Ageing Mind Initiative

Issue 51, June 2022 Newsletter
https://ami.group.uq.edu.au/

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FEATURE STORIES

CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

There's a chill in the air and winter has arrived. You can curl up and warm yourself with the auditory delights of the online resources we have collated for your listening pleasure. Prof Pachana has been appearing on the ABC about once a month and you can retrospectively access these interviews via the ABC website (page 2). Also, there is a brilliant panel discussion on "the resilience of older women and climate change" which should not be missed (page 3).

Please also take some time to explore our newly advertised and still recruiting research projects located page 8-13.

For additional information or to be added to the 50 Plus Registry to receive quarterly Newsletters, please contact us via email at ami@uq.edu.au. Alternatively you may contact Prof Nancy Pachana Tel. 07-3365-6832

ISSUE QUOTE:

In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."
~Abraham Lincoln

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Prof Pachana talks Ageing on the ABC

Once a fortnight Prof Nancy Pachana has been talking to the ABC about ageing. If you missed it live, you can still listed to the recordings, some of which we have helpfully collated for your listening pleasure and are stored on the ABC website.

Professor Nancy Pachana is a clinical geropsychologist and neuropsychologist, she's the Director of the University of Queensland's Healthy Ageing Initiative and her book is called Ageing: A Very Short Introduction.

JUNE "Breaking the Age Code"

Nancy is chatting with ABC Radio Brisbane's Kat Feeney about a new book in the United States that not only challenges commonly-held beliefs about ageing, but argues that just by changing the we think about getting older can add years to our life. So just how is that done?

MAY "The health benefits of owning a pet"

If you live on your own or you're socially isolated, the advantages of owning a pet are obvious: they're great company. But a new study in the US also seems to show clear links between better health and slower cognitive decline in older people if they have a dog or a cat in their lives. Nancy is chatting with ABC Radio Brisbane's Kat Feeney about how owning a pet could change our lives for the better.

APRIL " The great ageing debate"

Afternoons with Mike van Acker explores the great ageing debate with Prof Pachana. The pop star David Bowie once said that ageing is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been.
So is getting older something most people celebrate or something they quietly wish away? And is it really any easier for men than it is for women when it comes to ageing?

Free Online Event Available
"The Resilience of Older Women and Climate Change"

The International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics proudly presents a free Parallel Event with the NGO Commission on the Status of Women66 entitled "The Resilience of Older Women and Climate Change"

The Forum Parallel Event was hosted on March 24, 2022, shortly after the release of the March edition of the AMI Newsletter. Fortunately, a recording of this1.5 hour event was captured and can be viewed here so you haven't missed out!

Expert panellists discussed the role of behaviour in climate change and increased environmental risk, resulting in degradation of all human rights. Speakers discussed current lifespan initiatives and best practices across the globe, highlighting regions and activities where older women are taking the lead in mitigating negative outcomes.

SPEAKERS:

- Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief of Programme on Ageing, UN DESA
- Martha Bial, PhD, Fordham University, UN IAGG Team
- Nancy A. Pachana, PhD, Clinical Geropsychologist and Co-Director of the University of QueenslandAgeing Mind Initiative
- Michael Smyer, PhD, Founder/CEO of Growing-Greener.org, Climate Action for a Warming World
- Toni C. Antonucci, PhD, IAGG Secretary General, University of Michigan Collegiate Professor, Moderator and Discussant
- Robin C. Fenley, PhD, Fordham University, UN IAGG Team, Program Coordinator

Book Recommendation

The often-surprising results of Dr. Levy's scientific discoveries offer stunning revelations about the mind-body connection. She demonstrates that many health problems formerly considered to be entirely due to the aging process, such as memory loss, hearing decline, and cardiovascular events, are instead influenced by the negative age beliefs that dominate in the US and many other countries. It's time for all of us to rethink aging and *Breaking the Age Code* shows us how to do just that.

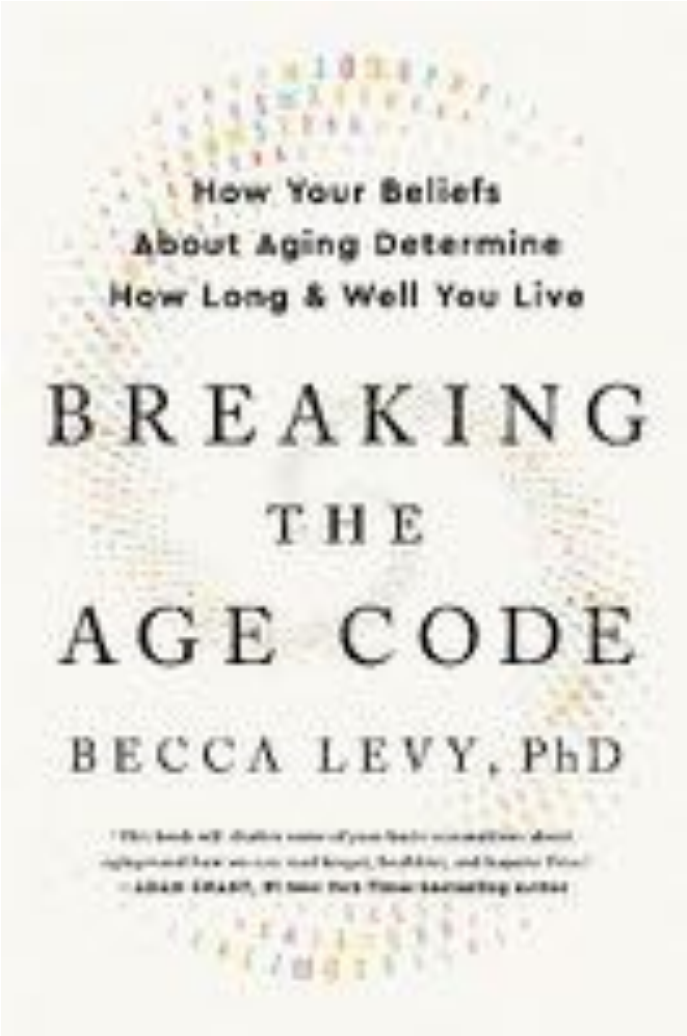
Based on her innovative research, stories that range from pop culture to the corporate boardroom, and her own life*, Dr. Levy* shows how age beliefs shape all aspects of our lives. She also presents a variety of fascinating people who have benefited from positive age beliefs as well as an entire town that has flourished with these beliefs.

Breaking the Age Code is a landmark work, presenting not only easy-to-follow techniques for improving age beliefs so they can contribute to successful aging, but also a blueprint to reduce structural ageism for lasting change and an age-just society.

Professor Pachana said "This book is in my mind one of the most important to read at the moment, with global and national attention focused on ageism. Becca Levy has spent decades researching the links between physical and mental health and ageist attitudes. She has shown that it is not only the ageist attitudes within society that contribute to reduced well-being in later life (so, for example, employers being less willing to hire older adults) but that internalised attitudes towards ageing also cause immense harm."

Professor Pachana reflected on further insights from the book including that "internalising ageist attitudes causes lowered health and wellbeing, which has determined costs a person on average 7.5 years of life lived. In contrast, internalised positive attitudes towards ageing are protective, and offer lowered risk of diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. This book also highlights parts of the globe where ageing is celebrated and where societies have retained intergenerational respect and vibrancy."

An essential must have on your reading list this year.



The Florence Project Update

The Florence Project designs research and technology with people living with dementia and their care partners, as living experience experts in multidisciplinary team. Partnering in research and technology, the team identifies key needs and ways of working towards them.

One need identified by the *living experience expert reference group* was to introduce key issues related to dementia to the general public.

The group identified wanting to create short resources to increase awareness and share perspectives on:

Communication changes related to dementia

How to communicate well with people living with dementia

How technology may help people living with dementia

These areas were identified as particularly important, and areas where myths and misunderstandings existed.

There are two living experience experts: Bobby Redman and Natalie. I've shared their perspectives and crafted the content along with Jacki Liddle (occupational therapist, researcher), Peter Worthy (interaction designer, researcher), Anthony Angwin (speech pathologist, researcher), Janet Wiles (Professor in Human Centred Computing) and Dan Angus (Professor of Digital Communications).

We hope you enjoy the resources – which serve to be a brief introduction – the very start of learning about these issues.

About the resources

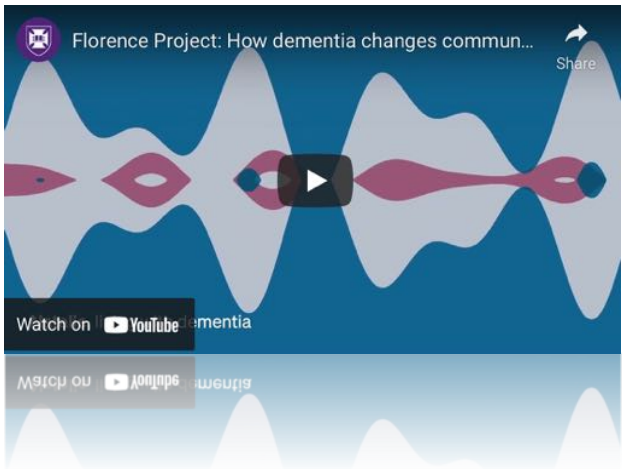
The resources were conceptualised and created with Inkahoots.

The videos used moving typography and shapes to help share some of the effortful, overwhelming and confusing experiences that can be part of communication for people living with dementia.

Important feedback from our team members indicated the need to also create a version of the video where the experience is not overwhelming and the messages can be clearly heard.

Two versions of each video have therefore been created – a high stimulus, and lower stimulus version. A written downloadable version is also available to make sharing easier.

These are shared on the website: https://itee.uq.edu.au/project/florence-project/community (scroll down and these are under the heading Communication and Technology Brief Introduction resources.



Research Update

Neighbourhood walkability for older adults: Investigating the role of physical and perceptual factors in shaping walking behaviour

Walkable neighbourhoods are a cornerstone of contemporary liveable and sustainable cities. The walkable neighbourhood confers a range of social, health and environmental benefits. Despite a long and rich academic interest in neighbourhood walkability (i.e., how friendly a locale is for walking) there remains much to be explored in relation to our understanding of how walkability varies across different population groups and ages. Given the ageing of the global population and increasing policy attention on ageing-in-place, understanding walking behaviour among older adults is of growing importance and forms the focus of this study.

Current scholarship has sought to measure the ways in which the physical environment impact walkability through the use of objective measures such as census data, surveys, field studies and, increasingly, GPS enabled technologies. Such studies have provided a number of important insights, including the role of both macro-level factors (e.g. street connectivity, access to shops) and micro-level attributes (e.g. shade, resting places). However, despite acknowledgement that walkability transcends the physical environment and involves the perceptual domain, far less is known about how people's perceptions of physical environments shape their walking behaviours. Consequently, conventional walkability metrics tend to exclude micro-level attributes and perceptual elements. There is a need to supplement current knowledge on walking behaviour and walkability to deepen our understanding of the micro geographic variations in walking environments alongside unpacking the ways in which individual behavioural processes and mechanisms operate to give rise to walking behaviours. Responding to this need to deepen our understanding of walkability, and particularly for different population subgroups and ages, this thesis places a focus on understanding walking behaviours in older adults. To this end, the overarching aim of the thesis is to delineate the suite of drivers that explain walking behaviours in older adults.

This study was undertaken in Brisbane, Australia. Despite recent progress in understanding and measuring walkability in Australian cities, understanding of walking behaviour among older Australians remains limited. This thesis will contribute to a better understanding of walking behaviour in Australia as well as to the growing literature on the walking behaviour of older adults from around the world.

Research Update

Continued…

The thesis commences by first re-conceptualising the suite of factors known to be important drivers of neighbourhood walkability and explaining walking behaviours in older adults. This conceptual model is then employed to inform the development of a new walkability index using a dedicated suite of physical environmental features deemed important by the extant scholarship. This is the first walkability index specific to older adults developed in Australia. It integrates both macro and micro characteristics of the built and natural environments and is informed by current research undertaken overseas. The resulting walkability surface differentiates locales of high and low walkability across Brisbane.

This thesis next draws on a seven-day primary survey of older adults using GPS technology to capture walking behaviour. The results reveal spatial heterogeneity and temporal variation in older adults' walking trips, suggesting that the contextual effect of walkability on walking behaviour cannot be made simply by reference to a static home neighbourhood. The relationships between observed walking behaviour and a range of physical environmental characteristics are modelled and the results of this analysis used to refine the walkability index developed previously.

Finally, data from the seven-day GPS survey are employed to understand the relationships between walking behaviour, walkability and older adults' perceptions of walkability using mediation analysis. Based on these results, a hybrid walkability index is created, one that reflects objective walkability as well as older adults' perceptions of it.

In sum, this thesis helps advance our understanding of walking behaviour in older adults and to more comprehensively identify, map, measure and model the suite of factors shaping walkability in an Australian city. Given the need to better plan walkable neighbourhoods that more closely align with the different population groups and ages that reside in such locales, it is critical for policy makers, planners and public health officials to (re-)design environments that best encourage walking. This is especially the case in the context of older adults to ensure that this population group has sufficient opportunities to live healthy, active and independent lives.

Current Ageing Research

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

How does age influence how we interact with objects in our environment?

What is the study about?

Researchers at the UQ perception and action lab are investigating how age influences how people interact with and cognitively value different types of objects in their environment.

What will you need to do?

You will play a computer-based object interaction game on your home computer. Followed by watching an interactive video clip. Finally, you will answer some questions based on individual assessment and your experience of the task. The study will take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

Eligibility criteria:

- 65 + years of age
- No history of neurological illness (e.g., Dementia or Alzheimer's)
- Have normal or corrected to normal vision (e.g., glasses if necessary)
- Access to a computer with internet connection

Compensation:

For voluntary participating in this study, you will receive a $20 Coles/Myer gift card upon completion of the experiment. Delivery of the gift card will be organised by project staff.

Do you want to participate?

If you would like to participate, please click here to start the experiment.

More information?

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Harrison Paff at h.paff@uq.edu.au or on 0406 907 611. Email communication is preferred.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

FOR BRAIN IMAGING STUDY INVESTIGATING FACIAL RECOGNITION*

WHO DO WE NEED ?

- **Females who are over 50 years old**
- **Be in good general health, with no history of neurological or psychiatric illness**
- **Does not have difficulties recognising faces**

Dates and times for participating are flexible and may involve 1-2 visits to UQ (1-2 hr/visit)

Financial compensation provided for participation & travel expenses.

CONTACT FOR MORE INFO.

k.xu2@uqconnect.edu.au

*** Conducted by UQ student under the supervision of Professor Alan Pegna**

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Uncovering a novel therapeutic target to reduce dementia risk in Parkinson's disease (TRIP)

The TRIP study aims to:

1. use neuroimaging of the brain to develop a marker for future dementia risk in Parkinson's disease and
2. test whether a drug (levetiracetam) can improve memory problems and reduce dementia risk in people living with Parkinson's disease.

Potential impact

We hope to produce evidence for a new therapy to reduce dementia risk in Parkinson's disease. The TRIP study will help us understand more about cognitive impairment in Parkinson's disease. In particular, we will learn about the brain mechanisms behind the memory problems experienced by many people living with Parkinson's disease.

Eligibility Criteria

- People living with Parkinson's disease
- No Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS), pacemaker, or other metal in the body (if unsure, feel free to ask the study coordinator)
- Fluent in English

We are also recruiting older adults without Parkinson's disease or memory problems as a comparison group.

Study duration

All older adults without memory problems will be required to make three (3) study visits over two (2) weeks. People with memory problems will be required to make six (6) study visits over twelve (12) weeks.

Study procedures

People without memory problems will complete cognitive, which is located on the RBWH Campus' after UQCCR psychological, and motor symptom tests, and then complete a memory test during an MRI scan.

People living with Parkinson's disease and memory problems will complete cognitive, psychological and motor symptom tests, as well as a medical assessment and blood test. Once enrolled in the clinical trial, people with memory problems will have two rounds of treatment – one where they take the drug (levetiracetam) and one where they take a placebo (an inactive ingredient, like sugar). At the end of each treatment, they will complete a memory test during an MRI scan.

Participant resources

All study assessments are provided at no cost, and a $50 travel reimbursement is available for each visit to UQCCR. Participants will also receive education and support from the study team throughout the study period.

Contact: Dana Pourzinal
E: pd.research@uq.edu.au
W: bit.ly/TRIPStudy
T: 07 3346 5028

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Psychotherapy via telehealth videoconferencing to ease anxiety

LAST CHANCE:

Recruitment will close at the end of June!

Introduction

Anxiety represents one of the most common mental health problems in the population and can be experienced by people of any age. Anxiety influences a person's overall wellbeing and quality of life.

Research objectives

Our study aims to test a new psychotherapeutic intervention delivered via videoconferencing to help combat anxiety in people living with cognitive impairment, irrespective of their location. Our 6-week program combines education about anxiety to help people understand their symptoms, relaxation techniques to help cope with anxiety.

Study design

The psychotherapy program will be tested in a randomised control trial. This means that if you are eligible to participate in the study, you will be randomly assigned to an intervention group or a control group. If you are selected to the intervention group, you will be asked to attend 6 weekly sessions of psychotherapy. If you are in the control group, you will continue your usual care as prior to entering the study.

How can I participate?

If you have been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment or dementia and if you are currently experiencing any anxiety symptoms like what has been described above ,we invite you to participate. We will do an initial screen to check your eligibility for our study. Participation in our study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point.

What help is available if I have never used videoconferencing?

We will provide you with a manual with clear instructions, a video link with step-by-step instructions, and support over the phone to help you setup your equipment for videoconferencing.

What's required from participants?

- Filling out questionnaires before, and after the therapy.
- Participating in weekly therapy sessions for 6 weeks delivered via videoconferencing.
- Practise techniques learnt in therapy sessions.
- Give us feedback on the ease of use of technology as well as the content of the therapeutic sessions.

Your participation and feedback will help us improve this program

Participants to receive a gift voucher You will be given a $50 electronic gift card at completion of baseline assessments and another $50 electronic gift card at completion of the entirety of the trial, regardless of whether you have been allocated to the intervention group or control group.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Important links:

More information about the study
Expression of Interest to participate

For more information contact:

T: 07 3346 5036 or 07 3346 5577
E: anxietyresearch@uq.edu.au
W: https://clinical-research.centre.uq.edu.au/psychotherapy-telehealth-video-conferencing-treat-anxiety

RESEARCH PROJECTS

A University of Queensland study designed to improve balance in older adults with a hearing impairment has been made possible thanks to a generous donation from Sonova.

"Three in five adults aged over 60 have a hearing impairment and recent research shows that hearing impairment is a risk factor for falling, with every 10-dB increase in hearing loss putting an individual at greater risk of falling [1].

This study will test if a device that gives feedback on body position can improve and maintain balance and stability.

Participants will be required to wear a device which is battery powered and worn on a belt around the waist for 20-minute training sessions over 10 days.

The device records body sway, compares it to normative data and provides vibrotactile feedback to the wearer for retraining of balance.

The original version of the device has been used in research trials in Europe, Germany and Switzerland, however this will be the first time it will be used with older adults who have a hearing impairment.

The study is an international collaboration between Professor Sandy Brauer, Professor Louise Hickson, PhD students Jacinta Foster and Marina Mahafza from UQ's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences; Department of Otolaryngology at Unfallkrankenhaus Berlin, Charite University Hospital Berlin; Center for Hearing and Balance, Department of Otolaryngology, Columbia University Medical Center and Sonova.

1. Lin, F.R. and L. Ferrucci, *Hearing Loss and Falls Among Older Adults in the United States.* Archives of Internal Medicine, 2012. **172**(4): p. 369-371.

Volunteers needed for research

VIBRANT TRIAL

Three in five older adults aged over 60 have a hearing loss and the risk of falling for older adults is higher if they have a hearing loss. Researchers at The University of Queensland are conducting a study that will test if a device that gives feedback on body position can improve balance and stability.

- Are you over 60?
- Do you have mild to severe hearing loss?
- Do you have vertigo, feel dizzy, or unsteady?

If you would like more information or would like to volunteer please contact Katrina Kemp on 07 3365 4564 or k.kemp@uq.edu.au

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Sterling is a boy with a dream. His dream is to find a cure for Dementia. When Sterling was 3 years old his Grandmother was admitted into a nursing home with Dementia and since then he has always wanted to find a cure. Sterling is now an Ambassador for The Common Good at The Prince Charles Hospital. He highlights that dementia has an impact on everyone, even someone so young.

There is no cure for dementia. Right now, there are more than 44 million sufferers worldwide, and that number is expected to treble by 2050. The impact this will have on individuals, their families and our health system will be devastating.

Alzheimer's Disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for up to 70% of all dementias. In health, the brain relies on neurochemicals to send messages between nerves. One of the typical features of Alzheimer's Disease is a decline in function of these chemical signals. The nerves and chemicals most vulnerable to these changes are in the memory forming parts of the brain.

The "Sterling's Dream" Study

This study is led by Dr Eamonn Eeles, Geriatrician/Physician and Head of Research of Internal Medicine Services at TPCH. His team includes researchers from the Australian E-Health Research Centre, CSIRO and the Queensland Brain Institute.

By using innovative imaging the team will measure the chemical signals in the memory-forming part of the brain. They hope this study will help us better understand if there are certain brain characteristics in people who don't have Alzheimer's Disease which differ in people who have early stages of the disease.

This information may also assist us in understanding which patients may respond better to treatments that are used in Alzheimer's Disease and therefore help target management of this disease more effectively.

We are inviting people over 55 years of age who have Alzheimer's Disease who can have an MRI to participate.

We are also inviting people over 55 years of age who don't have Alzheimer's Disease and can have an MRI. These people will be part of our control group.

Read more about our study

What will the participants be asked to do?

We will ask people who would like to participate to come to The Prince Charles Hospital for a clinical assessment, neuropsychology assessment and memory tests.

Participants will then be asked to undergo brain imaging using state of the art technology at the Herston Imaging Research Facility.

Travel costs will be met by the study. Refreshments will be provided.

How can you be invited to participate?

Phone the study Research Assistant, Anne Bucetti, on: (07) 3139-7208.

THE COMMON GOOD
THE PRINCE CHARLES HOSPITAL FOUNDATION