obtain details and learn more about the trial please contact: **Paul Connellan** Ph: (07) 3365 4691 Email: p.connellan@uq.edu.au

Did a close family member develop cardiovascular disease before age 60? Assess your own risk status now!

The Cardiovascular Imaging Research Centre of the University of Queensland is currently running a trial for healthy 40-65 year olds who have a family history of premature cardiovascular disease.

That is, you have a mother, father, brother or sister who has been diagnosed with premature (before age 60) cardiovascular disease – such as heart attack, acute angina, stroke caused by a blood clot (not a brain bleed) and/or poor blood supply to the hands, feet or lower legs.

The aim of the study is to see if a nurse-led risk management program will be effective in

reducing the incidence of cardiovascular disease in this group of patients. All participants will have their arterial plaque levels (cholesterol build up in the arteries) measured by undergoing a carotid artery ultrasound, as part of their risk assessment. Eligible participants will be randomised to either their usual medical care or the nurse-led disease management program. Participation involves 4 to 6 visits over 3 years.

There are considerable benefits for healthy patients enrolling in this trial, one of them being a carotid artery scan to assess plaque buildup in the arteries and a full risk assessment. The aim of the trial is to detect cardiovascular disease in healthy individuals with a family history and instigate a nurse managed life-style management program with a view to avoiding the disease.

For further information please contact:

j.holliday@uq.edu.au OR l.rigby@uq.edu.au

Have You Ever used Complimentary or Alternative Medicine?

Complimentary and Alternative Medicine Use (CAM) is a hot topic. Between 43% to 87% of older adults have reported using some sort of CAM in past year. This includes everything from acupuncture, dietary supplements like fish oil, naturopathy, chiropractic work and countless more treatments not considered part of “conventional” medicine. We want to understand why people use CAM regardless of whether or not society believes it works. Please share your experiences with us.

Audio-recorded focus groups will be run at The University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus throughout October. If you were born between the years of 1946-1951 or 1921-1926 please sign up.

Focus groups will only run for 1-2 hours and Tea, Coffee and light refreshments will be provided to all who attend.

For more information, contact Emma Poulsen at emma.poulsen@uqconnect.edu.au

Thank you in advance for your generous donation of time and personal experience.



Do You Have Ongoing Hip Pain?

Do you have or think you have HIP JOINT OSTEOARTHRITIS? Would you like a FREE scan for your hip Bone Mineral Density?

Researchers at the School of Physiotherapy and Exercise Science at Griffith University, Gold Coast campus are conducting a research study investigating the effects of hip joint osteoarthritis on muscle function and walking and related progression of the condition. This project has ethical clearance from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (PES/23/08/HREC)

Persons over the age of 45 years with ongoing hip pain (greater than 3 months) and/or suspected or known diagnosis of Hip Joint Osteoarthritis (and no previous lower limb joint surgery) are required for this research study. Testing will take place at the Griffith University Biomechanics Laboratory, Gold Coast campus. Free Xrays will be taken at a local radiology clinic in Brisbane or the Gold Coast.

Participation will involve:

- being tested twice, approximately 12 months apart
- having a free X-ray and Bone Mineral Density scan of your hips
- wearing a 'pedometer' for 1 week
- completing questionnaires on overall health, pain, mobility and quality-of-life
- having your lower body strength tested
- having your walking pattern analysed

To volunteer or receive more information, please contact:

Maria Constantinou Mobile: 0412392062 Phone: (07) 5552 7716

Email: m.constantinou@griffith.edu.au



For additional information or to be added to the AMI mailing list and Listserve, please contact us via email at ami@uq.edu.au.

**Alternatively you may contact Dr Nancy Pachana at
School of Psychology, The University of Queensland
ST LUCIA QLD 4072 or Tel. 07-3365-6832**