



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

# Ageing Mind Initiative

Issue 19 October 2013 Newsletter  
[www.uq.edu.au/ami](http://www.uq.edu.au/ami)

## FEATURE STORIES

Dementia & Driving	2
Health and Pet ownership	3

## RESEARCH UPDATES

Ageing Health and Emotion	4
Moving towards retirement	4-5

## RESEARCH PROJECTS CURRENTLY RECRUITING

How much do you talk?	6
Ageing in Australia	7
Transition to retirement	7
What is wisdom?	8
Over 75 and employed?	9
Emotion across the lifespan	9
Music for quality of life study	10



Page

Welcome to the October edition of the AMI newsletter.

The year 2013 seems to have flown by and it is hard to believe that there are only a couple of months left before a new year rolls in. Thank you to all of the dedicated researchers and participants who have helped shape ageing-research this year.

You may recognise some familiar studies in this edition of the newsletter. Some of these studies are in a second phase of recruitment following on from the success of the first round of research.

If you are interested in any of the advertised research projects, contact the researcher on the advertisement directly and they will give details that you need to know about participating.

If you have any questions for the Ageing Mind Initiative team, please email them through to:  
[ami@uq.edu.au](mailto:ami@uq.edu.au)



## ISSUE QUOTE:

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.

~ Henry Ford

## Feature Story

### Dementia and Driving: Balancing Safety and Independence.

Do you have dementia and currently thinking about giving up your driver's licence?  
Do you have a relative with dementia who's still driving? Are you worried about their driving, and not sure how to raise the topic of giving up driving?

Dementia can be diagnosed in someone in their early 40s or even 30s. As the symptoms of dementia progress, driving ability can be affected in a number of ways, including but not limited to: 1) becoming lost on familiar streets; 2) driving more slowly to make up for uncertainty; and, 3) failing to follow directional signs.

The decision to retire from driving can be a difficult one as it is a symbol of person's sense of independence, pride and control. It is a way to access healthcare, to buy necessities and to stay connected to family, friends and the community. Giving up driving can be a deeply personal and emotional issue.

In the early stages of dementia, many people are still socially engaged and able to drive. However, eventually as the disease progress, retirement from driving becomes a reality. Openly discussing the issues around driving during the early stage of dementia can help smooth the transition, and be more empowering than simply being told not to drive.

Clinical Psychologist Raychelle Sidhu, is currently working on a guide to help drivers with dementia and their caregivers address the issues of driving, and develop alternatives to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

If you, or someone in your family is diagnosed with dementia, and have concerns regarding driving, you are invited to participate in this study. It would involve a dyad (person with dementia and caregiver) to participate in a group/individual therapy sessions over 4 to 6 weeks to address concerns regarding driving cessation and developing coping strategies.

If you are interested in becoming involved in developing a tool to help people with dementia retire from driving and would like to receive more information please contact:

Raychelle Sidhu  
School of Psychology  
University of Queensland  
St Lucia Qld, 4072  
Tel: 0468 654 559  
Email: [raychelle.sidhu@uqconnect.edu.au](mailto:raychelle.sidhu@uqconnect.edu.au)



## Health Benefits of Pet Ownership

There is a growing body of research demonstrating that owning or caring for a pet improves your mental and physical health.

The joy of having a pet isn't new to most Australians; we have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. In fact our pets are such positive influences on our lives that one study found Australian ownership of cats and dogs saved approximately \$3.86 billion in health expenditure over one year.

Logan City Council have an initiative that capitalizes on the findings of all this research. Logan's older lost and abandoned animals are rehoused with Logan's residents free of charge in the senior pets for senior people program.

Research has identified benefits to seniors owning pets such as:

- Effectively reducing loneliness
- Ability to better cope with stressful situations
- Increasing social and verbal interactions
- Mobilising seniors residents by increasing their physical activity by taking their dog for a walk.

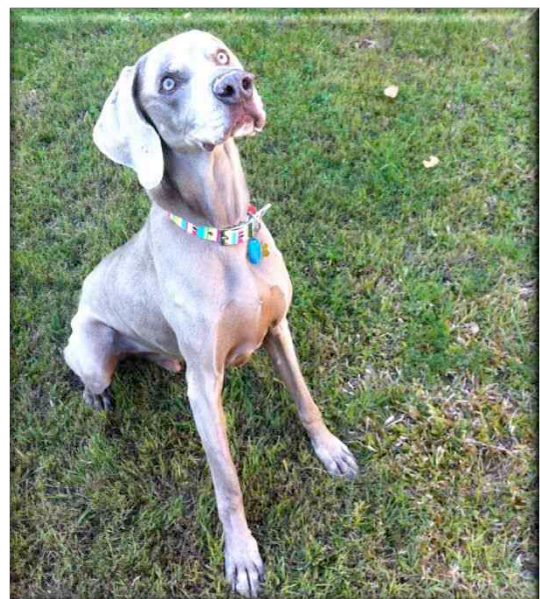
Research has shown that pet owners are generally healthier and happier than non-pet owners. They have lower blood pressure and cholesterol; are less depressed; are at lower risk of heart disease; feel less lonely than non-pet owners; and actually find it easier to get to know people. Studies have revealed that even just looking at animals can reduce anxiety in times of stress. For example, the simple act of

watching a fish tank can induce feelings of calm and relaxation.

All cats and dogs in this program are of mature age and more settled in their nature and checked by Council's veterinarian. They receive a behavioural and orthopaedic assessment to ensure suitability. All other health and temperament checks are performed in line with Council's current practice. Residents who hold a federal or state government seniors card are provided with free lifetime registration.

If you would like to provide a loving home for a mature aged cat or dog, complete the Registration of Interest - Senior Pets for Senior People form found at the Logan City Council website.

As cats and dogs become available for rehousing registration of interest applicants are checked and contacted if a match is found. Otherwise, the pets are advertised on FM101 free to holders of a seniors card. All applicants then have a pre-adoption interview to ensure compatibility.





## RESEARCH UPDATES

### Ageing Health and Emotion

By Elise Kalokerinos

Previous research has demonstrated that older adults, but not younger adults, tend to focus more on emotionally positive material and less on emotionally negative material. For example, older, but not younger, adults recall and recognise more positive than negative images, look more at positive faces and less at negative faces, and focus more on the positive aspects of their personal experiences. The research has labelled this phenomenon the “*ageing positivity effect*”. Because positive emotions are known to lead to better health, and people begin to face

greater health challenges as they age, we predicted that this positivity effect might emerge in older adulthood as a way to protect against declining health.

To test this prediction, we tested a group of older adults on their positivity in image memory at two time-points one year apart, and took blood measures of their immune function to measure their health at Time 2. We found that older adults who remembered more positive pictures at Time 1 showed significantly better health, in the form of improved immune function, at Time 2. These data suggest that older adults might become more positive over time in part to combat increasing health challenges.

### Moving Towards Retirement

By Shelly Stone

Individual’s perceptions of retirement develop over time and are constructed from participants’ understandings of societal values and their (or significant others) contextual experiences. The interplay and impact of social, societal and governmental aspects on a person’s life, or those around them, has potential to influence their perceptions of and attitudes toward retirement, social connectedness and associated aspects. While the maintenance of financial security, health and lifestyle remain primary indicators of enhanced or reduced perceptions for/ of retirement, adequacy of social connectedness is vital for increasing positive subjective perceptions of health, value, purpose, satisfaction and capacity to cope.

Multiple perceptions of retirement, its ambiguity and complexity make retirement hard to define. There are many ways to consider retirement. It can be seen as a transitional process or period in which individuals withdraw from or reduce their activities in paid employment, and subsequent required adjustments. Retirement may be viewed positively or negatively as an indicator of one’s life stage or ageing, opportunity or social standing. Broadly speaking, transitions and experiences of retirement are as varied as people themselves.

Research conducted by Shelly Stone aimed summarise the expressed perceptions, opinions, concerns and experiences of pre- and post-retirees regarding retirement.

Continued.....



## RESEARCH UPDATES

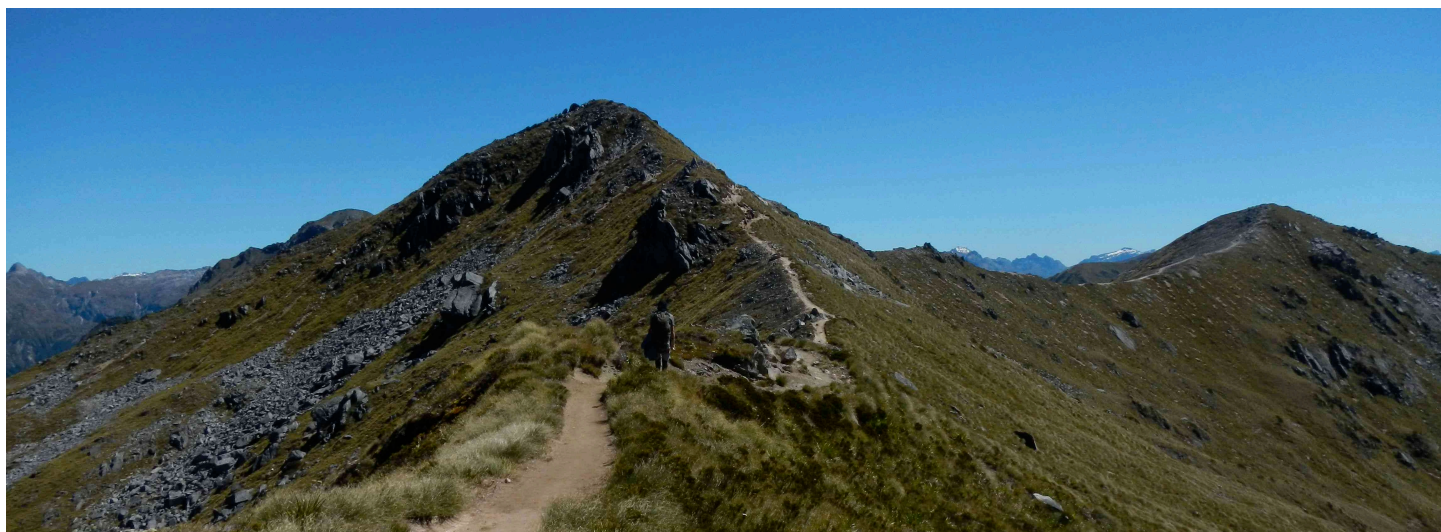
### Moving Towards Retirement continued....

Individual's perceptions of retirement develop over time and are constructed from their understandings of societal values and their (or significant others) contextual experiences. The interplay and impact of social, societal and governmental aspects on a person's life, or those around them, has potential to influence their perceptions of and attitudes toward retirement, social connectedness and associated aspects.

Remaining socially connected is crucial to promoting positive perceptions and experiences of retirement and connects with favourable perspectives on health. Pre-retiree responses show that maintaining networks was important to a positive transition, while enhanced inclusion could alleviate some retirees' negative financial and health perceptions (where finances met basic needs and social interactions) and boost coping. Conversely, where finances failed to meet social interaction opportunities, retirees were more likely to negatively perceive their finances, health and capacity to cope.

Retirement is a multifaceted concept that defies clear definition. Synergy of society's, governments', networks' and individual's, values, contexts and experiences produce perceptions and perspectives for attitudes toward, understanding of and experiences in retirement. Although perceptions of retirement and associated aspects are constructed over time, these are greatly influenced by individual's awareness of personal context, experiences and societal perceptions, and how this may (or does) affect their life and retirement experiences.

While the maintenance of financial security, health and lifestyle remain primary indicators of enhanced or reduced perceptions for/of retirement, adequacy of social connectedness is vital for increasing positive subjective perceptions of health, value, purpose, satisfaction and capacity to cope. Clearly, strategies which debunk myths of ageing and retirement, and promote broader societal awareness, understanding and connectedness have the potential to enhance the experiences of current retirees and encourage favourable perceptions of retirement for current and future pre- and post-retirees.



# Current Ageing Research

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

## How Much Do You Talk?

***We are looking for healthy older adults who do not have any communication disorders to participate in a study that measures talking time. Talking time is measured using a newly developed iPhone app called CommFit™.***

CommFit™ is short for Communicative Fitness. CommFit™ works using an iPhone and Bluetooth headset that is worn in the ear. It counts the time you talk for, but does not record what you are saying. You do not need an iPhone or experience using iPhones to participate! The equipment and training on its use will be provided as part of the study.

The main aim of this study is to investigate the talking time of people with aphasia, a language problem following a head injury or stroke. People who have aphasia often withdraw socially, which can contribute to mental health problems and poor quality of life. We want to measure their talking time to see if it is different to healthy adults of the same age. We will use the information we get to create more effective therapies using the CommFit™ app.

Participation takes around three weeks. There are two one-hour sessions and a testing period of two weeks.

**Session 1:** We will teach you how to use CommFit™ using a video and provide you with a manual for home use.

**Trial:** You will trial CommFit™ in your everyday life 6 hours a day for two days

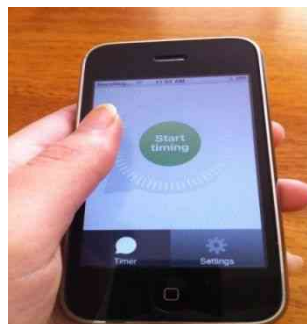
**Session 2:** We will check with you how everything went during the trial, and retrain you if necessary

**Main Test:** You will use the app in your everyday life 6 hours a day for 14 days Sessions can be held either at the University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus or in your home. We will provide free parking if you wish to drive to UQ.

**For more information please contact Caitlin Brandenburg**

**Phone: 33674946** (you will be prompted to leave a message)

**Email: [c.brandenburg@uq.edu.au](mailto:c.brandenburg@uq.edu.au)**





## RESEARCH PROJECTS

### How much do you know about ageing in Australia?

The University of Queensland, in conjunction with James Cook University and the University of Southern Queensland, is conducting a study looking at knowledge of ageing in Australia. The aim is to validate a measure of knowledge about ageing that has been adapted for an Australian population.

Around the world, the population is ageing. Unfortunately, this does not necessarily mean that knowledge of ageing is increasing. We are therefore looking to assess how well the Facts on Ageing Quiz (Australian adaptation) measures knowledge of ageing. Such measures help guide training of people who work with older adults to make sure that their skills and knowledge are of

an appropriate standard.

If you decide to take part in this project, you will be asked to complete an online-based survey that includes some questions about you, as well as 25 multiple choice questions that relate to older adults and ageing. We expect that it will take around 30 minutes to complete.

Use the following link to go directly to the survey:  
[http://uqpsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_6G2QsrnkVebscmN](http://uqpsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6G2QsrnkVebscmN)

For more information, please contact:  
Leander Mitchell  
Tel.: (07) 3470 4432  
[leander.mitchell@usq.edu.au](mailto:leander.mitchell@usq.edu.au)



### 'Transition to Retirement Study'

**We are seeking adults who have retired.**

We would like to invite you to participate in this research and help us understand more about people's experiences of their transition to retirement. **If you used to work full-time and have retired from work**, we would like to invite you to take part in this research.

#### Aim and background of this research

This research seeks to gain a better understanding of people's experiences of their transition to retirement from work. This research aims to gain an understanding of the role of people's relationship with work and their social relationships with other people in the process of retirement. More specifically, this research seeks to examine the role of these issues in people's adjustment to retirement and their subsequent well-being.

#### Your participation

Participation in this survey should take about 10-15 minutes. In this online survey you will be asked to reflect on various matters related to your work and retirement from it and to respond to series of questions. If you are able to participate, please copy the following link into your web browser and complete the following online study:

<http://tinyurl.com/o4nlpal>

This research is being conducted by the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland. If you have any questions about this research or any related ideas, please contact:

Dr Niklas Steffens  
Tel.: 07 3346 9506  
Email: [N.Steffens@uq.edu.au](mailto:N.Steffens@uq.edu.au)



## RESEARCH PROJECTS

### What is Wisdom? What does it mean to be Wise?

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be a wise person? What characteristics make one person wise and another not so wise? How do you even know if a decision you make is wise or not? And why do we want or need to make wise decisions anyway?

Wisdom is hailed as one characteristic of humans that can improve with age. Research also suggests that wisdom is something that can contribute to a person's sense of wellbeing and overall life satisfaction. It is something that develops across our lifetime based on the experiences we have lived and allows us to "give back" to those around us.

Researcher Leander Mitchell is currently exploring wisdom as part of her PhD project and in this initial study is looking to characterise wisdom from the perspective of Australia's multicultural population.

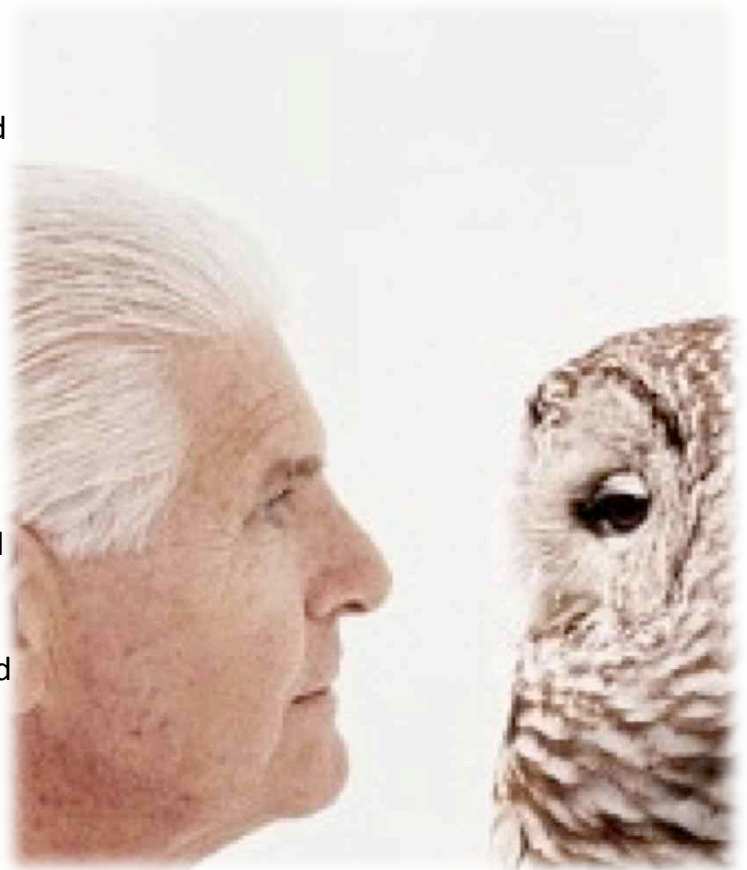
If you are currently living in Australia and are aged 50 years and over, you are invited to participate in this study (even if you don't think you are particularly wise yet!). You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire including a range of questions about the characteristics and qualities of wisdom (a paper version of the questionnaire is also available if preferred). It is expected that the questionnaire will take around an hour to complete and it can be completed in the comfort of your own home.

You can complete the online version of the questionnaire by copying the following link into your web browser:

[http://uqpsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_9KQFCsOuFdy4mxf](http://uqpsych.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9KQFCsOuFdy4mxf)

Alternatively, if you are interested in becoming involved in defining wisdom but would like to receive more information about the study or would like to receive the questionnaire via the mail, please contact:

Leander Mitchell  
School of Psychology  
University of Queensland  
St Lucia Qld 4072  
Tel.: (07) 3365 5050  
Email: [leander.mitchell@uqconnect.edu.au](mailto:leander.mitchell@uqconnect.edu.au)





## RESEARCH PROJECTS

### Are you over 75 and still employed in some way?

People aged 75-90 who are still working in some capacity are being sought for a small research study to gather information on the following:

- What type of work do you do?
- How often do you work?
- How did this job come about?
- What are your main reasons for choosing to work?
- What do you see as the main benefits to you?

The aim is to find out more about the

conditions of working for this age group as we know very little about them, other than there are some few individuals who are still employed in some capacity or other past 75.

Finding out more will help with greater understanding of the role of working throughout the life span. If you would like to participate it will involve you in an interview of around 40 minutes either in your own home, via skype or somewhere mutually convenient and private.

Further information can be obtained from Adjunct Associate Professor Margaret at either [encounter@internode.on.net](mailto:encounter@internode.on.net) or 85523617.

### Emotion across the lifespan

Research has found that older adults experience emotion differently to younger adults. We are aiming to better understand these differences by asking older and younger adults about their experience of emotion, and having them complete some tasks, across two testing sessions.

We are seeking adults 65 years and older. Participation involves two testing sessions. Both sessions involve answering some questions about your moods and feelings, as well as viewing some pictures. Participation in the first session should take less than an hour. Participation in the second session will be approximately a month after the first session, and will take 20 minutes. You will receive \$10 for participation in each session.

If you would like further information, please

contact Fiona Porter (email: [ageingandemotion@gmail.com](mailto:ageingandemotion@gmail.com) or call: 0415 741 896).

We can schedule the sessions at a time that suits you, and researchers can come to your home and interview you, or you can come to the UQ St Lucia campus.

*Please note:* If you participated in our earlier study, "Ageing, Health, and Emotion", you will not be able to participate in this study, since it involves many similar tasks and questions.



## RESEARCH PROJECTS

### Music for quality of life study

Do you live with someone who has dementia or Alzheimer's? Music can enrich people's lives and has been shown to enhance relationships between family members. Research also shows that when people are experiencing caregiver burden, even the smallest amount of improvement in the relationship can reduce that sense of burden.

We are looking for participants for a study called Meaningful Musical Moments, which is a collaboration between the University of Queensland (UQ) and University of Melbourne. Funding is through UQ.

Briefly, what we are looking for:

- People with a diagnosis of (any type of) dementia, who are:
- Still living at home, and:
- Cared for by a family member (husband, wife, partner, daughter, son, nephew, niece, adult grandchild, etc).

What we want from their caregivers:

- To use an instructional DVD and leaflet (that we will post to them) that inform them how to use their existing music collection to facilitate times of meaningful interaction,
- 3 times a week for 6 weeks,
- Answering a phone interview of 2 brief questionnaires at the beginning and end of the 6 weeks, and writing briefly in a diary (that we will

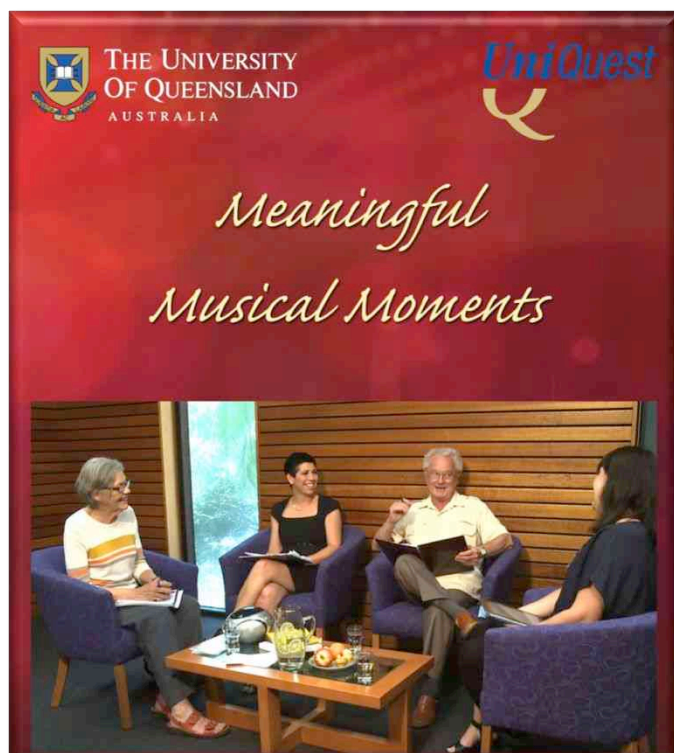
post to them) each time they have a music session.

At the end of the six weeks the caregiver will be mailed a reply paid envelope so they can return their diary.

Please note: Because of the type of study this is, participants can be located anywhere in Australia, so please feel free to pass on this request to anyone whom you think may benefit from it.

Interested? Please contact  
Wendy Chatterton

Ph: 0438 788 599 Email: [w.chatterton@uq.edu.au](mailto:w.chatterton@uq.edu.au)



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