

Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre

Member eBulletin #44 – July 2024

Members of RAIL are Monash education and research staff or students across a variety of disciplines within Monash Australia and Malaysia that are interested in rehabilitation, ageing and independent living.

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A message from the Director

To all our RAIL members, I hope you are staying warm and well in these winter months. RAIL has had a busy couple of months and I am pleased to share the achievements with you. Highlights of the bulletin include RAIL staff promotions and awards, distribution of the 2024 RAIL seed grants, running a RAIL short course, celebrating the start of the EACH – Monash partnership, as well as leading a community-based gymnastics program for five of Victoria's Special Schools.



I hope you enjoy reading about our activities and outcomes in the e-bulletin, and we welcome any contributions you consider will be of interest to others. Finally, if you have colleagues, or people new to Monash who would like to become a Member of RAIL, and thereby be on our email communications and e-bulletin distribution list, please complete the Member survey [online](#).

Associate Professor Natasha (Tarsh) Brusco

Member profile



Dr Sandy Reeder is Senior Research Fellow and Registered Nurse with 25 years of experience in education and critical care in the Victorian public health system. She currently works as the Qualitative Implementation Research Lead at the Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation. Sandy's research interests and current research program include promoting the uptake of Consumer and Community Involvement (CCI) in health and medical research.

In 2019-21 she completed a Consumer and Community Involvement Fellowship with [Monash Partners](#). Since then, Sandy has worked to support CCI implementation across university and healthcare settings. She co-developed the [Monash Partners online education and training resources](#), supports Monash Partners research on CCI best practice with multiple partner agencies, and provides coaching for fellow academics in CCI. She is currently involved in an MRFF funded project which aims to build a network of engaged consumers, an innovative digital knowledge hub, and apply behavioural science to understand how to increase CCI adoption. Sandy also enjoys co-leading workshops with consumers to train academics in CCI.

Additionally, Sandy works to support students and fellow academics with qualitative research. She has expertise in participatory research methods, mixed methods, and implementation and evaluation methods. Her qualitative research and consumer engagement work has been applied to diverse areas including long-term trauma recovery, sleep, machine learning in healthcare, epilepsy, stroke, burns, medication communication, patient and staff hospital experience, and she is always interested in new topics and learning new methods.

RAIL Research Centre eForum

On Thursday 27th June, Associate Professor Libby Callaway (RAIL's Independent Living Stream Lead) and Professor Terry Haines AM (Head of the School of Primary and Allied Health Care) gave a thought-provoking presentation to 52 attendees on 'The brave new world of technology monitoring in healthcare and support'. We discussed the important and timely issues of ethical practice and governance in the use of these technologies across a range of settings including hospital wards, playgrounds and assisted living homes. Join us for a next RAIL forum in August (details TBA).



RAIL paper of the month

Lee DCA, Callisaya ML, Haines TP, Hill KD. (2024) Program Evaluation and Refinement of the "Safe Functional Home Exercise" Program for Improving Physical Activity in Older People with Dementia Who Receive Home Care. *Healthcare (Basel)*. 12(2):166. [doi: 10.3390/healthcare12020166](https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12020166)



Abstract

Introduction: People with dementia who receive home care have low levels of physical activity participation.

Objectives: To evaluate and refine a co-designed exercise program for home care clients with dementia, led by trained care support workers.

Methods: An action research cycle whereby support workers, clients and carers (each n = 26) from the "Safe Functional Home Exercise" feasibility study were invited to complete an evaluation survey. Participants rated statements using Likert-style scales on (1) staff training, (2) staff confidence, (3) program support and (4) satisfaction. The participants could provide comments for situations that affected exercise performance, suggested improvements for staff training, program support and exercises. The co-design panel (original program designers) was reconvened to refine the exercise program.

Results: Support workers (n = 19), clients (n = 15) and carers (n = 13) returned their surveys. Support workers (74–90%), carers (77–92%) and clients (100%) rated program support positively and were overall satisfied. Support workers (>80%) agreed that the

training course was relevant and were confident in delivering the exercises to clients. Situations included “Covid isolation”, the client’s “poor medical condition” and “mood fluctuations” that made exercising difficult. Improvements included “making a client video” and “providing tips to motivate clients”. The co-design panel modified the exercise program.

Conclusions: The “Safe Functional Home Exercise” program is the first exercise program co-designed for people with dementia. It is well accepted by support workers, people with dementia and carers. Utilising support workers to facilitate physical activity participation is potentially low-cost and scalable in home care. Future studies are needed to evaluate the refined program in home care.

RAIL Award and promotions

Award

Congratulations to RAIL researchers, Keith Hill and Aislinn Lalor, for their success in being awarded the Faculty of Education Equity and Inclusion Award 2024, along with Faculty of Education staff Geraldine Burke (Project Lead), Megan Adams, Laura Alfrey, Priscilla Pettengell, and First Nations artists Karan Kent, Kylie Colmane and Nikki Browne, for their We Are Well: Intergenerational Art-Moving-Wellbeing Project. If you'd like to know more about this project and see the visual poster outputs, please see <https://lens.monash.edu/@education/2023/12/07/1386323/intergenerational-learning-challenging-stereotypes-and-supporting-social-connection> and https://bridges.monash.edu/projects/We_Are_Well_Intergenerational_art-moving-well-being_project/184111

Promotions

RAIL team members Den-Ching Angel Lee and Sze-Ee Soh's academic excellence outcomes have led them to being promoted to Senior Research Fellow Level C (Angel) and Associate Professor Level D (Sze-Ee) in the recent School promotion round. Congratulations to Angel and Sze-Ee!

RAIL Early-Mid Career Researcher (EMCR) grants awarded

We are pleased to announce that two RAIL Early - Mid Career Researcher seed grants have been awarded for the 2024 round. We will provide a profile of each of the lead researchers over coming e-bulletins – the first of these is below the two successful grants:

Pilot evaluation of a telehealth adaptation of the i-RECOVeR interdisciplinary intervention for persisting post-concussion symptoms after mild traumatic brain injury

Lead Investigator: Dr Jack Nguyen (Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre (MERRC), School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University and Epworth Healthcare)

Other investigators: A/Prof Adam McKay (Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre (MERRC), School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University and Epworth Healthcare), Prof Jennie Ponsford (Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre (MERRC), School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University and Epworth Healthcare), Mrs Katie Davies (Neurological Rehabilitation Group), Dr James Brennan (Epworth Sports and Exercise Medicine, Australian Football League), Dr Pamela Harvey (School of Rural Health, Monash University), **A/Prof Natasha Brusco** (Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre, Monash University), **Sara Whittaker** (Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre,

Monash University), Prof Sean Drummond (Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health, School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University), Adjunct A/Prof Catherine Willmott (Australian Football League)

Summary: Concussion/mild traumatic brain injury represents a public health concern given its prevalence and potential long-term consequences, with 30% of people experiencing delayed recovery. Limited options for evidence-based treatments exist, particularly in rural areas where concussion rates are relatively higher. Our team, comprising international leaders in concussion research, developed and piloted an Interdisciplinary Rehabilitation program for Concussion Recovery (i-RECOVeR) with positive results, leading to a randomised controlled trial funded by MRFF. Specialised treatments such as i-RECOVeR, however, are usually inaccessible in rural/regional areas. Telehealth-delivered care can increase access to treatments such as i-RECOVeR, although the evidence for telehealth concussion interventions is not established. In an Australian and possibly world first, this study will pilot an interdisciplinary concussion treatment model via telehealth to establish its feasibility and preliminary efficacy. Utilising a mixed-methods design, we will evaluate a telehealth adaptation of i-RECOVeR(-TH) in adults with persisting post-concussion symptoms (pPCSs) who live in rural and underserved areas. This project represents new collaborations between MERRC, RAIL, and the School of Rural Health, and has the potential to establish a feasible, effective, and accessible intervention for pPCSs, with pilot data that could support future grants and improve patient outcomes.

Understanding health literacy challenges among older adults living in urban and rural residential aged care

Lead Investigator: Dr Denise Azar (School of Rural Health, Monash University)

Other investigators: A/Prof Alison Beauchamp (School of Rural Health, Monash University), **Dr Raphaëlle Guerbaai** (Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre, Monash University), Prof Helen Rawson (Monash Nursing and Midwifery), Dr Matthew Carroll (School of Rural Health, Monash University), Dr Eli Ristevski (School of Rural Health, Monash University)

Summary:

Research Questions (RQs):

1. What is the existing evidence regarding levels of health literacy among older adults living in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs)?
2. What health literacy challenges do older adults living in RACFs experience?
3. Are there differences in health literacy challenges between rural and urban RACF residents?

Methodology:

RQ1 will be addressed via a scoping review of existing evidence on the health literacy of older adults living in RACFs. RQ2 & 3 will be addressed through a qualitative descriptive study with older adults living in RACFs, family members and RACF staff. The interview guide will be drawn from the Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool (CHAT) and informed by the findings from the scoping review. Residents, family members and staff's perspectives from one rural and one metropolitan RACF in Victoria will be explored. Reflexive thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data.

Significance:

This research delves into the intersection of health literacy, ageing, and residential aged care, addressing a notable gap in evidence regarding the challenges faced by older adults

living in aged care. This foundational research will identify what the health literacy needs are to enhance health outcomes in aged care residents.

RAIL 2024 EMCR awardee profile

We will profile the lead investigator of the two successful RAIL seed grants 2024 over the next e-bulletins. The first one is below:



Dr Jack Nguyen (PhD, BPsychHons) is a research fellow at the Monash-Epworth Rehabilitation Research Centre (MERRC). He leads a theme of research focussed on improving the management of persisting post-concussion symptoms after mild traumatic brain injury.

Dr Nguyen's dual roles as researcher and clinician enable his research to be grounded in clinical practice and ensures his research output is readily translatable to clinicians working with individuals with mild traumatic brain injury/concussion.

Along with his team at MERRC, Neurological Rehabilitation Group, and Olympic Park Sports Medicine Centre, Dr Nguyen developed i-RECOVeR (Interdisciplinary Rehabilitation for Concussion Recovery), a novel eight-week interdisciplinary intervention for persisting post-concussion symptoms. In a pilot study led by Dr Nguyen, i-RECOVeR was associated with symptom reduction and goal attainment.

The 2024 RAIL EMCR grant will support Dr Nguyen's efforts in translating the i-RECOVeR intervention for telehealth delivery to enable greater access to interdisciplinary treatments for those living in rural/regional areas.

Free e-course on Physical activity for people living with dementia (Changing the Focus Project)

Who this e-course is for: Exercise and physical activity providers or referrers of people living with dementia for exercise programs (initial priority for those in areas around Frankston and Mornington Peninsula).



Monash University' Rehabilitation Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre is running a free e-course (self-paced, access period 2024-2025) that aims to provide support – through the provision of information and resources - for referrers, exercise and physical activity providers (health and non-health professionals) to facilitate the participation of people with dementia living in the community in exercise and/or physical activity.

Modules include: 1) Introduction; 2) Changes in physical function and benefits of physical activity for people with dementia; 3) Exercise or physical activity considerations and ways of engagement for people with dementia; 4) Design factors for making exercise facilities or environments dementia friendly; 5) Referrals for physical activity and funding options for people with dementia

For more information or to register, please email the Monash University RAIL research team: Dr Angel Lee at Angel.Lee@monash.edu or Ms Lisa Licciardi at Lisa.Licciardi@monash.edu.

Funded by: Commonwealth Government of Australia through the Community Health and

Pets and People pilot program - to support healthy ageing

Monash University researcher, Dr Em Bould and their team are exploring the potential of using human-animal bonds in aged care to facilitate social connections between intergenerational and intercultural groups at risk of loneliness and social isolation.

The pilot of the Pets and People program has been funded through the Community Health and Hospitals Program Grant, via the [National Centre for Healthy Ageing](#) (NCHA). Two aged care facilities in Melbourne are hosting a Pets and People group, and between 8 to 15 volunteers from two target groups (older Australians and international university students) are meeting for 1 hour each week. Pets and animals including a robotic [dog](#) and [cat](#) have formed a key focus, but there have been a range of other animal-assisted activities, including arts and crafts, jigsaws, animal bingo, and singing.



We look forward to seeing the final results of this important research and hope to offer the program to other aged care facilities and community services.

RAIL short course - Exercise to optimise balance, mobility and fall outcomes for older people

Professor Keith Hill and Associate Professor Sze-Ee Soh from RAIL were joined by Dr Melanie Farlie and Mrs Pek Hill on Friday 14th June for an interactive short course on how to assess balance (including balance intensity) and prescribe challenging balance exercises. They were also joined by Margaret Thomas who shared her own lived experience on the factors that may influence older people's engagement with exercise, particularly the need to avoid ageist terms such as 'elderly' which were highly valued by participants.



George's Gymnastics Program

Enhancing social and community participation, and physical activity for children with a disability, through community based gymnastics

Meet George, the program's namesake, who is also Tarsh Brusco's son



Waverley Gymnastics Centre, Vermont South Special School, and Monash University partnered together in 2022 to establish **George's Gymnastics Program**, a 5-week inclusive gymnastics program for primary school children with a disability (aged 5-12). The program is hosted on site at Waverley Gymnastics Centre in Oakleigh, during school hours, and is run by gymnastics coaches and Monash University physiotherapy students. **In 2023**, George's Gymnastics Program was provided to all children attending Vermont South Special School (150 children). **In 2024**, the program expanded to include 5 Victorian Special Schools, including Vermont South Special School, Bayside Special Developmental School, Eastern Ranges School, Belmore School, and Endeavor Hills Specialist School (1-

2 groups of children per school, 170 children). **In 2025**, we hope to repeat the 2024 program across the same five schools (or more), and employ people with a disability to help deliver the program.



The teachers provided feedback on the 2024 and this is what they said:

- “I think the program was excellent and removed barriers that are usually there for our students.”
- “The confidence of the students throughout was incredible to watch.”
- “The students really enjoyed going to George's Gymnastics Program each week. It was inclusive of all children and was set up for success.”
- “Students all looked forward to the program and came back to school happy and proud.”
- “Students were requesting gymnastics when they were at school, which is HUGE!”

EACH - Monash Partnership

EACH community health and social services, and Monash University, met for the first of many collaborative meetings to celebrate and progress the new EACH – Monash Partnership. Led by EACH CEO Natalie Sullivan, and RAILs Director Tarsh Brusco, the first meeting focused on getting to know one another, as well as establishing the partnership governance structure and partnership goals, that stretch across the domains of Research, Education and Innovation. Over the coming 6-months we will employ an EACH Senior Research Fellow to lead the research strategy, and establish the EACH Clinical School that will extend across Nursing and Allied Health (led by Monash’s Lisa Murphy and EACH’s Cam Radia-George).



Collaborations with Canada

RAIL Senior Research Fellow [Dr Natasha Layton](#) recently travelled to Canada to represent Australian Standards at the [ISO meeting](#) for assistive products in Ottawa, Canada (23-24 April), and attend the [Canadian Occupational Therapy Conference](#) (1-3 May).

RAIL activities were showcased during talks to the [Canadian Centre for Health Economics](#) (26 April) and the [PRISM Lab](#), Holland Bloorview Research Institute (29 April). Natasha had the opportunity for a site visit to the [KITE Research Centre](#) in Toronto (26 April), and delivered one of 16 shortlisted papers for 'best rehabilitation paper 2022' at the International Conference on Ageing, Innovation and Rehabilitation ([KITE/ ICAIR Conference](#)).

2024 Empathy Symposium

Monash Nursing & Midwifery is hosting the 2024 Empathy symposium at the Frankston arts Centre on 5-6 December 2024 and PhD candidate Cameron Marshman's associated exhibition at the Cube 37 Gallery from 4-21 December 2024.

The Empathy Symposium will be three days of collaborative and interesting dialogue which will include plenary speakers, workshops and oral presentations exploring the relationship between art, empathy and compassion across health professions education, research and practice.

For more information on the symposium or to register or submit an abstract, please visit: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/nursing/empathy-symposium>.



MONASH NURSING AND MIDWIFERY WILL BE HOSTING THE 2024 EMPATHY SYMPOSIUM.

This will be an exciting event that brings together healthcare consumers, educators, clinicians and researchers who are committed to sharing the power of empathy and compassion to transform education and healthcare.

The Symposium will include plenary speakers, workshops and oral presentations exploring the relationship between art, empathy and compassion across health professions education, research and practice.

Artwork by Cameron Marshman

SPECIAL EXHIBITION: CULTIVATING COMPASSION

Monash Nursing and Midwifery PhD candidate Cameron Marshman will hold an exhibition showcasing his PhD research and the visual art created by participants. This research explores the embodied understandings of compassion in mental healthcare and how we can work together to cultivate flourishing and compassionate mental healthcare systems.

The exhibition will run from Wednesday 4 - 21 December 2024 at Cube 37 Gallery.

EVENT DETAILS

DATE: 5 - 6 DECEMBER 2024

Where: Cube 37 Gallery
Frankston Arts Centre
Frankston, VIC 3189

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
monash.edu/empathy-symposium

ERIC OS Provider Number: Monash University 00008



Research participants required

Clinical management of cognitive changes in stroke survivors: An Australian healthcare perspective

A group of researchers at Monash University, PhD candidate Ms Miki Boneh with Associate Professor Rene Stolwyk from the School of Psychological Sciences along with colleagues from Macquarie University, is seeking health professional participants for their project titled *Clinical management of cognitive changes in stroke survivors: An Australian healthcare perspective*.

The project aims to understand health professionals experience and perception of working with stroke survivors. Participation involves a 50-minute interview over Zoom.

If you are a health professional working with stroke survivors and would like to participate in the study, please complete the following expression of interest form: <https://redcap.link/cogpoststroke>

This project has full ethics approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (ID #32484).

This project has full ethics approval from the MUHREC: ID#32484



Are you a healthcare professional working with stroke patients?



Your Input

Participate in a 50min interview exploring your experience managing cognitive changes with stroke patients.

Your input may help improve how cognitive changes after stroke are managed!



Don't have much experience? We still want to hear from you!

<https://redcap.link/cogpoststroke>

Contact us if you have any questions:

Miki Boneh
M: 0431 348 383
E: michal.boneh@monash.edu

Research Team:

A/Prof Rene Stolwyk Dr Elizabeth Lynch
Dr Vincent Oxenham Ms Miki Boneh

Early and mid-career research support activities

Although the staffing level for RAIL at this point is small, we are keen to provide support for any early or mid-career researcher that we can. We are happy to provide an external review perspective of grants you are preparing as one avenue of support. If you would like to discuss possibly accessing this service, please email Karine in the first instance (spahc.rail@monash.edu).

Member contributions

We would love to showcase current research from our members. We invite you to submit a short story (and relevant images) about any research you are working on that aligns with RAIL. Submissions are due by the 30th of each month to spahc.rail@monash.edu.

RAIL aims to provide an accessible ebulletin for all. Image descriptions are available for images appearing in the ebulletin, with the use of a screen reader. If you have any issues with accessing any part of the ebulletin, please let us know at spahc.rail@monash.edu.

We acknowledge and pay respects to the Elders and Traditional Owners of the land on which our four Australian campuses stand. Information for [Indigenous Australians](#)

We're committed to [diversity and inclusion](#)

<https://www.monash.edu/medicine/spahc/rail/>

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spahc.rail@monash.edu

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