

Ageing Mind Initiative Newsletter

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Please direct all
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Welcome to the first Ageing Mind Initiative (AMI) Newsletter for 2010!

2010 is shaping up to be an exciting year as fresh post-graduate and post-doctoral researchers embark on exciting new projects exploring a range of ageing related topics. This year AMI has already received news of several new projects that explore paying attention to language in stroke patients, investigating the influences of exercise in people suffering from prostate cancer and examining the issues associated with older adults using Queensland's enduring powers of attorney (EPA) and advance health directive (AHD) forms. Also an international research team including AMI co-director Nancy Pachana has assembled to find an effective measure for assessing attitudes in older adults within Australian populations (see feature story page 2).

Several on-going research projects are also now in their final phases of participant recruitment and others are now analysing data. In the next few issues of the AMI newsletter we hope to update you on the findings of our horticultural study, the effects of caregiver burden and the osteoarthritis study that were advertised in the 2009 AMI newsletters. Thank you to everyone who participated in these studies!

AMI Program co-directors Associate Professors Gerard Byrne and Nancy Pachana have grand plans for the New Year. In 2010, the Ageing Mind Initiative hopes to strengthen the existing collaborations between researchers not only at The University of Queensland, but also with national and international researchers. Hopefully this will foster more collaboration in research and highlight global themes, ideas and theories on ageing issues.

The Positive Ageing Journey Symposium will also be returning in 2010 following it's success last year. The AMI team hope to make this event an annual fixture on the AMI calendar.

Keep reading the Ageing Mind Initiative Newsletter for more details or consult our website at www.uq.edu.au/ami. Thank you for reading!

ISSUE QUOTE

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind." - James Truslow Adams

How Your Attitudes Impact on Your Health

5th Feb 2010 - Emma Poulsen



An international research team have come together to better understand older adults and their attitudes towards ageing and themselves. Scottish researcher Dr Ken Laidlaw (The University of Edinburgh), Australian-American researcher Associate Professor Nancy Pachana (The University of Queensland) and Australian-Canadian researcher Professor Edward Helmes (James Cook University) plan to dedicate the year 2010 to exploring this intriguing topic.

“Attitudes are really quite a powerful phenomenon” Dr Pachana notes. “They can have a profound effect on an individual’s cognitive functioning, emotional health and even physical functioning through things like diet and exercise. It’s quite amazing when you consider the wider array of consequences that impact on your health just by holding a certain belief.”

“Attitudes can also play an important role in building up resilience” she continues. “Having a healthy attitude as opposed to an unhealthy one can really help individuals deal with some of the inevitable losses that ageing brings. Difficult events such as the passing away of friends or loss of function can be handled with incredible strength and fortitude if your attitude is a positive one. There is still no denying that these sorts of events are incredibly difficult but it seems as though they become more bearable with certain outlooks”.

Professor Helmes adds “I think examples such as that really highlight the difference between attitudes and facts. While you can have detailed knowledge about a variety of facts, it is your attitude that controls your reactions to life events and different situations. It is your attitude that motivates you rather than a set of circumstances, whatever they may be. If you’re about to turn 101 there is no denying your age which is a fact. The difference is more about whether you see yourself as possessing the wisdom of the ages and a wealth of life experiences worthy of sharing versus having dated knowledge and feeling useless.”

Pachana and Helmes also pointed out the importance that culture plays in influencing an individual’s attitudes. Each country and culture generates within it a certain set of beliefs and attitudes. Research has shown that youth oriented

culture can have negative consequences for attitudes towards older adults.

In youth oriented cultures there tend to be misconceptions about ageing, such as ageing equals senility. By allowing such beliefs to continue, greater value is placed on being young and older adults are at risk of being undervalued and the ageing process being poorly understood.

Dr Pachana remarks that “the worst part about this happening (in youth oriented cultures) is that it is not just the younger adults that come to believe negative misconceptions about ageing. Attitudes are often difficult to break and what seems to happen is that the older adults themselves come to believe in their own lowered status and value, and internalize these beliefs. The repercussions of this can be quite negative. Part of the motivation that drives our work is the desire to understand how negative as well as positive attitudes get established, and their prevalence in older adults in Australia.

Dr Ken Laidlaw has a dual appointment with The Edinburgh University and the NHS Lothian older adults clinical psychology service in Edinburgh. He has published an Attitudes to Ageing Scale, which will be used in the current study. We are also using an Australian instrument to measure reactions to ageing. The researchers hope to find out which measure of attitudes is the best fit for Australian populations as many of the current measures are designed for other countries and cultures.

“The results of this study are very important for future research” Professor Helmes explains. “Once an appropriate measure for assessing attitudes in Australians has been found, the real advances in this kind of research can begin. Hopefully with a more sophisticated measure, we can go on to better understand how Australian’s attitudes impact on the health and well-being of older adults”.

“Yes” Dr Pachana adds. “Now that research shows how powerful attitudes can be in determining the health outcomes of individuals, the potential for improving quality of life through attitude-targeted interventions is immense”.

If you are interested in assisting in this research, please contact **Matthew Taylor** at attitudes.to.ageing@gmail.com





Centenary Celebration Day - 18th April

As part of the University of Queensland (UQ Centenary Celebration Day on **April 18 2010**, UQ Sport, the School of Psychology and the School of Human Movement Studies have put together a Positive Ageing Series. This is the first event of its kind on the UQ calendar and it is completely **FREE** to the public!

The series will provide practical information and demonstrations for men and women over 55. There are many interesting topics that range from the therapeutic benefits of working with plants or owning a pet, to clever gadgets that can improve everyday living.

All events will be held in the Alumni Court (Building 16) at The University of Queensland campus, St Lucia. Visit www.uq.edu.au/centenary/celebration to find out more or email centenary@uq.edu.au

The Positive Ageing Series	Time
Relaxation through horticulture	9.30 - 10.00
Benefits of exercise and activity	10.00 - 10.30
Pet therapy	10.30 - 11.30
Tips on safer driving	11.30 - 12.00
Cooking demonstrations	12.00 - 13.00
Benefits of exercise and activity	13.00 - 13.30

Get Involved in UQ Ageing Research

Helping stroke patients to speak

This study is looking at the role of attention in language, so that we may develop a treatment for adults who have aphasia. Aphasia is caused by head trauma, most commonly by stroke, and can result in difficulties in all aspects of language, including speaking, listening, reading and writing. We know that attention plays a significant role in all aspects of language in healthy adults.

We are seeking adults over the age of 40 who are right handed, have no neurological disorders, have no history of drug or alcohol abuse, do not have any uncorrected visual or hearing impairments and have English as a first language.

We will ask you to undertake a number of language/attention tests which will include picture naming, picture descriptions and counting tones. We will then ask you to watch words as they appear on a computer screen and indicate whether they are real or nonsense words.



While you are doing this, we will be recording the electrical activity in your brain using electroencephalography (EEG). EEG is a non-invasive and accurate method of electrophysiological measurement which uses sensors placed on the scalp. The sensors do not emit any signal, but instead monitor changes in brain activity.

Contact: Carole-Ann Greig, email: c.greig@uq.edu.au, telephone: 07 3346 6110, mobile: 0405 308189



Get Involved in UQ Ageing Research

Home-based music therapy for couples where one spouse has dementia

Music Therapy is recognized as a therapy that can assist people with dementia to recall special memories and events, which can be used to improve meaningful communication and interaction with other people, especially between couples. Music can affect mood and facilitate the release of tension and stress that couples may experience. This means that music can be beneficial for both you and your partner.

We invite you to participate in this research project which is investigating the effectiveness of a home-based music program on the quality of life and well-being of couples where one partner has dementia. We will show you how to choose and use music strategically to facilitate couple-interaction, enjoyment, and relaxation. The project runs for 6-weeks and you can implement it in your own home – no need to travel anywhere.

Some comments from participants are:

"I found the session invigorating", "Holding hands during music listening helped me feel close to him";

"We had fun dancing- we both laughed about how we cannot move like we use to";

"When I was feeling uptight, or things were getting a bit hectic, it provided a great way to relax" ;

"Singing songs she knows helps her because it's something she can do. She smiles when she does it and that makes me smile".

The project is run through the University of Queensland and participation in this project is free. For more information on being a part of this project, please contact: **Dr Felicity Baker** f.baker1@uq.edu.au
Phone: (07) 3365 3740 Ph 0415615327



Prostate cancer and exercise study

Eligibility: Prostate cancer patients on androgen suppression therapy (for more than 2 months) and who are anticipated to remain so (hypogonadal) for the duration of the study (12 months).

Participants must NOT have:

- Metastatic bone disease, established osteoporosis or taking medications known to affect bone metabolism, such as bisphosphonates
- A musculoskeletal, neurological or cardiovascular disorder that could inhibit them from exercising (will require GP consent)
- Participated in regular, structured (e.g. 2 to 3 times per week) resistance training (also known as weight or strength training) in the previous 3 months

Intervention: 12 months of supervised exercise sessions of resistance and aerobic training. Participants in the exercise groups will undertake 2 supervised sessions per week, approximately 1 hour per session. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of three groups: (1) Resistance/ impact-loading exercise, (2) Usual care and delayed exercise group or (3) Resistance/ aerobic exercise group.

If you are interested please contact: Kate Bolam Ph: 07 3365 4998, Email: k.bolam@uq.edu.au or Dr Dennis Taaffe Ph: 07 3346 7904 Email: dtaaffe@hms.uq.edu.au



Get Involved in UQ Ageing Research

Seeking Participants for a Study in How People Manage their Finances

In older people with dementia, a diminished capacity to manage finances can result in poor financial decisions, victimisation, self-improvement, and vulnerability to exploitation. In conjunction with the Office of the Adult Guardian, Queensland, we are investigating the usability of an innovative protocol for determining the capacity of older people with dementia to manage their finances. As part of this research, we would like to interview people **who do not have dementia** and a member of their family or a friend to ascertain how healthy older people and their families respond on the questionnaires.

Participation in this research involves one 2-hour session, conducted conveniently in your home. The session includes some brief questionnaires, and simulated financial tasks such as writing cheques and reading bank statements. We will also ask a family member or friend of your choice to participate in an interview. We will ask your relative or friend questions about how they view aspects of your social and everyday functioning.

If you are aged 60 years or over and are interested in participating, please contact Katherine Vearncombe on **3365 5572**. Your participation will help the Office of the Adult Guardian to work better in the future with potentially vulnerable older people.

Seeking Healthy Participants for Learning and Memory Studies

Are you a healthy 60+ year-old who has not had a stroke and does not have dementia? We are investigating memory and learning in healthy older adults and older adults diagnosed with dementia, and are currently seeking healthy participants without dementia.

We will be running three studies consisting of one, two, and three sessions, respectively. You may choose to participate in one, two, or all three of these studies. In each study you will be asked to complete memory and learning tasks, and answer some questions related to other aspects of thinking and mood.

You will be offered entry to a draw for a \$25 shopping voucher for each study that you participate in. Sessions can be conducted in the comfort of your own home, or at the University of Queensland, if this is more convenient for you. If you are interested in participating, please contact Dr. Erin Smith or Dr. Megan Broughton on 3346 7451, or via email at e.smith1@uq.edu.au or

Enduring Power of Attorney and Advance Health Directive Study

We are looking for participants for a project that aims to investigate the issues associated with Queensland's enduring powers of attorney (EPA) and advance health directive (AHD) forms and suggest improvements concerning their usability and effectiveness for the people who use them.

Who are we looking for?

We are looking for people who feel they are familiar with the EPA and/or the AHD form either by way of being a principal or an attorney for an enduring power of attorney, or by completing an advance health directive. We would like to hear about your experiences with the forms and give you the opportunity to tell us what you think of the forms, and suggest any improvements.

If you are interested, or require further details, please contact Carlie Rocco on 3346 7314 or email: c.rocco@uq.edu.au



Reactions to Feared Objects

Researchers in the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland are running a study starting from late 2009 or early 2010 investigating the responses of mentally healthy men and women aged 60 and over to common feared objects such as spiders.

Participants will complete some questionnaires and perform some reaction tasks on a computer while their physiology measures such as EMG, skin conductance and respiratory rate are taken. The entire experiment will take 1.5 hrs to complete. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

For more information on the project, please contact Shuyang Chen at :
shu.chen@uqconnect.edu.au or 0413 426 791.

Have you stopped driving? Or will you need to stop soon?

We are interested in speaking with people who have stopped driving or who will need to stop due to dementia.

The project is being run by the Division of Occupational Therapy at the University of Queensland. We would like to hear about your experiences and the experiences of your family members.

People with dementia or their family member/carers who are interested in the study can call:

Sally Bennett on 3365 3004 (and leave a message if she is not available she will ring you back) or send an email to sally.bennett@uq.edu.au

Help Change Attitudes Towards Older Adults!

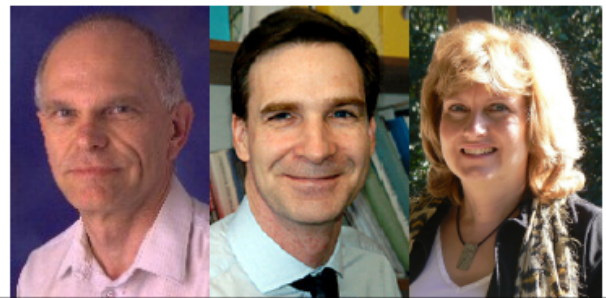
Attitudes have been shown to effect memory, emotional health, physical functioning, diet and exercise. The difference between having a positive attitude, as opposed to a negative attitude, can be greater than you think!

We need your help to better understand the attitudes of older adults towards themselves and the ageing process. By assisting in this study you will help develop an Australian specific measure that will dramatically advance research with Australian populations and Australian older adults.

Come and share your opinions, thought and attitudes. This study simply involves filling out a few short questionnaires. Give older adults a stronger voice. We'd love to hear what you have to say.

For more details on the study, please contact **Matthew Taylor** at attitudes.to.ageing@gmail.com

Research Investigators pictured (left to right):
Edward Helmes, Ken Laidlaw, Nancy Pachana



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