



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Ageing Mind Initiative

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The final edition of the AMI Newsletter for 2015 has arrived! We are already getting excited about the coming New Year.

We are hoping to give the Newsletter a boost in 2016 and will be increasing the number of feature stories and updates on relevant-ageing research. Hopefully this broader approach will allow us to better address the interests of our readers.

If you have any creative ideas or topics that you would like to learn more about, please email us at ami@uq.edu.au to share your ideas. While we may not be able to address every suggestion, we can certainly try.

We hope you all have a Merry festive season and that the New Year brings in exciting new developments in Ageing research.



ISSUE QUOTE:

I look to the future because that's where I'm going to spend the rest of my life ~ George Burns

Psychological Needs of Older Adults

We chatted to Dr Sofia Robleda, a Clinical Psychologist and Geropsychologist who works in a private practice in Brisbane, to find out more about the psychological needs of older Australian adults today.

Dr Robleda, can you tell us a little about the mental health of Australian older adults?

Older adults are the most rapidly growing section of the Australian population. While most older adults are in good mental health, and better mental health compared to other age groups, there are still significant numbers who experience psychological distress (about 10-15% in the community). Most older adults will turn to their GPs for support with these issues, and in fact, the majority (from 50-70%) of primary care medical visits by older adults are related to psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, and stress.

Are there specific events that can lead depression and anxiety in older adults?

Not everyone who experiences stressful life events will develop depression and anxiety. However, older adults are likely to experience a range of stressful life events, which often occur simultaneously. These stressors include: adapting to and coping with late-life transitions, grief, poverty, multiple medical conditions, functional limitations, cognitive changes, chronic pain, and care for a sick family member. Stressors in late life can significantly affect the physical and mental health, and independence of older adults.

What help is available for older adults who do

develop mental health difficulties?

Therapies traditionally developed and practiced with younger client groups are well suited for older adults, although often these therapies require skilful adaptation to an older population to maximize treatment efficacy. Psychologists experienced in working with older populations, or Geropsychologists, promote the use of psychotherapies for treatment in a variety of fields such as mood disorders, anxiety and somatoform disorders. Moreover, a strong research base supports their use with older populations. In fact, psychological treatments for depression have been shown to achieve up to 70-80% of recovery rates in older adults.



Psychological Needs of Older Adults

Continued...

Are there any barriers to older adults receiving appropriate psychological care?

Unfortunately, many people over 65 still feel that there's a stigma attached to mental health conditions. Many older adults view these conditions as a weakness of character rather than a health problem, despite the fact that over 3 million Australians experience mental health difficulties each year! Older people are also more hesitant to share their experiences with mental health problems, often ignoring symptoms over a long period of time and only seeking professional help when things reach crisis point.

Ageist myths held by health professionals can also be a barrier to treatment. For example, some health professionals might not know that older adults can benefit from psychological therapy, or may see depression as a natural part of ageing, which it is not. This is a real problem as evidence suggests that not only do older adults benefit from psychotherapy, but a majority of older adults would often prefer psychological services to antidepressant

medication. Additionally, older adults often report feeling comfortable receiving mental health services from qualified mental health professionals. As such, ageist myths need to be dismissed, and access to appropriate services need to be offered and provided.

If you believe that you, or someone you know, would benefit from psychological support, please do not hesitate to contact your GP and ask for a referral to a Geropsychologist near you.

References

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Research Update: Everyday Life of Older Adults in Australia

Thank you for your participation in our research on the influences of everyday physical activity in older Australians. We are pleased to let you know that with your help we gathered important information about the contexts and situations in which older adults are physically active, and about the motivators and barriers of physical activity. This research is based on the evidence that shows significant preventive effect of physical activity on the occurrence of age-related illness and disease, and on maintenance of functional capacities of daily living and health in general.

The national **Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Adults** recommend *accumulating at least 30 minutes of at least moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days*, to achieve health benefits. However, in order to develop interventions which will be effective in ensuring that older adults obtain the recommended amount of physical activity, it is crucial to consider a wide range of personal, social, and physical environmental factors.

Your participation was extremely valuable in helping us, the researchers, better understand the various factors that can either act as motivators or barriers for physical activity in later life. The findings of this study should help to improve the effectiveness of programs promoting active

ageing, and will also be used in further research, aiming to expand our understanding of, and ultimately, increase physical activity engagement among older adults.

We have now completed the data collection phase of this study, which will allow us to analyse the data, and, based on the findings, prepare scientific publications to be published in peer-reviewed journals. In this way, the findings will be shared with wider public interested in the health of older adults. **A short summary of the findings** will also be sent to those of you who provided a contact email or residential address, once the data analysis has been finalised. Please note that all results are grouped together and your participation will remain confidential. If you have any additional questions about this research, please contact: Urska Arnautovska
Email: urska.arnautovska@griffithuni.edu.au
Phone: 07 3735 3313

Thank you again for your participation in this research. We have from the prize draw selected five of you who will receive 1 of 5 prizes. The winners of the prize draw will be contacted shortly.



Research Update

Working and Employability after 75 in Australia

Margaret Patrickson has been advised that her paper **Working and Employability after 75 in Australia** has been accepted by the Asia-Pacific Journal of Human Resources and hopefully will be published later this year.

The research reports the findings of a small (31 people) study of individuals between 75 and 95 who are still undertaking some form of paid work in the economy and looks at the type of work undertaken, number of hours worked per week on average, how their job had been obtained, what they believed stimulated them to continue working and what outcomes they sought.

Participants reported that their choice to continue working had been facilitated by above average educational attainments, their good health, their established reputations, the relative scarcity of needed skills within their industry and their own active networks. The majority worked an average of 2-3 days each week.

Valued outcomes were cited as primarily psychological such as “keeping the brain active”, opportunities to apply their skills, to be part of what they still considered important, and receive positive feedback

on their continuing ability to make a valuable contribution followed by opportunities for social interaction and additional income.

The findings indicate that although many older individuals look forward to their retirement and the opportunity this can open up for exciting new leisure activities and family time, there is a slowly growing number of people who prefer to continue working if the opportunity to do so should arise.

If Australia wants to narrow the growing disparity between taxes and pensions by reducing dependency of older people on pension income, it may need to learn much more about this group, in terms of what stimulates their desire for continued workforce participation, how to support their skill maintenance, how to encourage their engagement and how to reward their involvement.



Research Update

Improving driving and driving cessation outcomes for people with Parkinson's disease and their families

Several studies have shown that the symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease (PD) can impact upon one's driving ability which may result in the need to self-regulate or cease driving. Reasonably little is understood about the process of driving and driving cessation for people with PD and their families. Investigating this process may enable a better understanding of how it is uniquely experienced by this group, and may inform the development of interventions to assist both people with PD and their families at key times within this process.

Twenty participants with PD and thirteen family members participated in the study and data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews.



driving cessation for people with PD and their families is complex, the complexity of which is further exacerbated by the fluctuating nature of the disease.

Driving cessation also appears to be a slow and gradual journey, and participants identified three key phases related to driving cessation, and each phase being associated with unique needs and challenges. The experience of anxiety while driving, as well as anticipatory anxiety related to driving cessation also seems to affect the driving experiences and wellbeing of people with PD.

As a result, people with PD and their families may benefit from interventions that provide clear information about PD and driving, as well as the formal requirements related to stopping driving.

Practical skills training and emotional support (including therapeutic interventions to directly target heightened levels of anxiety) may also be required, particularly to facilitate physical and emotional adjustment during the driving cessation process, as well as after driving has been ceased.



News from the Community

The University of Queensland Head of School, Professor Virginia Slaughter, was made a Fellow of the Queensland Academy of Arts and Sciences in November.

This highly prestigious award recognises Virginia's expertise and program of research

Altogether 21 fellows were inducted on Wednesday, November 4 at Government House by Queensland Governor Paul de Jersey.

Virginia: congratulations from all of us at the Ageing Mind Initiative.



Upcoming Events

The World Congress on Active Ageing (WCAA), is a global event that will be hosted by Victoria University's Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living (ISEAL).

This will be the 9th Congress held under the auspices of the International Coalition for Ageing and Physical Activity (ICAPA). In light of significantly increasing governmental focus on keeping their ageing populations more healthy and active, this conference will prove to be the largest gathering of experts and stakeholders in the field of Active Ageing ever assembled.

We are anticipating that in excess of 1,000 international delegates will meet from more than 30 countries in July 2016 at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre and to that end we invite you to be part of this exciting event.



world congress on
active ageing 2016

28 June - 1 July 2016 Melbourne Australia

Current Ageing Research

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

People's perceptions of their home modifications

Home modifications are described as structural changes that can be made to a home to remove environmental barriers and make managing at home easier and safer, for example removing a bath and putting in a level shower or installing a ramp or lift. Little is known about peoples' experience of home modifications despite their perceived benefits.

This research:

This study forms part of a larger PhD project conducted at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, which aims to investigate people's perceptions and expectations of the outcomes of their home modifications. To achieve this purpose, we would like to kindly ask for your help.

Your contribution to this research:

Your participation will include completing an interview at your own home or over the phone, about your views on your home modifications. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be recorded.

You are warmly welcome to participate if you:

Are aged 18 years of age or over
Have received a major modification, valued

over \$1000 in the last two years
Or are a relative or carer of someone who has received a major modification in the last two years.

Next steps:

You are invited to contact the principal researcher, Liz Ainsworth at phone 0408 781 554 or on email at elizabeth.ainsworth@uq.net.au to indicate your agreement to participate in the study. Further information and a consent form with a reply paid envelope will then be sent to you, and a time will be arranged for the interview.



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Imaging the Ageing Brain

Dementia refers to a group of age-related brain illnesses. People with these illnesses experience problems with memory, thinking and daily tasks. There might also be changes in their social interactions. It can be very difficult to diagnose these illnesses at the early stage. Sometimes they can be confused with other mental illnesses, especially in younger patients. These diagnostic difficulties bring frustration and confusion to the patients and families, and delay proper treatment.

This study will use advanced imaging techniques to examine how the brain changes in dementia and other age-related illnesses. We invite you to participate in our research study if you are between 45 to 65 years old, and 1) you are diagnosed with one of these illnesses: Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia, late-onset bipolar disorder, or 2) you are healthy without any neuropsychiatric disorders. You will answer some questions and undergo brain imaging scans. This information will help us understand the ageing brain and how it influences behaviour. We hope to find better way to identify these brain illnesses, so that proper care can be delivered.



QIMR Berghofer
Medical Research Institute

Together, we can make a difference

Are you between 45-70 years of age?

- Diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia or late-onset bipolar disorder?

OR

- Healthy without any neuropsychiatric disorders?

If you'd like to participate, please contact

Phone 07 3845 3805

Email brain.recruit@qimrberghofer.edu.au



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 two additional follow-up sessions 1 week and 3 months after the learning period (2-3 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

Understanding Ankle Pain (Part 1)

Have you had ankle pain that has been constant or coming and going for at least 3 months?

If you have not taken our survey before, you are invited to tell us about your ankle pain experience

Volunteers with ankle pain are sought to complete an online survey. It will collect information on previous ankle injuries you have experienced, your ankle pain, and how it affects you. This survey will help us to better understand and manage the problems experienced by people with ankle pain. It will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. There is no foreseeable risk associated with

participation in this study. Participants have the opportunity to withdraw at any time, without penalty.

Any data collected pursuant to this survey will be handled in accordance with guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Publications resulting from this study will not allow identification of any individual. A summary of the overall outcomes will be available on completion of the project. If you are interested in participating in understanding ankle pain survey please follow the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ankle-pain-study>

Understanding Ankle Pain (Part 2)

Do You Have Ongoing Ankle Pain?

Do you have or think you have ANKLE JOINT OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Would you like a FREE X-ray for your ankle?

Researchers at the School of Physiotherapy at UQ are conducting a research study investigating the effects of ankle joint osteoarthritis on function, walking and related progression of the condition.

Persons over the age of 18 years with ongoing ankle pain (greater than 3 months) and known diagnosis of Ankle Joint Osteoarthritis (and no previous lower limb joint surgery) are required for this research study. Testing will take place at the University Laboratory, St Lucia campus. Free X-rays will be taken at a local radiology clinic in Brisbane.

Participants will be tested on two occasions (Early 2016), and will:

- have a free X-ray of their ankles
- wear a 'pedometer' for 1 week
- complete questionnaires regarding overall health, pain, mobility and quality-of-life
- have their lower body strength tested
- have their walking, function and agility analysed

Participant will be compensated for their time

To volunteer or receive more information, please contact:

Munira Al Mahrouqi

Email Munira.almahrouqi@uq.net.au



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Interested in 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 how we perceive other people's perspectives and emotions.

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 this study will involve 2-3 sessions (approx.. 1.5 hours each) during which you will be asked to perform a series of tasks testing various

aspects of cognitive functioning.

During the stimulation we will attach 2 electrodes to your scalp using a rubber band and/or cap and conductive gel. A weak constant current will be applied 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.

Research will take place in Herston, Brisbane. Participants will be reimbursed.

For more information or to participate, email uq.brainstim2@gmail.com



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Participants with Neck Pain needed for Balance Study.

Participants with Neck Pain or discomfort needed for Balance Study. A PhD project at the University of Queensland is seeking individuals with neck pain above the age of 60. We are investigating how neck pain may influence balance.

Participants will complete some questionnaires and perform various tests related to your neck function and balance. You will gain a greater appreciation of your physical Function such as posture, strength, sensation and balance and feedback on your performance will be provided. The entire experiment will take 2 hours and may be conducted at your home or at the University of Queensland, Brisbane.

If you would like to participate in this study or would like further information, Please contact:

June Quek

Email: june.quek@uq.net.au

Phone: 0431 005 641.



Improving Hearing Rehabilitation

Did you know that adults with even a mild hearing loss can experience significant hearing difficulties in everyday life? Barbra Timmer, an audiologist and PhD student at the University of Queensland is conducting a research project to deeply explore these hearing difficulties. Therefore if you currently do not use a hearing aid, have a mild hearing loss and sometimes have hearing difficulty, you are invited to take part in the research project.

What is involved?

Two appointments (in your home, or at the University) for a hearing test, questionnaires and training on how to use the equipment

Over the space of two weeks, you will fill in daily quick 5-minute questionnaires, answered on a Smartphone

You will receive a **\$50 Coles/Myer voucher** for participating

If you can help or would like more information please contact Barbra Timmer:

Mobile: 0415 902 258 , Email: b.timmer@uq.edu.au

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Seeking Volunteers with Tennis Elbow For Sensory Testing

We are seeking volunteers who have tennis elbow (pain over the outer side of the elbow) to participate in a study investigating different types of sensation in people with tennis elbow.

Background and Aims of the Project

Tendon pain and problems are very common, can be quite disabling, and are often difficult to treat. While there has been increasing knowledge of tendon problems, we still do not understand the underlying pain mechanisms. Preliminary research has indicated that there are changes in the way the central nervous system functions that might underpin the severity of tendon pain. This has been discovered by using some measures from a battery of tests called Quantitative Sensory Tests (QST). In this research project we are testing both those with and without tendon problems by using a comprehensive QST. The study primarily aims to answer the questions:

- 1) What is the difference in QST between those with tendon problems and those without?
- 2) What is the relationship of any of these QST differences and the patient's ratings of their tendon pain and problems?

How much time is involved?

Completing an online survey: We would like

you to answer some simple questions about your health and elbow pain to ascertain that you do not have any medical or health related matters that exclude you from the study. This will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

One session: You will be required to attend a session at the University of Queensland School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at St Lucia where:

- **A brief physical assessment** will be conducted to confirm that you do have tennis elbow.

-- **A battery of non-invasive sensory measurements** will be conducted. Sensory measurements test either sensation (i.e. first perception of a stimulus, such as light pressure, stroking, pin prick) or pain thresholds (i.e., the first onset of pain with a stimulus, such as pressure, heat or cold).

This should take approximately 2 hours. You will be recompensed reasonable expenses.

Questionnaires: Prior to attending the session, we would like you to complete a series of questionnaires, which will be emailed/mailed out to you. This should take approximately 20 minutes.

If willing to assist, please email sirph@uq.edu.au for more information.



RESEARCH PROJECTS



New Wisdom Project in 2015: The Getting of Wisdom

Pots of gold at the end of the rainbow, the brass ring on the merry-go-round, the getting of wisdom... all of these things are considered elusive, difficult to grasp, nigh impossible! However, history and research tells us that the getting of wisdom is actually attainable, not necessarily all of the time by all of the people, but there are those among us who have been known to be wise.

PhD candidate, Leander Mitchell (University of Queensland), is therefore seeking your assistance. She and her supervisor, Professor Nancy Pachana, are looking to learn more about wisdom, in particular, the measurement of wisdom.

If you are interested in helping to discover more about the elusive concept of wisdom and how it might be best measured, please contact Leander Mitchell for more information.

Alternatively, if you would like to complete an online survey on the topic, please use the following link:

https://uqpsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6ifV8erMRaW3iZ

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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