

Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre

Friends of RAIL eBulletin #5 – March 2024

Friends of RAIL are people in our community who may contribute to – or use – any of RAIL's research outputs across the areas of rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living. Friends include consumer and community members, such as people with their own lived experience across the areas of rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living, and their families and friends. To become a Friend of RAIL, email spahc.rail@monash.edu.

In this RAIL Friends eBulletin edition:

- [A message from Aislinn \(RAIL Consumer and Community Engagement Lead\)](#)
- [A message from Grainne \(Friends of RAIL Consumer and Community Representative\)](#)
- [Telling others about becoming a Friend of RAIL](#)
- [RAIL Team member introduction](#)
- [Spotlight on a Friend of RAIL](#)
- [Article from a Friend of RAIL - Geri Colson](#)
- [RAIL Team update - Publication \(White Paper\) from the Launch of Friends of RAIL 2023 event](#)
- [Friends of RAIL 2024 online event - Save the date!](#)
- [Research participants required: Changing the Focus Project – enhancing physical activity of people with dementia](#)
- [Peninsula Health / Monash University Carer Health and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Top Tip from the RAIL team](#)
- [Friend Contribution and Feedback](#)

**A message from Aislinn
(RAIL Consumer and Community Engagement Lead)**



Welcome to Our First Friends of RAIL eBulletin of the Year! We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to you as we kickstart the year with our first eBulletin!

As we embark on this journey together, we are excited to connect with you, our valued Friends, through this digital platform.

Our eBulletin serves as a bridge between us, providing you with timely updates, valuable insights, and exciting announcements. Whether you're joining us for the first time or have been a Friend of RAIL for a while, we're thrilled to have you on board. In this edition, we've an introduction to our new Director of RAIL, a spotlight on our Friend Britta, and an amazing piece by Geri (a must-read!). We also provide an update on the White Paper we are drafting from our official Launch in November last year (it's nearly ready to share!), and introduce you to a couple of the research projects (that you may wish to participate in or just happy to read about), as well as our usual Top Tip!

As we navigate through the year ahead, we invite you to engage with us by sharing your feedback, suggestions, and ideas. Your input is invaluable in shaping the future direction of our eBulletin and ensuring that it remains a valuable resource for you and our Friends of RAIL community.

Thank you for being part of our journey, and we look forward to sharing many exciting updates with you in the months to come. Together, let's make this year one to remember!

**A message from Grainne
(Friends of RAIL Consumer and Community Representative)**

Welcome to the first eBulletin for 2024, hoping that you all had a restful break.

To our new members, my name is Grainne Cruickshank (pronounced Gron-ya) and I am the Friends of RAIL Consumer and Community Representative (or "Head Friend" as the RAIL staff refer to me!).

I have lived rehabilitation for 30-plus years. My husband Peter had a significant brain injury from a motor car accident 2 years into our marriage, but we were lucky to have another 32 years together living life. I also lived with my father until he was 89 until he needed more care than we could give him at home.



I would like to share with you a little about my experience and memories of living with my father as he got older - and knowing for many living with someone with any form of dementia is very difficult. Most importantly you have to know they and you are safe. You want to give them the best quality of life that you can but sometimes that comes at a high cost to you as the carer. Thankfully there are strategies and aids, Webster packs or dosette boxes for medication which worked well for us. Now there are My Aged Care Packages which were just being introduced when my father went into care. Sadly, while he

did qualify, it was only after he had passed away. Having a supportive family and community really helps especially when you can't provide the level of care your loved one needs and you all have to look at other options. Ultimately, we knew our father was safer in Aged Care.

As Friends of RAIL we look forward to more opportunities to connect with each of you throughout the year and we hope that you continue to share our network with others so they too can become a Friend of RAIL.

Grainne Cruickshank

Telling others about becoming a Friend of RAIL



Do you know someone who may like to become a 'Friend of RAIL'?

If so, please either:

- share [this link](#) with them to complete the registration survey

Or they can:

- email spahc.rail@monash.edu or,
- call 03 9904 4557 to speak to Karine about registering.

In addition to this Friends of RAIL eBulletin (distributed four times per year), RAIL also runs free networking events for our Friends and invites Friends to contribute to and/or collaborate on education and research activities.

RAIL Team member introduction



Associate Professor Natasha Brusco, known as Tarsh by her colleagues and friends, is the new Director of the Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre. Previously, Tarsh has been the Rehabilitation Stream Lead of the RAIL Research Centre.

Tarsh's clinical background is in physiotherapy, where she worked in stroke rehabilitation for 15 years, before moving into health service management and research roles. Over recent years, Tarsh has also focused on health economics, which is the study of health care costs, access and equity.

Tarsh's research focuses on pioneering new approaches to evaluate cost-effective rehabilitation interventions, to shape the landscape of inpatient rehabilitation across

Australia, ensuring that our rehabilitation models of care are person-centred, cost-effective, with equitable access for all Australians who cannot complete their rehabilitation at home. Tarsh is currently leading two streams of research.

1. **My Therapy:** My Therapy is a consumer-driven, self-management program designed to increase the dosage of therapy participation during rehabilitation, through independent practice of exercise and activity, in addition to usual care. This means that during rehabilitation, patients have a structured self-practice program to complete by themselves, in between sessions with their therapy team. After a successful trial of My Therapy across four Victorian health services, we have just launched the My Therapy Community of Practice, so that we can roll out My Therapy to other health services across Australia.
2. **Risk Assessment for moving Individuals Safely (RAISE) – Staff manual handling program:** Through dynamic risk assessment, the RAISE program aims to reduce staff musculoskeletal injuries; prevent patient falls; and provide opportunities for patients to safely participate in movement (rehabilitation). Early work across 2 health services has demonstrated that in health and aged care, the RAISE program is practical, acceptable and balances staff safety with the patient's need for physical rehabilitation.

Tarsh also has a passion for enhancing access to community sports for children with a disability. Over the past 2 years, Tarsh has led “**George’s Gymnastics Program**”, with the vision of “Enhancing Physical Activity for Children with a Disability” through access to community sports. The program is run by qualified gymnastics coaches and is supported by Monash University students on placement. In 2023, 150 children from Vermont South Special School had a wonderful time completing the 5-week program at Waverley Gymnastics Centre. In 2024, the program has been expanded to include 5 Victorian special schools and the children are looking forward to completing the 5-week program in Term 2 (April to June 2024).



Spotlight on a Friend of RAIL

Hello fellow Friends of RAIL! My name is Britta and I'm so excited to be connected with this group! I am in the unique position of being a 'Friend' AND working for the School of Primary and Allied Health Care at Monash, sitting a few doors down from the wonderful RAIL team!





I first joined Monash in 2006 in a completely different area and role, but commenced a nearly five-year hiatus from university work in 2012 when my daughter and I were involved in a life altering car accident.

Half a decade of rehabilitation later, here I am working with many of the professions that helped put me back together, and looking after the team that facilitates student placements across the allied health disciplines! It's funny how life works out!

I was inspired to connect with RAIL after attending a Melbourne Design Week event at Peninsula campus, which spoke about co-design in relation to 'Good design features for healthy ageing'. My brain was buzzing with design ideas for broader healthcare settings based on my own lived experience and I introduced myself to Keith before I left! I was so excited to hear that 'consumer' input was increasingly being recognised as an important (somewhat obvious??) key driver of design and of research more broadly.

In 2022 I had the humbling experience of sharing my post-accident journey at the RAIL End of Year Forum. I felt so connected to and inspired by the other speakers that day - it was a special event that further excited my desire to contribute to 'better', however I can!

My dream is for rehabilitation to become more holistic, and for rehab-settings to become more inspiring!

A random fact about me is that I have written three children's poetry books! One day I'd love to publish a children's book about navigating the rehab journey. I'll keep you posted!

If you would be happy to provide a Spotlight of yourself to be featured in upcoming Friends of RAIL ebulletins, please contact Karine via emailing spahc.rail@monash.edu or calling (03) 9904 4557.

Article from a Friend of RAIL - Geri Colson

[Select here to listen to a voice recording of Geri's article, or the text article is below](#)



At age 11, I started limping around with a long face. 'Growing pains' and 'get on with it' were the usual responses to a mopey child in the 1950's. For me though it was something else. Medicine had recognised Perthes Disease back then, and there was treatment available, had it been diagnosed. But that didn't happen for me. A spontaneous dislocation of my right hip landed me in plaster from chest to feet for 6 months in the Children's Hospital, and permanent stiffness from then on. Basic physiotherapy in my teenage years gave me some mobility on the right side, a stiff walking gait as I grew older, and I 'got on with it' - marriage, social work, two children, and life in general.

In 1976, when my children started school, a newly developed prosthesis was implanted in my hip and then reversed in 1987. I'm very good at denial, and over the years have ignored ever-so-gradual increases in pain, when bone was being gradually worn down leaving very little space for a new replacement to be screwed in. By about 2010, I was in serious trouble and consulted a young surgeon, Jit Balakumar at the Melbourne Orthopaedics Group. He felt my needs

were too great and I would not cope with the complicated surgery. He told me (very kindly) to adjust to a wheelchair and pain medication.

I am very fortunate to have a long-term partner willing to stay the distance and help me in so many ways. I made the move to a wheelchair-friendly home and gave my car to my grandson. Covid and the enforced restrictions became a new lifestyle, and I was grateful to not be the only one shutting down. After all, by then I was nearly 80 I'd had a good life ... etc, etc. I withdrew into isolation and dependency. Depression was constant, but fended off by the internet, some success in online graduate study, and loyal friends and family.

Then about a year ago, the pain became something else. The loose prosthesis was constantly grinding away my pelvis. Standing, sitting, lying, anything was getting harder and harder. I took cannabis and daily opioids just to get by. Not expecting anything, I didn't believe the surgeon at first when he greeted me late last year with enthusiasm and new plans for rejuvenation. Science had caught up. New techniques and anaesthesia, epidurals and so on, meant my luck had changed. I had lived long enough to be helped once again.

In July 2023, Jit performed some fairly remarkable feats on my torso. Somehow, he relocated my gluteus maximus tendon, which had been cut in the first replacement operation so long ago, and reattached it. Then, he found my sciatic nerve caught up in scar tissue and he corrected that and reattached it. A new cap for the prosthesis (electronically designed) was screwed into the remaining piece of pelvis and a new ball inserted, and finally, he added three centimetres to the prosthesis shaft, so that I can discard my five-centimetre build-up boot and add a demure 2 centimetres, which doesn't distort my gait.

Rehabilitation is fairly intense, but any pain from stretching muscles and tendons I recognise as 'positive pain', not pathological and depressing, and it lessens every day. As soon as the surgeon told me I could drive, I bought another car and forced myself to get moving. My friends marvel at my new walking ability, which although still with a stick, is not 'looking like a duck'. My self-perception hasn't yet adjusted ... I feel as if I'm still walking like a duck ... but I hope that will happen as strength and agility returns. I'm now 82, but am feeling maybe 52, no more than 62!

I have so much to be grateful for. Rejuvenated as I am, I'm ready to forgive my mother and the culture of the 1950s for condemning me to disability for so long. I owe so much to the surgeon, Jit Balakumar, and to science, the other health professionals and medical imaging technology, which has come together to give Geri Colson another chance for a few years. Not to mention my family and friends and my secure, middle-class access to medical intervention, and my fortunate position in life.

I am a forerunner, but I am sure I am not unique, and I encourage my peers dealing with pain and disability to hold on to hope, as our amazing younger generation finds hope for us now and others who come after us.

Geri Colson (21 September 2023)

RAIL Team update - Publication (White Paper) from the Launch of Friends of RAIL 2023 event

As many of you know, RAIL hosted a Launch of the Friends of RAIL network on the Monash University Peninsula Campus on 2nd November 2023. The event gave us the opportunity to hear from Friends on what they think are the current opportunities and challenges across rehabilitation, ageing and independent living and building on the key points raised by three Friend representatives, Vincent Rovtar, Coral Keren and Chris Le Cerf, who kindly provided their time for the presentation delivered during the event.



The RAIL team has been working hard compiling the Friends' feedback and comments from the session into a summary document called a White Paper which will inform our research moving forward. We are pleased to let you know that the first draft is nearly completed and will soon be shared with the Friends who attended the event for approval to be published on our RAIL website.

Stay tuned for more information!

Friends of RAIL 2024 online event - Save the date!

The RAIL team is planning to host an online (via Zoom) event for Friends to meet and share ideas on Monday 1st July 2024, 2.00-3.00pm, AEST.

If there are any particular topics that you would like this event to cover, please feel free to email us at spahc.rail@monash.edu. More information will be circulated shortly.

Please save the date! We would love to see you there!

Research participants required

Changing the Focus Project – enhancing physical activity of people with dementia

The RAIL Research Centre (Monash University) is running a **free support program for people with mild dementia or cognitive impairment** to take part in community-based physical activity programs in 2024.



We are seeking people with mild dementia or cognitive impairment to participate in a personalised 12-month “Changing the Focus” physical activity program.

The voluntary physical activity program is available to people who provide their consent to participate (or with the support of a carer) that live in Frankston or Mornington Peninsula region of Victoria.

Those who participate will be supported by physiotherapists and/or exercise providers throughout the program. Support will be provided at home, in the community and via

telephone.

Participation in the program will promote good health and wellbeing for the person with dementia. It will also assist the research team in evaluating the program; informing its future use.

For more information about the project, please contact:

Dr Angel Lee, (03) 9904 4662, angel.lee@monash.edu or
Ms Lisa Licciardi, (03) 9904 4350, lisa.licciardi@monash.edu

Funded by: Commonwealth Government of Australia through the Community Health and Hospitals Program Grant Scheme.

Ethics approval: Monash University Human Research Ethics committee Project ID: 39672

Peninsula Health / Monash University
Carer Health and Wellbeing Service

A new **free** service is commencing to support carers (aged ≥50 years) who provide informal care to older people (aged ≥65 years) - the Carer Health and Wellbeing Service. Using carer prioritised needs, the service will assess specific areas of need and work with carers to improve their own health and wellbeing, helping them to sustain their carer role in better health.

The service has been established by RAIL (Monash University) research staff Dr Aislinn Lalor and Professor Keith Hill, jointly with Peninsula Health, with funding from the Commonwealth Government of Australia through the Community Health and Hospitals Program Grant Scheme and the National Centre for Healthy Ageing. For more information and contact details, please see the flyer below.

Carer Health & Wellbeing Service

Are you a carer aged over 50 years caring for someone over 65 years?

Do you have health and wellbeing goals that you need help with?

Our allied health team would love to help!



Could you benefit from our services?



Psychology

Including counselling, cognitive behaviour therapy, psychotherapy, talk therapy, education.



Social Work

Including advocacy & referral, respite services, housing support, family therapy, health and human services.



Occupational Therapy

Including energy conservation techniques, mindfulness strategies, planning & self-management skills, environmental assessment & adaptation, sleep hygiene.



Physiotherapy

Including manual handling, range of movement & strength exercises, education, home exercise programs, walking/mobility aid prescription.

We care about your health

Evidence shows it is important for carers to look after their health and wellbeing. Doing so helps them to help others.

- Located at Orwil Street Community House, Frankston
- In-person, telephone or telehealth appointments available
- Open Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm



1300 665 781



MONASH University



Peninsula Health

Top Tip from the RAIL team

Top Tips



Mobile Dentist Services/Clinics

Do you know about mobile dental services/clinics? These portable clinics offer multiple dental services from simple check-ups to more complex procedures and can be scheduled for home visit, aged care facilities and even for children in school.

For more information, please see some providers below:

NSW and Victoria: <https://mobiledentalservices.com.au/>

Victoria: <https://www.mobiledentist.com.au/>

Queensland: <https://moviliti.com.au/your-oral-health/>

Perth: <https://www.agedcaredentistry.com.au/>

Sydney and some parts of NSW: <https://www.dentalondemand.com.au/>

South Australia: <https://www.mobiledentalsa.com.au/>

If you have a top tip that would like to share with others, please feel free to contact us at spahc.rail@monash.edu.

Friend Contribution and Feedback

At RAIL, we are committed to conducting research that occurs with the community and would love to hear from you. If you would like to share a story related to your experience of rehabilitation, ageing and independent living, be involved with RAIL research, share a top tip with Friends of RAIL or provide any feedback that you may have on the format/content of the Friends eBulletin, please contact us at spahc.rail@monash.edu or call 03 9904 4557.

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/>

Our mailing address is:

spahc.rail@monash.edu

You are receiving this email because you have been identified as a Monash University staff member and/or you have requested to be kept updated on RAIL matters.

To see how we handle your personal information, please refer to our [Data Protection and Privacy Procedure](#) and the relevant Data Protection and Privacy Collection Statement that applies to your interaction with us, available [here](#) or contact dataprotectionofficer@monash.edu

You may unsubscribe from this list at any time by contacting us at spahc.rail@monash.edu

Copyright © 2019 Monash Primary and Allied Health Care, [Monash University](#), ABN 12 377 614 012, All rights reserved

CRICOS Provider: Monash University 00008C Monash College Pty Ltd 01857J