

REHABILITATION, AGEING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING (RAIL) RESEARCH CENTRE

Member eBulletin #7

A message from the Director

Another month has passed, and it is pleasing to see the restrictions in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 are having good effects nationally across Australia, and that we are starting to see some small instances of restrictions being eased. However, it remains early days, and the easing of restrictions will be staggered so many of the changes will remain in place for some time.

There are a number of implications for current research by the RAIL team, RAIL members and HDR students that are being implemented to accommodate the COVID-19 restrictions. Opportunities to vary the timing of various stages of a research activity (eg if possible bringing forwards a survey component of a multi-phase project and pushing back a component with direct participant interaction) might be useful for some projects. Obtaining extension to timelines from project funders appears to be being positively viewed at the present time. HDR students have been involved in modifying their methods / study plan, or to move into a strong writing phase (even for studies not yet underway, writing their introduction and methods sections of upcoming papers or chapters) in the interim while waiting for the opportunity to resume data collection. It is important to raise issues and seek solutions as early as possible in any instances where research timelines look likely to be impacted, and to discuss these with relevant funders / senior staff, or supervisors.

It is concerning that many of the people our research targets are among the vulnerable populations that are most susceptible to COVID-19, and to the

strategies put in place to protect them. While strong research focus currently is on finding a vaccine, there is an urgent need to consider the current (and likely longer term) impacts of the COVID-19 response strategies. Social isolation, depression, cessation of some physical activities are just a few of the negative impacts among older people, people with disability, and those with health / rehabilitation needs. Research and practice needs to be working towards ways of identifying and addressing these issues in the short term, and identifying possible better responses that may have less negative impact on these and other vulnerable groups in the situation of a possible future pandemic.

Maintaining social connectedness is also critical for members of a research team. We are missing the corridor and tea-room chats, the opportunities to catch up a bit before and after meetings and other informal occasions where we connect, both for social purposes, as well as at times being informal opportunities to generate ideas, brainstorm or problem solve. Staff should continue to look for or create opportunities to sustain these interactions. For example, the RAIL staff had a virtual drinks session after work one night last week, which provided a valuable opportunity for these interactions. Consider different ways for you and your team to remain socially connected.

Take care and stay positive.

Professor Keith Hill

RAIL staff updates

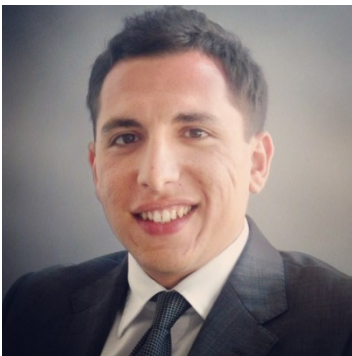
We are pleased to welcome our 2 new research assistants Joanna Schwarzman and Mohammed Aburumman. Joanna and Mohammed are currently working with Dr Christina Ekegren on a recently funded TAC project.



Dr Joanna Schwarzman

Joanna completed her PhD at the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine in 2019. Her PhD research examined the determinants of evaluation capacity in health promotion and primary prevention organisations. Joanna's

career interests focus on building capacity for the generation and use of evidence to more effectively address population health challenges. Joanna is currently a physiotherapist in residential aged care, Health Promotion and Evaluation consultant to the Department of Veterans' Affairs and an active member of the Australian Health Promotion Association. Prior to commencing her PhD, Joanna worked for several years in the Northern Territory in clinical and non-clinical roles.



Dr Mohammed Aburumman

Mohammed is a PhD student at the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC). He holds a Bachelor degree in Industrial Engineering as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Safety, Risk and Reliability Engineering. Mohammed has worked in various health and safety engineering and consultancy roles across a range of sectors. His PhD research explores workplace safety culture implementation in the construction industry.

Member profile (joined Monash in April)

Associate Professor Helen Rawson PhD MSc BSc (Hons) RN

Helen Rawson is a Registered Nurse and Associate Professor in Monash University's School of Nursing and Midwifery. She has over 17 years of experience in academia involved in teaching and research. Her research agenda is to enhance wellbeing and promote safe and evidence-based care for older people in acute and residential care settings. Her most significant



contributions include development and implementation of care models that increased staff capacity to engage older people and families in care delivery, and research translation that supports quality care for older people in hospital and aged care. As a Registered Nurse, Helen has extensive experience working with older people in acute and residential care. Helen serves on various committees related to older people including, the Australasian Association of Gerontology, Victorian Division; the Policy Development Committee, COTA Victoria; and two taskforces at Monash Health residential services. Helen is also the co-chair of Monash Health's Low Risk Human Research Ethics Panel.

Website to promote physical activity for older people during COVID-19 restrictions



A small group of experienced physiotherapist researcher/clinician/academics from across Australia (including Keith Hill and Michele Callisaya from Monash

University) saw a need a few weeks ago as the COVID-19 restrictions were impacting, to develop a resource to support older people to stay active, or become more active. Over a few short weeks, the team have developed a new website (Safe exercise at home – Safeexerciseathome.org.au) that was launched on Tuesday 5th May.

The website includes sections highlighting general information, safety considerations, tips for staying motivated, and how hard you should work, as well as three levels of exercise (including sample exercise sheets, and recommended videos for people with different levels of function), success stories (older people who have managed to stay active during COVID-19, and their tips), and some resources / web links for health professionals who are seeking additional information and resources. The website has been reviewed by consumers and international experts, and has been endorsed by the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

This was an excellent example of a group of individuals nationally with specific expertise in physical activity for older people, working quickly and remotely to address an identified need, with no funding or additional resources (done within the context of everyone's existing priorities and work commitments, on a very tight timeline).

As well as Keith and Michelle, the team was led by Cathie Sherrington (University of Sydney) and Cathy Said (University of Melbourne), and other team members were Shylie Mackintosh (University of South Australia), Frances Batchelor (NARI), Anne-Marie Hill (Curtin University), Stephanie Fu (University of Queensland) and Rik Dawson (Australian Physiotherapy Association). Special thanks also to Courtney West from University of Sydney for managing all aspects of the web design.

Grant success

External grants involving RAIL staff:

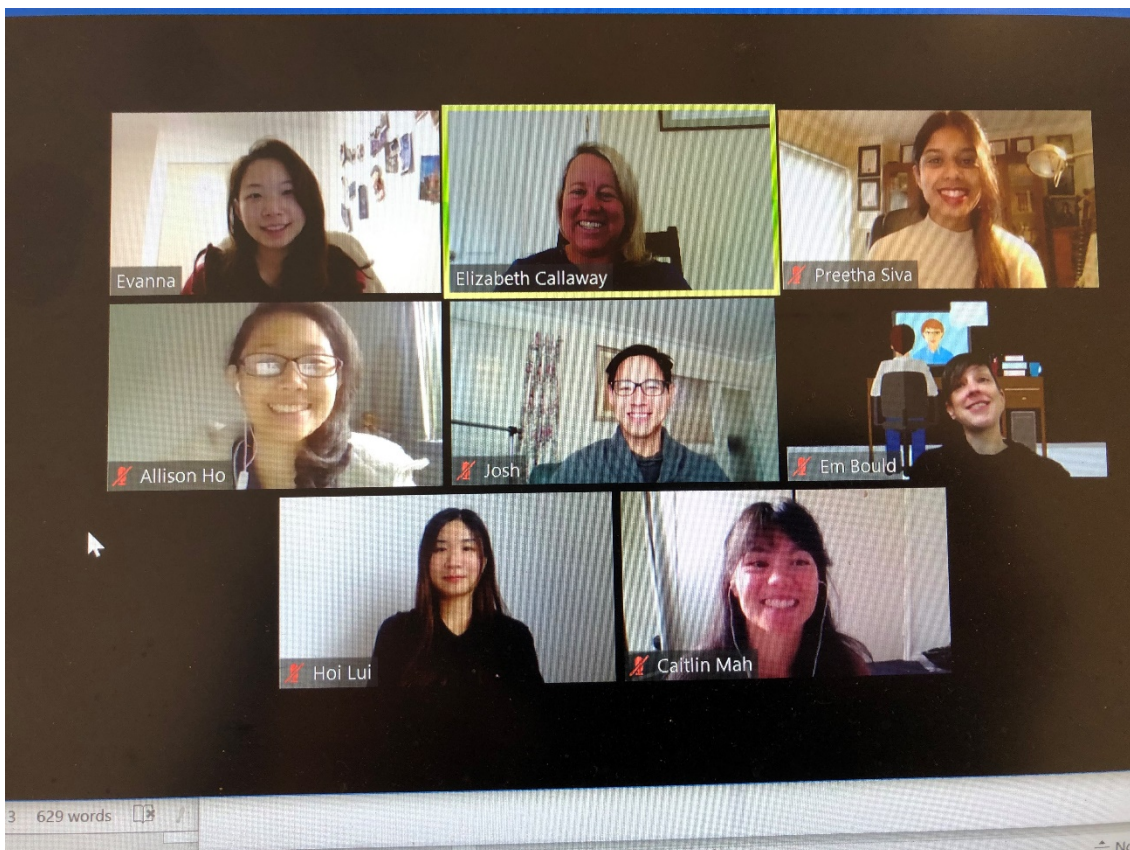
Innovative workforce growth in thin markets - Piloting use of mixed digital & face-to-face workforce development to scale capacity building supports with NDIS participants in Tasmania

Through an NDIS Jobs and Market Fund project

(<https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/programs-services/what-is-the-ndis-jobs-and-market-fund>), an interdisciplinary team across the Monash School of Primary and Allied Health Care at Monash University has been collaborating with NDIS participants, disability support providers (Able Australia and Yooralla), consumer expert mentors (Emma Gee and Jono Bredin), community-based health professionals (Osborn Sloan and Associates, Applied Communication Skills) and health professional students. This project is trialing the use of telepractice by allied health student training with NDIS participants living in Specialist Disability Accommodation across Tasmania and Victoria.

This project, titled “Innovative workforce growth in thin markets - Piloting use of mixed digital & face-to-face workforce development to scale capacity building supports with NDIS participants in Tasmania”, is led by Libby Callaway (RAIL Independent Living Stream Lead) with Prue Morgan (Head of Physiotherapy) and running for 18 months to June 2021. It was originally designed to offer mixed digital and face to face learning - digital training and supervision was to be delivered online from Monash Peninsula Campus to students and participants co-located in Tasmania during full-time placement blocks. The rapid escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic, and associated restrictions on travel and physical distancing, has provided an unexpected opportunity for rapid transformation and pilot of a full time telepractice fieldwork placement.

This project has been designed to build capacity of NDIS participants, their families, health professional students and disability support providers to engage with low-cost, mainstream technologies for digital connection, online communication and delivery of participation-focused supports. The students are developing a range of plain English step-by-step resources to assist people to learn to connect to the internet and use mainstream technologies (e.g. iPads) for video and phone-based connection. A project evaluation framework has been developed and led by Dr Em Bould from Monash OT department, in collaboration with Dr Natasha Brusco from the RAIL team. Timing of the project aligns with the National Disability Insurance Agency announcement this week of a new policy on provision of low cost, mainstream technology for NDIS participant telecapacity – see <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/4758-further-initiatives-support-ndis-participants-and-providers-during-coronavirus-pandemic>



Six Masters of Occupational Therapy Practice Students, Libby Callaway and Em Bould meeting in week 1 of the fieldwork training project

Cross-faculty research initiatives:



Release of PRACTIS project findings

As introduced in the last RAIL Member eBulletin #6, the PRACTIS (PRimary health and Aged Care Translation and Interpreting Services) project aims to improve the delivery of care to older Australians with limited English proficiency living in Residential Aged Care Facilities.

The PRACTIS team have just released a summary of the findings of their Phase 1 2019 mixed methods study, which aimed to evaluate the relationship between communication barriers and unplanned emergency department transfers for residents with limited English proficiency and explore residents' experiences in communication with staff.

For a summary of the [Phase 1 PRACTIS project findings please click here.](#)

For the latest information on the PRACTIS project go

to: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/spahc/research/practis>

Group of Eight Roadmap to Recovery post COVID-19 (a report to the nation)



An expert taskforce of more than 100 researchers drawn from across the Group of Eight (Go8) Universities has presented the Australian Government with a “Roadmap to Recovery”, a report aimed at helping Government plot the best path through COVID-19. Keith Hill was invited to be part of the task force, together with a number of other Monash University researchers. It utilised a novel platform to allow the researchers to remotely interact anonymously to put forwards ideas and data, and contribute to aspects of

the report, through a consensus approach. The report is available from <https://go8.edu.au/research/roadmap-to-recovery>

The report notes:

“How this document differs from the hundreds of articles and opinion pieces on this issue is that this report specifies the evidence on which it is based, it is produced by researchers who are experts and leaders in their area, and it engages the broadest range of disciplines – from mathematicians, to virologists, to philosophers. Over a three-week period, this taskforce has debated and discussed, disagreed, and agreed, edited and revised its work over weekdays and holidays, Good Friday and Easter. All remotely. All with social distancing. It is a testimony to their commitment to the Australian community, to our enviable way of life, to securing our standard of living, to increasing national productivity and to protecting the values all Australian’s hold dear. It is research collaboration in action – a collective expression of a belief that expert research can help Government plot the best path forward and of a commitment to provide this help in support of the nation and the Australian community.”

Events

Member forums

The next RAIL member forum will be held:

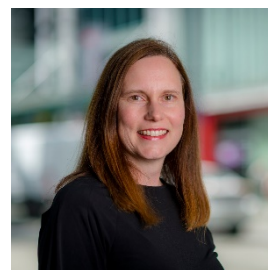
Title: Novel Approaches to Enhance Mobility of Older Adults: Targeting Injury Prevention and Physical Activity

Presenter/s: Associate Professor Dawn Mackey

Venue: Via Zoom - Meeting ID: 9314943850

Date and time: 1.00pm - 2.00pm Thursday 14th May

RSVP: [Online](#) by 11/05 (zoom options will be available)



Dr. Dawn Mackey is an Associate Professor in Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. She visited RAIL in February and March 2020 and was hosted by Dr. Christina Ekegren. Dawn directs the Aging and Population Health Lab where she and her team are focused on designing, evaluating, and implementing

effective strategies to support older adult mobility and health behaviour change. Her current areas of concentration are physical activity promotion and fall and injury prevention. www.drdawnmackey.com

The presentation will cover two main areas of research led by Associate Professor Mackey. These include investigation of the effect of compliant flooring on falls and other outcomes in residential care settings; and projects enhancing physical activity and behaviour change among older people.

Upcoming conferences

Please note – we have checked as best as possible regarding updates on whether events in coming months are being cancelled or proceeding (as detailed below). Please check websites / conference organisers to confirm details of specific events.

- **(CANCELLED) May 7-9 2020**, Perth – The Australasian Society for the Study of Brain Impairment (ASSBI) 43rd Annual Brain Impairment Conference. Theme: Getting on with the business of living. <https://assbi.com.au/ASSBI-Conferences>
- **(POSTPONED TO Tuesday 13 October – Wednesday 14 Oct 2020)** - ATSA independent living expo <http://atsaindependentlivingexpo.com.au>
Free exhibition
- **(POSTPONED TO Monday 12 October - Tuesday 13 October)** Melbourne - Biennial Universal Design Conference <http://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/australian-ud-conference-ud2020/>
- **(POSTPONED TO Wednesday 19 May - Friday 21 May 2021)** Melbourne – The Australian and New Zealand Society of Geriatric Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting. Theme: Vision for the future. Abstract submission open (closes February 2020). <http://www.anzsgmconference.org/>
- **(POSTPONED – new date to be set)** Adelaide – The NHMRC National Institute for Dementia Research (NNIDR) Australian Dementia Forum. Theme: Innovation, Discovery and Translation. Abstract submission open until Feb 14. <https://nnidr.eventsair.com/adf2020/>

- **(UNDER REVIEW) July 12 - 15 2020.** Australian & New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators (ANZAHPE) 2020 Conference, hosted in Melbourne, <https://www.anzahpe.org/2020-conference>
- Nov 17-20, 2020. Australian Association of Gerontology conference – Hobart. Theme: A climate for change in Ageing. Abstract submission opens Feb 17, **EXTENDED ABSTRACT CLOSING DATE - 11 MAY.** <http://2020.aagconference.aag.asn.au/>
- **(POSTPONED TO Saturday 28 November - Monday 30 November)** Australian and New Zealand Falls Prevention Society conference – Auckland, NZ. Theme: Live stronger for longer. Abstract submission opens Feb 27, abstract submissions close May 29. <http://anzfpconference2020.co.nz/>
- Latest NDIS-hosted events for Scheme participants, families and/or providers. See <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/events>

If you are aware of any other conferences that may be relevant to members of RAIL, please forward details (if possible, before the timing of closure of abstract submissions).

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 Cassie 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