

Ageing Mind Initiative

Issue 32 July 2017 Newsletter
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Page

Welcome to the Winter edition of the AMI Newsletter and thank you to all of our readers who emailed in suggestions for feature articles. We have tried to address some of these requests in the current edition and we hope you enjoy. Please keep the suggestions coming as they are always warmly received.

Once again there are a host of new research projects seeking participants. If you currently receive support services in the home, you may be interested in turning to page 11. If you are curious to share your opinion on the accessibility of Mental Health services, please turn to page 18. There are a number of studies that involve filling out an online survey, which can be done from anywhere in Australia.

You are always welcome to forward our Newsletter to friends who you think may be interested or invite others to joining the mailing list. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Thank you again for your ongoing support of ageing-related research!



ISSUE QUOTE:

“Experience is the teacher of all things”
~ Julius Caesar

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Feature Story: Social Planning for Retirement Pays Off

Retirement is an inevitable part of aging for most people, but successful adjustment is far from straightforward. While most people find the transition positive, about 10-25% find it hard to adjust and experience a marked decline in their health and wellbeing as a result. Retiring from one's major career allows a person to sweep aside routine and leave them free of deadlines and rosters. However, it can also take them away from things they value, like their workmates and a job that can provide them with meaning and purpose.

To date, financial planning has been the focus when preparing for retirement. While financial security is clearly important, research is beginning to show that attention to social factors is equally important in ensuring a successful retirement transition. Yet this is the area we tend to neglect.

Previous research has found that our relationships with other people is a vital source of support to help us cope with difficult life changes (such as recovery from stroke; Haslam et al., 2008). So what is it about social networks that promotes health and well-being in the retirement transition specifically? This is the key question that a team of researchers at the University of Queensland, University of Kansas (in the US) and Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics (in China) have been investigating.

Social group relationships support retirement adjustment

Key to a positive transition to retirement is developing relationships with groups of other

people (family and friend groups, community groups, interest groups, voluntary groups, etc.). This is the finding from a recent study conducted by the above team of researchers. Retirees who had two key group memberships *after* retirement had only a 2% risk of early death 6 years later. This risk increased to 5% if retirees lost one group and 12% if they lost both groups (Steffens et al., 2016).

Extending on this, another study conducted with members of the Ageing Mind Initiative and other retirees in Australia and New Zealand, showed that these group relationships were as important, and sometimes more important than other factors we usually associate with better retirement — such as access to financial resources, having a partner and being in good physical health.



Continued...

Social Planning for Retirement Pays Off

The findings from these studies highlight just how important social groups are when it comes to protecting health and well-being into retirement. Especially important are those groups that people join *after* retirement. So, if we want to live well into retirement then we need to prioritise social planning alongside financial planning and invest in social group activity in the transition by joining new social groups.

References

Haslam, C., Holme, A., Haslam, S.A., Iyer, A., Jetten, J., & Williams, W.H. (2008). Maintaining group membership: Identity continuity and well-being after stroke. *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation, 18*, 671-691. doi: 10.1080/09602010701643449

Steffens, N. K., Cruwys, T., Haslam, C., Jetten, J., & Haslam, S. A. (2016). Social group memberships in retirement are associated with reduced risk of premature death: evidence from a longitudinal cohort study. *BMJ Open, 6*:e010164. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010164



Take part in a new study

This research would not have been possible without the interest and support of members of the Ageing Mind Initiative and so the team want to send their thanks to everyone who took part.

The research is ongoing and the team are currently recruiting people who are ***planning to retire in the next six months*** to find out more about the role of social networks in the retirement transition. This involves completing some online surveys about your experience of the transition. If you would like to be involved or know of others who would be interested in being involved, please contact Ben Lam at ben.lam@uq.edu.au or visit www.groups4health.com/g4r/

where you can access the survey.

(Details of the study also listed on page 17 of the Newsletter)

Learning about Short-term Memory

Short-term memory loss is a common phenomenon that can occur for a wide range of reasons. It could be health-related or lifestyle-related. Short-term memory is often referred to as “working memory”. The brain temporarily stores information where it can be immediately worked with, then often discarded. For example, as you walk around the shopping market you might be thinking to yourself “I must remember to pick up some milk”. This information can quickly disappear unless a point is made to intentionally remember it and have it be transferred to long term memory.

The brain does a tremendous amount of filtering in short-term memory to determine the usefulness or importance of the information prior to discarding it. If the brain did not do this, we would soon be overwhelmed with a large amount of redundant information e.g., remembering every grocery list you ever created.

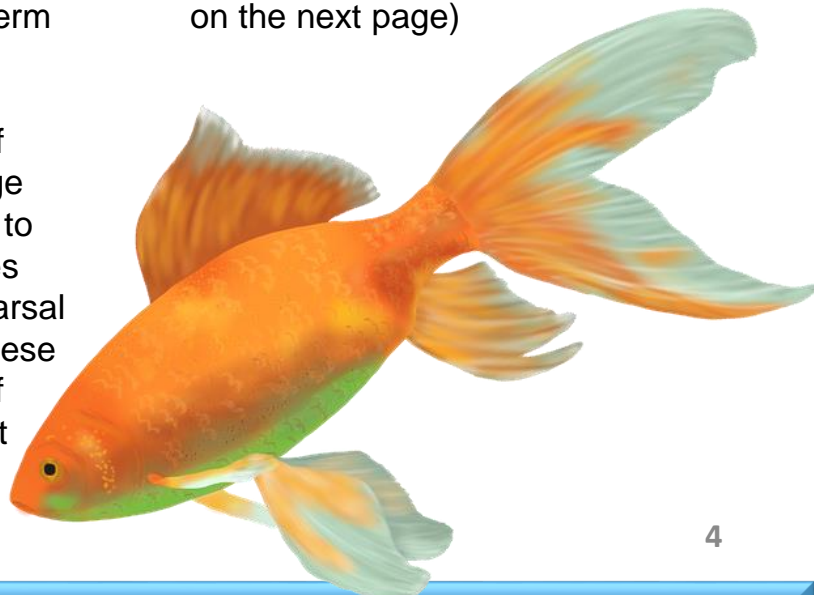
There is also a limit to how much our brains can store. Typically our short-term memory can only hold approximately seven pieces of information at a time Miller (1956). However, the amount of information you can store does change depending on whether you have time to allow for the use of memory processes such as grouping information or rehearsal of information. If you are able to do these things, you can change the amount of information that can be stored in short term memory.

If you have trouble with short-term memory or suffer from short-term memory loss, you likely have trouble remembering things that happened recently. This can vary from mild forgetfulness that everyone experiences from time to time, to severe memory-loss where you might be getting lost in your own home and struggling to complete activities of daily living.

As previously mentioned, you can experience short-term memory loss due to health-related or lifestyle-related factors. For example, prescription medications can often have the side-effect of impacting on short-term memory. Other causes may include lack of sleep, mental health conditions, lack of exercise and diet.

In fact, three simple ways to try to help cope with short-term memory problems are:

1. Improve your sleep
2. Improve your mood and address any Mental Health concerns e.g., stress or depression
3. Use supportive strategies (as outlined on the next page)



Short Term Memory Strategies

There are many ways to compensate for short-term memory difficulties that can assist in maintaining and improving your day to day functioning. Some of these are:

Minimise distractions - Letting your brain focus on one thing at a time will help you remember information and reduce conflicting distractions.

Use memory aids - Write it down on a calendar, diary, notebook, whiteboard, phone. Make a list and help transfer the information from a thought in your head, to a written down record.

Repetition - Say it out loud or write it down. Ask for other people to repeat information. Practice a routine, a trip or a procedure multiple times. The more times you repeat it, the more likely you are to remember it.

Grouping information- Grouping information or “Chunking” is breaking up information into smaller, more memorable bits. For example it can be hard to remember a long sequence of digits like 378902 but it is easier to remember 37 89 02. You can also group things according to meaning e.g., remembering your shopping in groups like meats, vegetables and preserved goods.

Get some exercise - Your short-term memory is improved by walking in nature.

Hopefully this has given you some tips for working with short-term memory. Remember, if you are really concerned about short-term memory loss, please consult your doctor.



Website Reviews for Dementia Tips

One of our readers shared a collection of helpful websites that may be useful to families or friends who are supporting someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's is currently the most common forms of dementia that an individual can be diagnosed with. It affects up to 70% of all people who have dementia (www.fightdementia.org.au). These websites provide tips and ideas for supporting someone with dementia.

[10 Stimulating Activities for Alzheimer's Patients](#)

Dementia can cause seniors to withdraw from activities, family and friends. But maintaining those relationships and interests reduces the effects of severe cognitive impairment, leading to a better quality of life. This website provides ideas on how to do this.

[The Caregiver's Guide to Car Travel with Your Loved One with Alzheimer's](#)

This guide will help you find better ways to transport your Alzheimer's loved one by car.

[Alzheimer's Disease and When to Stop Driving](#)

Driving is a powerful symbol of competence and independence, besides being a routine part of adult life. But the focused concentration and quick reaction time needed for safe driving tends to decline with age. This website helps identify things to consider when someone with Alzheimer's disease needs to consider driving.

[Everything You Need to Know to Prepare Your Home for a Loved One with Alzheimer's](#)

Alzheimer's disease has unique symptoms and traits, so it's likely that your home will need

some modifications in order to create the best environment for your loved one. This guide will cover all the adjustments you should consider making room by room, with tips on creating both the safest surroundings and the most secure environment.

[Dementia Care Dos & Don'ts: Dealing with Dementia Behavior Problems](#)

Some helpful tips to assist in navigating challenging behaviours of concern that may appear when a loved one has dementia.

[Sensory Rooms for Dementia](#)

Sensory rooms are special places for people living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia to safely explore and stimulate all five senses. The rooms can be used for calming or stimulating, depending on the needs of your loved one. This website gives some ideas on how to create your own sensory room.

We hope you find some of these websites helpful. Remember that you can also always call the National Dementia Helpline or for help with dementia management, the Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (see numbers below). These services are available 24/7.

National Dementia Helpline
Ph 1800 100 500
Dementia Behaviour
Management Advisory Service
Ph 1800 699 799.

Current Ageing Research

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

Sleep and Neuroplasticity

Amongst its many functions, sleep plays a critical role in consolidating the memories and skill that were acquired during the day. When we learn a new skill or store a memory, certain physiological processes, known collectively as **neural plasticity**, take place that retain the acquired information. During a particular phase of sleep known as slow wave sleep (SWS), large, highly synchronous bursts of low-frequency brain activity known as **slow-wave oscillations** are critical in consolidating these plastic changes. Consolidation is important in promoting long-term storage of information.

Despite the undeniably important role that sleep plays in promoting neural plasticity, there are many amongst us who find it difficult to sleep properly, and thus, to gain benefit from a good night's sleep. One demographic particularly prone to poor sleep is the elderly, and poor sleep in this group has recently been causally linked to memory dysfunction. Impairments in memory manifest because of impaired plasticity mechanisms.

Recently, non-invasive brain stimulation, transcranial discrete current stimulation (tDCS), has been used to induce these oscillations in the awake human brain, and has consequently enhanced memory. The project described uses

tDCS to harness the beneficial effects of sleep in promoting plasticity in the brain in young and elderly people.

The Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) are currently running studies to investigate these processes further.

For more information, please contact:
Claire Bradley
claire.bradley@uq.edu.au



RESEARCH PROJECTS

How do different thinking skills relate to language and emotion?

We are conducting a study to investigate a range of cognitive skills and how they relate to speech production and emotional expression.

We are seeking the help of:

Males and females aged 60-85 years with English as first language and no neurological history (e.g., brain tumour or stroke).

Why this research?

We are looking at how different aspects of cognition are related to language, and how certain parts of the brain control a range of thinking skills. For example, we will be looking at how the brain pays attention to information seen in the environment, or how a spoken or nonverbal response is produced, or how a plan or strategy is made when problem solving. The overall findings will potentially benefit patients with illnesses or conditions that affect the brain through improved assessment, more specific rehabilitation and a clearer understanding of various cognitive deficits.

What will I be asked to do?

Participating involves completing a 2-3 hour one-on-one session with the experimenter, where you will be asked to do several simple tasks that look at your thinking skills. This may involve responding verbally (i.e. speaking) or

nonverbally (e.g., pointing) to words, dots and pictures. The tasks are carried out with pen and paper or via computer. For example, you might be asked the name of an object, to talk about pictures, or respond to stimuli on computer screens by pressing a button. Each task will be explained to you beforehand with examples given. Testing sessions can be split across two days if needed.

There is no cost to participate and the study will take place at the St Lucia campus of The University of Queensland Brisbane (or at your home if suitable) at a time that is convenient for you.

If you would like to learn more or participate, please contact Amie Willis at amie.willis@uq.net.au, or on 0437 352 987.

I am happy to talk with you and answer any questions you may have. **Thank you for considering this invitation**



This study is being conducted by Honours Student Amie Willis, in association with PhD candidate Megan Barker, in collaboration with Dr Gail Robinson, a Clinical Neuropsychologist/Psychologist, and Dr Nicole Nelson (University of Queensland, School of Psychology) and has been approved by the University of Queensland Human Ethics Committee [2015000853].

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Understanding sideways balance in older adults with hip osteoarthritis

Balance problems in older people can be made worse by the presence of disease, such as joints wearing out. However, we don't clearly understand how common diseases affecting the hips and trunk impair sideways balance. This study will look at how hip osteoarthritis affects people's ability to respond to a sudden loss of balance in a sideways direction.

What is involved?

You would be required to come to the Gait Laboratory within the Physiotherapy Department, Princess Alexandra Hospital, for up to 2 hours. We will measure your balance, how your body segments move, and how your leg and trunk muscles work, when you are standing, stepping, walking, and in response to a sudden pull at your waist.

Who can participate?

To be eligible to participate in this important research study you **MUST:**

- be 60 years old or over

Unfortunately the study isn't suitable if you have:

- Symptomatic ankle, knee or hip osteoarthritis
- Low back or lower limb pain or disease that effects your daily activities
- Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, or have had a stroke
- Sensory problems (e.g. visual, inner ear disorders, peripheral neuropathy) that affect your balance or walking
- Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease

What will you receive?

- We can provide complimentary day parking. Refreshments will also be provided.

Interested?

I'll be happy to speak to you about the study and send you more details. Please contact: Alexandra Picorelli - Tel: 0412 933 810 Email: alexandra.picorelli@uqconnect.edu.au



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Do you have pain on the outer side of the hip?

We are seeking volunteers with pain on the outer side of the hip (lateral hip pain) in a study investigating pain perception and physical function. Specifically, we aim to collect information about your response to different types of sensation (heat, cold, pressure) in relation to pain, and the effect of physical load on pain. We will compare this with the information obtained from people without lateral hip pain. We hope that this information will contribute to our knowledge of some of the physiological processes occurring in tendinopathy, and will help us to develop more effective treatments.

What will the study involve?

Completing our online survey. We would like you to answer some simple questions about your health and lateral hip pain to ascertain that you do not have any medical or health related matters that exclude you from the study. This will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

One testing appointment. For this study, you will be required to undergo one testing appointment at the University of Queensland of approximately 2.5 hours. This includes a free physical assessment, questionnaires and a number of sensation tests for heat, cold and pressure.

What will you receive?

You will receive a free clinical assessment, a \$10 Coles/Myers gift voucher after completion of your appointment and parking costs will be covered.

Are you interested?

If you are interested and would like to know if you fulfil the requirements to participate, please go to: <https://is.gd/lateralhippain>

For further information, please contact Melanie Plinsinga at m.plinsinga@uq.edu.au



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Do you receive support services in your home?

We are seeking volunteers to participate in a study investigating the experience and impact of receiving paid support services in the home, for example help with cleaning, laundry meal preparation and personal care activities such as showering.

What is the purpose of this study?

Home support services are commonly provided in the community for older adults by non-government organisations and provide support for personal care (bathing and dressing), domestic assistance (cleaning and laundry), social support and other activities at home such as meal preparation. Currently, there is little understanding of these support services

from the perspective of the people receiving the support or how these services affect home life. This study aims to understand how home support services impact the people who use them.

What does the study involve?

Completing an **interview in your own home** with a member of the research team for approximately 1 hour. Participation may also involve the completion of a questionnaire about different aspects of your home.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

If you are interested in participating **please contact Dr Tammy Aplin**, email: t.aplin1@uq.edu.au or phone: 07 3365 2649 to register your interest.



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Can Brain Stimulation Improve Learning in Older Adults?

Even healthy older people frequently struggle to remember the names of people they have met for the first time or report problems remembering new information. We are currently conducting a study to find out if those age-associated problems can be alleviated using a new brain stimulation technique (transcranial Direct Current Stimulation, tDCS).

We are looking for **healthy older adults over 55 years of age**, who are right-handed, have English as a primary language, with no history of neurological diseases, mental illness or head trauma.

Participation in the study will involve an initial assessment during which memory, language and other functions will be tested (2-3 hours), **a series of word learning sessions held over 5 consecutive days** (approx. 1.5 hours each), and three additional follow-up sessions 24 hours, 1 week and 3 months after the learning period (1-2 hours/each).

During the learning sessions, we will attach 2 electrodes to your scalp using a rubber band and apply a very weak constant current to your head (tDCS). This technique is a safe procedure with no known adverse side effects except for a mild tingling sensation or itching when the machine is turned on for about 30 seconds.

You will receive \$250 as reimbursement for your time and travel for the entire duration of the study. The research will take place at the UQ Centre for Clinical Research (UQCCR) which is at the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital.

If you have any further questions about this study or would be interested in participation please contact:

Garon Perceval

email: g.perceval@uq.edu.au

phone 0421235651



RESEARCH PROJECTS

HELP UQ RESEARCHERS UNCOVER HOW ANKLE OA AFFECTS PEOPLE.

DO YOU HAVE ONGOING ANKLE PAIN/STIFFNESS?

DO YOU HAVE OR THINK YOU HAVE ANKLE OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Researchers at The University of Queensland are looking for people with ongoing ankle pain or stiffness, and/or a known diagnosis of ankle osteoarthritis to participate in one or both ankle studies described below:

Study 1 is a lab study that involves coming to The University of Queensland, St Lucia campus, to participate in physical testing of the ankle. Researchers will test posture, ankle muscle strength, joint mobility, sensation, balance, and function. Research volunteers will be reimbursed for their time and participation with a gift voucher and free x-ray. If you have

or think you have ankle osteoarthritis, interested in assessing your ankle, and able to attend for lab testing at UQ please express your interest by clicking

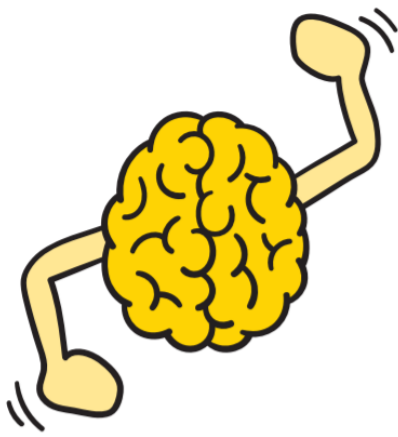
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EOI-Lab>

Study 2 involves completing online questionnaires about symptoms and disability associated with ankle osteoarthritis. This study can be completed by individuals living anywhere in Australia. Completing the survey takes approximately 20-30 minutes, and will help us to better understand the problems experienced by people with ankle osteoarthritis.

To complete the online survey, please click: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ankle-pain-Part2>

For more information contact munira.almahrouqi@uq.net.au





Do you want to be part of a study to understand how exercise affects brain functions, like learning and memory?

***We are recruiting for a new study at
The University of Queensland, St Lucia***



Are you aged 65 to 85 and interested in your brain health?

Join our study and:

- **become more physically active**
- **participate in regular supervised exercise**
- **learn more about your brain**
- **be part of a supportive community**

**To find out more contact
Dr Mia Schaumberg:**

Web: qbi.uq.edu.au/exercisestudy

Email: healthybrains@uq.edu.au

Phone: 07 3443 3209

This is a joint study between:



Queensland Brain Institute

School of
**HUMAN MOVEMENT
AND NUTRITION SCIENCES**



Centre for Advanced Imaging

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Free testing of your leg strength and balance Would you like your leg strength and balance assessed?

Physiotherapy researchers at The University of Queensland are looking for volunteers who **do not have** ankle pain or stiffness to be part of lab study. The research will examine ankle muscle strength, joint movement, balance, sensation and functional tasks. Information will be compared to that obtained from people with ankle problems.

Participation involves completing a 20 minute online survey and attending a testing session at The University of Queensland in St Lucia. Lab testing takes 3 hours and can be divided into multiple shorter session if desired.

We will also ask you to visit a local radiography clinic for a free x-ray of your ankle. You will receive a gift voucher for your participation.

For more information or to volunteer to participant visit
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EOI-Lab>

or contact Munira at
munira.almahrouqi@uq.net.au.



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Interested in how the brain processes language?

The aim of this study is to investigate how stroke patients with communication impairment recover language function. We want to determine the best predictors of language improvement and treatment response in the critical phases of brain recovery.

We are seeking healthy male and female participants over 55 years of age who are right handed, have English as a primary language, have no history of neurological disease, mental illness, or head trauma, nor have any metals present in the body which would be unsafe in an MRI scanner.

Participation in the research will involve one brain scanning (MRI) session, carried out at the Herston Imaging Research Facility (HIRF) at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Herston. Prior to the scanning session, a brief telephone interview will be conducted to screen for project suitability. Suitable participants will then attend a scanning session at HIRF where they will be required to complete a functional MRI (fMRI) language task while in the scanner (approximately 1 hour). You will also complete a

few short activities with us prior to your scan (approximately 30 mins). 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 Natasha Simons on 3346 6110 or email PAPAR@cai.uq.edu.au

Your interest in stroke research is much appreciated!



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Maintaining a Healthy Brain?

If you're aged 55 and over, you may be eligible to participate in a University of Queensland brain science study.

Researchers are trialling a unique, non-invasive brain stimulation technique to improve cognition in several areas, including how we perceive other

people's perspectives and emotions, and attention and quick decision making.

Time: **2 sessions** of about **2 hours** at UQ Centre for Clinical Research, **Herston**
Reimbursement: **\$50**

For more information or to participate, email uq.brainstim1@gmail.com



Adjusting to Retirement

We are looking for people who are going to retire in the next six months.

We are looking for participants who are willing to take part in a three-part research study looking at the role that social networks make to retirement adjustment and well-being.

If you are about to retire (or are thinking of retiring) within the next six months, please join our study!

- Participation takes about 30 minutes to complete the first online survey.
- Then we will contact you at retirement (second part) and a few months after

retirement (third part) to ask you to complete similar online surveys.

If you are interested, please visit the following link: www.groups4health.com/g4r/

Participation in the current research is completely voluntary. The purpose of this study is to track your experience in the transition to retirement. We are happy to provide you a summary of the current research on helping people better adjust to retirement.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Ben Lam via ben.lam@uq.edu.au.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Mental Health Services Accessibility Study

Professor Bob Knight at the University of Southern Queensland is looking for persons 60 years of age and older to participate in a survey about accessibility of mental health services for older adults. It is NOT necessary to have used mental health services or to think that you might use them in the future to participate. It is hoped that results can be used to draw attention to barriers to access to psychological services for older adults

and to eventually make services more available to those who need and want them.

Participants are asked to fill out several questionnaires on-line, which is expected to take about a half hour or less. Responses are anonymous. Participants will also be invited to participate in focus groups or interviews on this topic. To participate go to the survey link listed below.

<http://eresearch-surveys.usq.edu.au/index.php/524811?lang=en>



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