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HEALTH CARE

## REHABILITATION, AGEING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING (RAIL) RESEARCH CENTRE

### Member eBulletin #36 - February 2023

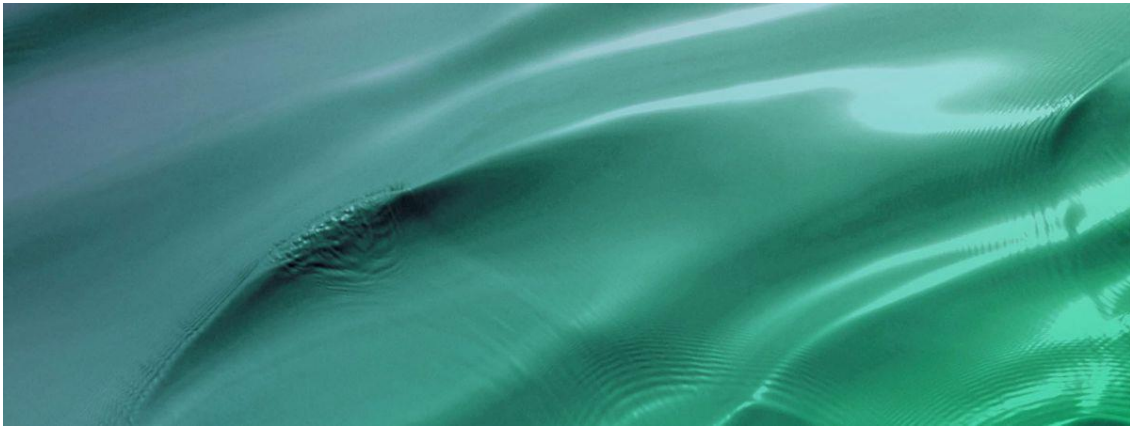
Members of RAIL are Monash education and research staff or students across a variety of disciplines within Monash Australia and Malaysia that are interested in rehabilitation, ageing and independent living.

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## A message from the Director



Welcome to the first e-bulletin for RAIL for 2023. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday period over the new year, and also for those celebrating the lunar new year, welcome to the year of the rabbit.

RAIL had a flurry of activity at the end of 2022, which capped off another very good year for RAIL and our staff. Some of the activity and outcomes you will read about below. It is particularly pleasing that considerable grant writing has resulted in a number of small but important grants, especially because of the multiple new collaborations these have involved across Schools and Faculties for RAIL (see details within this e-bulletin). It is hoped that these small grants will translate into firstly successful small projects, and secondly into future larger scale collaborative grants.

Another important initiative underway is that of Friends of RAIL, a group of people, often with lived experience of the areas of research we undertake, who are interested in supporting RAIL across its research activity spectrum – from concept through to successful completion and dissemination of outcomes. Special thanks to Grainne Cruickshank who has taken on a lead role of Consumer and Community Representative, and Dr Aislinn Lalor, the

RAIL staff lead for Consumer and Community Engagement.

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](#).

Stay safe and well.

Professor Keith Hill

## Member profile

We are currently seeking Members who would like to be profiled in our RAIL Member eBulletin. If you are interested to be one of our next RAIL Member profiles, please contact us at [spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu).

## Member and Partner forum

### Previous RAIL forum

In our first 2023 forum titled *What do advocacy and research have to do with each other? In conversation with Dr Natasha Layton* that was held on Tuesday 31st January 2023, we had the opportunity to hear Dr Layton discuss her dual role in research and advocacy. The session was very interactive and led to a good discussion on the benefits and challenges for researchers involved in advocacy and provided insightful messages for researchers to consider.



The event was a success with over 40 people attending the forum! Thank you to Dr Layton for her inspiring presentation and to Dr Ekegren for the excellent facilitation of the session!

## Upcoming RAIL forum

The RAIL team is currently planning the next forum. More information will be circulated shortly. Stay tuned!

## Launch of the Friends of RAIL network



We are very excited to launch our new Friends of RAIL network! Friends of RAIL include those people with their own personal experience of rehabilitation, ageing and independent living or disability care; family members and friends, including care partners; and other informal

supporters who may provide support for decision making or be an appointed representative of a person with lived experience.

Friends are important to RAIL as they have first-hand experience with the target areas of research for our centre. At RAIL, we are committed to conducting research that occurs with the community rather than only conducting research for the community.

Friends of RAIL will receive quarterly Friends eBulletin and be invited to networking events as well as to contribute to and/or to collaborate on education and research activities.

If you know someone who might like to become a 'Friend of RAIL', please ask them to contact Karine at [spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu).

## RAIL paper of the month

### **Examining gait aid use and user safety by older people with dementia: Perspectives of informal carers to inform practice**

Hill KD, Meyer C, Burton E, Hunter SW, Suttanon P, Dawes H, & Lee DA.

#### **ABSTRACT**

##### **Purpose**

To determine gait aid use and decision-making related to usage in people with dementia, and examine factors influencing (1) gait aid use or not; and (2) falls in past year.

##### **Materials and methods**

A survey of informal carers of older people with dementia in the community. Closed questions on gait aid use, falls, timing and sources of gait aid acquisition, and advice received to support use were used. Chi-squared tests (Fisher's Exact) compared: (1) gait aid users vs non-users and carers' report of (i) unsteadiness in walking/turning, (ii) dementia severity, (iii) falls in past year, and (2) fallers vs non-fallers and (i) timing of gait aid commencement relative to dementia diagnosis, (ii) whether health professional advice was received regarding use, and (iii) regularity of use.

##### **Results**

Forty-seven completed surveys, 63.8% of care recipients used a gait aid; 56.9% had  $\geq 2$  falls in past year; 66.7% commenced use after dementia diagnosis; 25% acquired their aids from non-health professionals; and 37% did not receive advice regarding use. Gait aid users and non-users differed on carer ratings of unsteadiness in walking/turning ( $p = 0.02$ ).

##### **Conclusion**

Carers reported important aspects regarding gait aid acquisition, safe gait aid use and benefits which warrant further investigation.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION**

In our small sample, use of gait aids by people with dementia was related to the level of unsteadiness in walking and/or turning, and not associated with falling in the past year.

People with dementia do not routinely receive professional advice about how to use gait aids, highlighting the potential value of maximizing health professional involvement in gait aid prescription and training.

Deterioration in the ability of gait aid use after the diagnosis of dementia indicates a need for re-assessment or re-training of gait aid use over time.

Clinical guidelines to facilitate decision-making regarding under what conditions gait aids are beneficial, what duration and aspects require instruction to ensure effective use by people with dementia are needed.

**Hill KD, Meyer C, Burton E, Hunter SW, Suttanon P, Dawes H, & Lee DA.** (2022). Examining gait aid use and user safety by older people with dementia: Perspectives of informal carers to inform practice. *Disabil Rehabil*, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2022.2148302>



## Grant Success

### Peninsula Campus Research Seeding Grants

***1) Building financial inclusion of people with disability in global contexts: scoping Inter-faculty methods and interventions both at and beyond Monash University***

Dr Natasha Layton (RAIL) has been successful in achieving a Peninsula Campus Inter-Faculty Seed Grant (\$15,000), along with Associate Professor

Abu Zafar Shahriar, Faculty of Business and Finance (Monash Business School) and Dr Dan Richardson, Faculty of IT and Professor Keith Hill.

### **Why financial inclusion?**

Persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty than persons without disabilities. This proposal will enhance understanding of financial disadvantage as one aspect of exclusion that can impact upon thriving disabled communities. Financial inclusion features in at least five of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and is recognised as a right within the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability.



[Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/disability-and-banking>]

### **Aims**

1. A cross-faculty capability scan to systematically locate and interrogate actors and actions with the potential to address financial exclusion across fields of research within Monash University, mapping 'interventions' and enabling technologies across disciplines groups within Monash faculties.

2. A pragmatic synthesis of approaches using an intervention bundling approach; and testing their use cases through focus group methods with key stakeholders.

### **Linkages**

Excitingly, this seed grant will run concurrently with a Monash Business School Interdisciplinary Seed Grant to **Enhancing Financial Inclusion of People with Disabilities Using ICT-based Financial Education** upon which Dr Layton is an associate investigator. As CI's of two complementary research projects, Associate Professor Abu Zafar Shahriar and Dr Layton have commenced dialogue with global civil society organisations also working to overcome barriers to financial exclusion. The seed grant research projects and engagement with key stakeholders in the international development and banking sectors will inform further pilot and large scale research applications aimed to support financial inclusion for people with disability, wherever they live.

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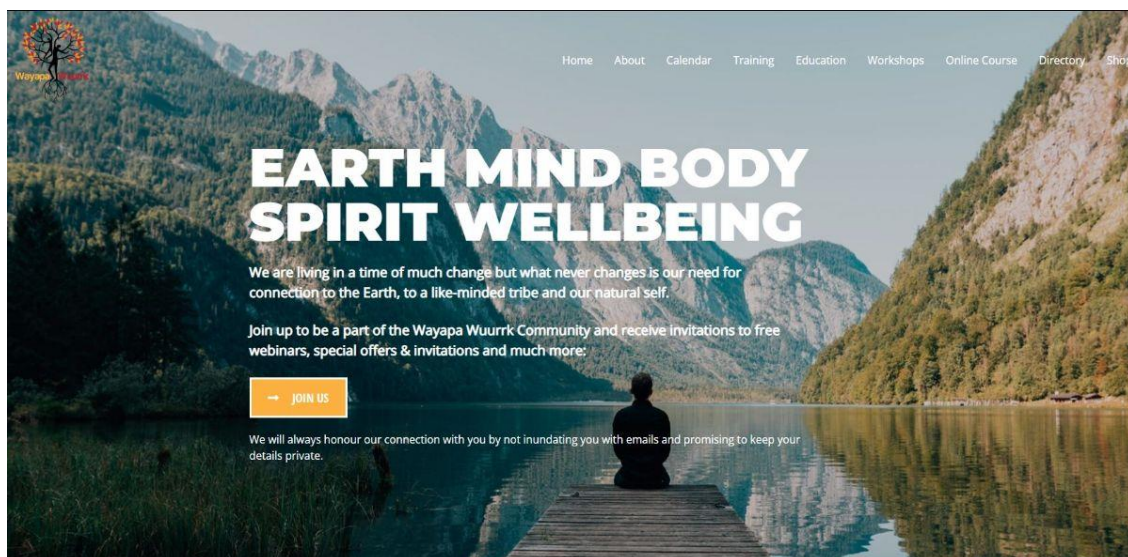
2) A team of researchers led by Dr Geraldine Burke from Faculty of Education and including Professor Keith Hill and Dr Aislinn Lalor from RAIL as chief investigators has been awarded a Peninsula Campus Research Seeding grant of \$15,000 for their project titled ***Intergenerational social connection through art-movement-well-being practices.***

**Team:** Dr Geraldine Burke, Dr Laura Alfrey, Dr Aislinn Lalor, Professor Keith Hill, and Associate Professor Megan Adams.

### **Project description:**

This research aims to find ways to alleviate loneliness and improve social connectedness, physical activity and well-being through sustained intergenerational connections (10, 20 and 50+ years i.e. school children, preservice teachers and U3A+ members), with art-wellbeing and movement activities led by Indigenous artists and the Research team. We will develop an evidence-based 'art-well-being and movement' participatory approach informing

and promoting intergenerational social connections and wellbeing in community settings. The mixed-method approach uses pre/post surveys, and focus groups based on participatory, *art-moving-well-being* practices. By positioning participants as physically active artists, researchers and teachers, we will explore *patterns of people* and *place* with local Indigenous artists/knowledge holders.



Employing art, movement (using the Wayapa Wuurk approach: Indigenous-based movement with the land, see: <https://wayapa.com/>) and wellbeing practices, in partnership with Indigenous artists/knowledge holders, the research promotes intergenerational connection, and feelings of wellbeing alongside listening, unlearning, re-learning and creating together, in recognition of the unique position that First Nations people hold (Impact, 2030) within communities. Agreed participation and existing relationships with McClelland (Indigenous Artists/knowledge holders), Frankston U3A+ and local schools (Woodlands, Langwarrin Primary) builds on previous projects.

## **RAIL and Monash Nursing and Midwifery Collaborative seed research grant**

In October 2022, a successful collaborative retreat was held between RAIL and Monash Nursing & Midwifery (MNM) staff. Resulting from this collaborative

event, RAIL and MNM established a co-funded seed research grant 2022 scheme. The main purpose of this scheme, open to RAIL and MNM early to mid-career researchers, was to encourage cross disciplinary and cross School research collaboration. Two grants of \$15,000 each were awarded to the following recipients and their team:

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**1) *A feasibility study of self-practice of therapeutic activities via the My Therapy program, in the residential aged care setting***

Dr Natasha Brusco - lead Investigator (RAIL), Associate Professor Helen Rawson (Nursing & Midwifery), Dr Christina Ekegren (RAIL), Professor Julia Morphet (Nursing & Midwifery), Professor Nick Taylor (Eastern Health / La Trobe University)

**Brief project summary:**

My Therapy is a self-management program designed to empower rehabilitation inpatients to independently complete self-practice of therapeutic activities.



In 2021/22, via a NHMRC Partnership Grant, My Therapy was successfully implemented across four Victorian Health services with the patients reporting that participation in My Therapy is empowering and that it builds confidence.

The current seeding grant will aim to implement My Therapy in the residential aged care setting with a focus on testing (a) acceptability by the staff; (b) acceptability and demand for the intervention by the residents and their families; and (c) practicality and integration of the program and associated data collection into the existing aged care program.

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## ***2) Examining aged care workers; experience of grief and co-designing strategies to support workers, care recipients and carers***

Dr Kaori Shimoinaba - lead investigator (Nursing & Midwifery), Associate Professor Helen Rawson (Nursing & Midwifery), Dr Kimberley Crawford (Nursing & Midwifery), Dr Angel Lee (RAIL), Dr Aislinn Lalor (RAIL), Ms Kim Jackson (CEO, Village Baxter)

### **Brief project summary:**

Staff (nurses, personal care workers, allied health clinicians) in residential aged care facilities (RACFs) experience frailty and death/dying among residents.

The aims of the project are to:

- i) examine staff experiences of death/dying and support needs;
- ii) co-design a support program with staff.

Research questions:

1. What is the impact on staff from experiencing death/dying in RACFs?
2. What current support services/strategies are available for staff?
3. What strategies would support staff to cope with death/dying in RACFs?

**School of Primary and Allied Health Care (SPAHC) Early Career Research (ECR) Mentoring Program - open for applications**

The School of Primary and Allied Health Care (SPAHC) is pleased to announce the launch of a new SPAHC ECR Mentoring Program, to run from March to November 2023.

The SPAHC mentoring program will complement faculty and university mentoring programs by providing ECRs, regardless of academic level and PhD qualification, the opportunity to connect with mentors from inside and outside the SPAHC. We aim to match mentors/mentees from different

departments/disciplines according to professional development goals, needs and preferences of mentees.

Mentees who have participated in the program in previous years have highlighted several benefits of taking part, including:

- Having someone take an interest in the development of their research career;
- The opportunity to track progress and achievements and receive objective career advice;
- Learning strategies for how to persist in the face of set-backs or slow progress; and
- Providing an insight into the 'hidden world' of research.

We encourage all experienced Monash, alumni and affiliated (i.e. non-Monash) researchers to sign up to be mentors in this program. Mentoring plays an important role in working towards continual improvement for both individuals and teams and is highly valued by the School and University.

APPLICATIONS TO BE A [MENTOR](#) OR [MENTEE](#) ARE NOW OPEN AND WILL CLOSE ON FEBRUARY 27 2023. [Click](#) for full information, eligibility and how to apply.

Please direct any queries to the SPAHC ECR representatives, Christina Ekegren and Mel Farlie, at [spahc-ecr@monash.edu](mailto:spahc-ecr@monash.edu)

## Spinal Cord Injury Nurse Massive Open Online Course

The First Spinal Cord Injury Nurse Massive Open Online Course will Go-Live on the **13th of February**.

Designed by the ISCoS Nurse Special Interest group, in collaboration with the ISCoS Education Committee and supported by [@HollisterInc](#)

Register here: <https://nurse.scimooc.org>

A promotional banner for the SCIMOOC course. On the left, a woman with long brown hair is sitting cross-legged on a grey surface, using a silver laptop. The background is a light grey gradient. On the right, there is a circular inset image showing a person's hand on a wheelchair wheel. The text is arranged as follows: 'LEARN ABOUT SCI: NURSES ROLE IN REHABILITATION' in white uppercase letters. Below that, '5 Weeks – 5 Topics' in bold black, followed by '– max. 5 Hours a Week:' in bold black. A bulleted list follows: '• SCI essentials', '• Bladder', '• Bowel', '• Sexuality / Fertility', and '• Pressure injury prevention'. In the bottom left, the SCIMOOC logo is shown with the tagline 'Spinal Cord Injuries Massive Open Online Course'. Below that is the ISCoS logo, 'The International Spinal Cord Society'. To the right of the ISCoS logo, it says 'sponsored by' above the Hollister logo. In the top right corner, an orange circular callout contains the text: 'Registration starts on 13th January 2023' with the URL 'https://nurse.scimooc.org/registration' below it, and 'Go-live: 13th February 2023' below that.

## Independent Mental Health Advocacy - NDIS Mental Health Toolkit

The NDIS Mental Health Toolkit, written by the Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA), is for people who may be considering applying for, or are already a participant of, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS):

*"The toolkit has information and worksheets to help you know your rights and speak up for yourself, whether you are applying for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or have already been accepted.*

*We created it with people with experience of using the mental health system and the NDIS. They told us they wanted to know more about how to self-advocate under the NDIS' psychosocial disability stream, and what information and features the toolkit should have.*

*The toolkit is designed for people with lived experience of the mental health*

system who use or are eligible for the NDIS, but can also be used by supporters, such as carers, kin, family of origin, family of choice, friends, community members and support workers. We acknowledge that people using the tool might have both psychosocial and physical disability."

For more information, please visit: <https://www.imha.vic.gov.au/ndis-mental-health-toolkit>

imha Independent Mental Health Advocacy

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Home > Know your rights > NDIS mental health toolkit

## NDIS mental health toolkit

This toolkit is designed to provide you with the information, skills and support to advocate for what you want under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

- What does the NDIS mental health toolkit do?
- How to use NDIS mental health toolkit
- If you come across a term you don't understand
- Speaking up for yourself

**In this section**

- NDIS mental health toolkit
- What is the NDIS?
- My identity and keeping myself safe
- Who will support me?
- Applying for the NDIS
- Setting my goals

## National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) preliminary research agenda

The [National Disability Research Partnership \(NDRP\)](#) recently released their preliminary research agenda, which will be completed by June 2023 with the opportunity for input into final design.

*"The preliminary research agenda sets out broad areas for research topics that people with disability and other stakeholders told us are important. Initial consultations identified these four focus areas where research is needed:*

- *Research about making services better*
- *Research about different experiences of people with disability in Australia*
- *Research about how systems can support people better*
- *Research about mental health and wellbeing.*

*The preliminary research agenda complements the outcome areas of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31, building on years of disability research and policy work that has already been and is being done across Australia."*

For more information on the NDRP preliminary research agenda, please visit <https://www.ndrp.org.au/post/researching-what-s-important-to-people-with-disability>.

## **RAIL member study - participants required**

RAIL Members Dr Debbie Pu (chief investigator), Dr Melanie Farlie and Dr Sze-EE Soh from the School of Primary and Allied Health Care are currently recruiting participants for their study titled *Whole-body exercise and its effects on swallowing function* (Ethics ID 36947).

For more information about the study, please see flyer below (click on the image to download the flyer) and access the explanatory statement [HERE](#).

## *Is exercise hard to swallow?*



- Did you know that your swallowing function can become disordered with age and disease?

Gulp!

- Did you know that your exercise habits may influence your swallowing function?

Gasp!

We want to find out more about this relationship, and you can help us!

**Project ID: 36947**

**Project title: Whole-body exercise and its effects on swallowing function**

In-person or online, you will:

1. Complete 2 surveys about your exercise habits and swallowing function (~15 minutes)
2. Complete 2 short oral function assessments with our instructions (~ 5 minutes)
3. Measure your calf circumference (~5 minutes)
4. Repeat in six months' time!

Contact Dr. Debbie Pu at

[Debbie.pu@monash.edu](mailto:Debbie.pu@monash.edu) or 03 9904 4004

and find out how well you swallow, either in person at Peninsula Campus or by completing this online questionnaire:



[https://monash.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2gmAWtcs9Grur8q](https://monash.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2gmAWtcs9Grur8q)

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu).

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