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HEALTH CARE

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

### Member eBulletin #17

#### A message from the Director

One of the pleasing things as we transition further along the journey towards what will be the post covid norm, is the gradual return towards conferences with some element of face to face associated with them. I have just completed submission of abstracts for the 2021 Australian Association of Gerontology conference, to be held at the Gold Coast in November (won't that be nice!). The conference will utilise a hybrid format, with some face to face / on-site activities, and some on-line activities / access. I am quite excited to actually attend a face to face conference event after such a long time, but it is also great that some of the technological developments and learnings forced on us to a degree to manage to continue with conferences during covid will be here long term, and mature even further.

It is pleasing to see the growth in grant success by the RAIL team, including the two grants described below led by Christina Ekegren and Angel Lee. These new grants are building on streams of research that we are developing stronger track record in, including the areas of telehealth and dementia.

Also, a reminder about the RAIL seeding grant round that is currently open – see details below. Also note that the National Centre for Healthy Ageing Living Labs grant round 2 is now open. Both of these grant rounds have some specific requirements relating to the research team and that some focus of the research have links with Monash Peninsula campus / Peninsula Health, and on the Frankston / Mornington Peninsula region.

In conclusion, I hope your footy season is going better than mine!

Finally, remember, 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, Keith Hill

## Member profile



Fang Lee Cooke is Professor at Monash Business School, Monash University and a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Her research interests are in the area of diversity management, strategic human resource management (HRM), knowledge management and innovation, and employment and HRM in the care sector, including healthcare, disability care and aged care.

Examples of related project include: Cooke, F. L., McLoughlin, I., Sohal, I. and Cooney, R. (2014-2015) 'Evaluating the Transferability of Innovative Models of Care', Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research, Australia; Sohal, A., Bamber, G., Cooke, F. L., McLoughlin, I., Cooney, R., O'Neill, P. and Prajogo, D. (2013), 'Developing a better co-ordinated, high quality system of care for people with disabilities', Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research, Australia. Examples of related publications include: Cooke, F. L. and Bartram, T. (2015), 'Human resource management in healthcare and aged care: Current challenges and towards a research agenda', *Human Resource Management*, 54:5, 711–735; McNeil, N., Ellis, J., Cregan, C., Bartram, T. and Cooke, F. L. (2019) Caring for aged people: The influence of personal resilience and workplace climate on 'doing good' and 'feeling good', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 75:7, 1450-1461.

## Grant Success

## TAC Project

The Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre has recently received \$200k funding from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) for a new project: "The uptake, benefits and impacts of telehealth care for hospitalised TAC clients and service providers". The project aims to understand the experience and cost-effectiveness of telehealth delivered services for hospitalised TAC clients, and will run from May 2021 until June 2022.



Up until the COVID-19 pandemic, there was limited telehealth provision for people with transport-related injuries. If new telehealth services are shown to be acceptable, effective and cost-effective, there will be strong justification for the continuation of telehealth as an option in the future. In the absence of evidence, it may be difficult to justify continued funding for telehealth, leading to a return to traditional in-person health care. This outcome could have a particular impact on people who live in rural and remote areas and people with mobility and time restrictions, for whom it is often challenging to access in-person appointments.

The Monash University team is led by Dr Christina Ekegren (RAIL) with co-investigators from RAIL (Professor Keith Hill, A/Professor Libby Callaway and Dr Natasha Brusco), the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine (Professor Belinda Gabbe, Dr Sandy Braaf, Ms Jemma Keeves and Dr Lara Kimmel) and BehaviourWorks Australia (Dr Breanne Kunstler).



## Dementia Centre for Research Collaboration (DCRC)

Dr Angel Lee has recently been awarded a pilot grant from the Dementia Centre for Research Collaboration (DCRC). She will receive \$75K over two years to conduct research to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Her project title is "Development of a scalable physical activity

program for improving physical activity and reducing risk factors for falls in older people with dementia who receive home support".

Over 90,000 older Australians who receive home support have cognitive impairment associated with dementia or other conditions. This population had a lower level of physical activity and fell 50% more frequently than similar older adults who did not use home support. By capitalising on an existing aged care funding mechanism and workforce, this research aims to develop an exercise program for support workers to promote physical activity for older people with dementia. This program will be piloted for acceptability, feasibility, safety and effectiveness, ultimately aiming to improve physical activity, reduce risk factors of falls and enhance health outcomes in this population with a view to scaling this intervention into practice.

The co-investigators of this project are Professor Keith Hill and Professor Terry Haines (RAIL research centre and the School of Primary and Allied Health Care of Monash University) and Assistant Professor Michele Callisaya (Peninsula Clinical School of Monash University and Peninsula Health).

## RAIL Early - Mid Career Researcher (EMCR) grant

The 2nd round of RAIL seeding grants is now open. The grant round will be similar to the first round awarded in late 2019. There will be a total of \$30,000 available in this grant round, with individual applications limited to a maximum of \$15,000. **Closing date for applications to be submitted is close of business, Monday May 31.**

The objectives of this scheme are to:

- Support early-mid career researchers with high research potential to progress their research careers by funding high quality research projects and pilot research projects on a competitive basis,
- Encourage cross disciplinary research collaboration,
- Enhance the staff member's competitiveness in bidding for external research funds,
- Provide experience in preparing a grant application for peer review,
- Provide research funding for projects that are strategically aligned with RAIL's research priorities,
- Provide an opportunity for research mentorship.

Given RAIL's focus on building research on the Peninsula campus, projects need to include at least one researcher based at the Peninsula campus of Monash University.

Chief Investigators from the successful grants from the previous grant scheme are ineligible to apply as Chief Investigator in this round, but can be an Associate Investigator in this round.

To obtain a copy of the guidelines and application form, see the Research grants section of the RAIL website: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/spahc/rail/research>

## Current RAIL research update

### WHO funded project:

The COVID-19 global pandemic and access to assistive technology: voice of users and providers (October 2020- May 2021)

Dr Natasha Layton, A/ Professor Libby Callaway and Professor Keith Hill of RAIL Research Centre, Monash University are working with the Centre for Inclusive Policy in Washington DC, USA on research commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO).

This rapid research project commenced October 2020, aiming to establish:

- Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way people access or use assistive products?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the way assistive products, services and other supports are provided?

The research team includes members of the WHO Assistive Technology team, and regional co-researchers from each of the six WHO regions. As AT service users or providers and as members of regional disability and ageing communities, our co-researchers enable voices from WHO regions to be captured in a culturally safe and meaningful way.

Over 150 respondents across global regions participated in this mixed methods study, and analysis is underway. Results will be disseminated by the World Health Organization, through the peer reviewed literature, and showcased at a 2021 November Summit in Geneva planned to inform the Global Report on Assistive Technology (2022).



## Events

### Member and Partner forums

The RAIL forum, Pain Assessment and Management in people with Dementia, that took place on the 20th April, was attended by 47 people. Two presenters (Dr Julia Gilmartin-Thomas, from the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Monash University, and Professor Jeff Hughes from Curtin University and PainCkek Ltd), gave excellent updates on their complementary research helping us to understand, assess and better manage pain for in people living with dementia.

### The next RAIL members and partners forum:

The RAIL research team is pleased to announce our next member and partner forum '**Housing, technology and community design – Rules for living**' is scheduled for **Thursday 27th May, 12 - 1pm via zoom.**

Speakers include:

- Ben Gauntlett, Australia's Disability Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission
- Associate Professor Kate Tregloan, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne
- Professor Nigel Bertram, Department of Architecture, MADA, Monash University.

Bookings will be open next week. Further information will be provided shortly via email.



# Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration

**Using Technology to Care for Older People During COVID-19: A Showcase  
Sharing MARC Partners Experiences, Lessons and Outcomes  
Thursday 20th May 2021  
9:30am - 12pm | Zoom**

The Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration (MARC) invites you to **Using Technology to Care for Older People During COVID-19: A Showcase Sharing MARC Partners Experiences, Lessons and Outcomes** which will provide an opportunity for MARC partners to share the initiatives their organisations took when caring for and supporting older people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Chaired by Dr Isobel Frean, Senior Consultant,  
Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre**

Including presentations from:

**Dr Paul Yates** - Geriatrician & Deputy Director, Austin Medical and Cognitive Research Unit, Austin Health  
**Dr Nancy Chen** - Consultant Geriatrician, Continuing Care Division, Austin Health  
**Wennie van Riet** - Manager, Reach, Train and Employ, COTA Victoria  
**Dr Jagdeesh Singh Dhaliwal** - GP & Medical Director, Aged Care GP, & Chair, NWMPHN COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group  
**Dr David Sykes** - Director, Centre for Dementia Learning, Dementia Australia

[Register](#)



With support from the JO & JR Wicking Trust  
and the Department of Health Victoria



## My Therapy launch

The Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) team are very happy to announce the recent launch of the NHMRC-funded clinical trial: “My Therapy”.

Led by Dr Natasha Brusco (RAIL), this multi-site stepped wedge randomised clinical trial commenced data collection on Monday 12th April at all four participating sites (Alfred Health, Cabrini, Eastern Health and Healthscope), in collaboration with La Trobe University.

RAIL Research Centre Investigators also include Professor Keith Hill, A/Professor Libby Callaway, Dr Christina Ekegren (Project Lead) and Sara Whittaker (RAIL PhD Student), with additional Monash University Investigators including Dr Annemarie Lee, Professor Natasha Lannin and Dr Paul Sanfilippo. This NHMRC Partnership Project is based on the self-management program “My Therapy”, and explores the implementation of independent practice of exercises and activities during inpatient rehabilitation, without additional staffing resources, to increase participation in rehabilitation. The project will run until May 2022.



**Pictured: Members of the My Therapy team celebrating (virtually) the launch of the trial with a glass of champagne**

## RAIL paper of the month

Scully AE, Hill KD, Tan D, Clark R, Pua YH, de Oliveira BIR. Measurement Properties of Assessments of Freezing of Gait Severity in People With Parkinson Disease: A COSMIN Review. *Phys Ther.* 2021 Apr 4;101(4):pzab009. doi: 10.1093/ptj/pzab009. PMID: 33444444.

## Abstract

**Objective:** Parkinson disease (PD) is the second-most common neurodegenerative condition worldwide. Approximately 50% of people with PD experience freezing of gait, a motor symptom associated with falls, disability, and poorer quality of life. Accurate assessment of freezing of gait severity is important for guiding management. The aim of this systematic review was to determine the measurement properties of subjective and objective clinical assessments of freezing of gait severity using the COSMIN methodology to facilitate better outcome measure selection.

**Methods:** Three databases (MEDLINE, EMBASE, and CINAHL) were searched. The COSMIN Risk of Bias checklist was used for evaluating quality of included studies. Data on measurement properties were extracted. Where possible, meta-analysis was performed.

**Results:** Nineteen studies investigating measurement properties of 7 outcome measures (patient-reported outcome measures, n = 3; objective assessment tools, n = 4) were included. Ten studies evaluated the Freezing of Gait Questionnaire. Based on COSMIN criteria, the best performing outcome measures were the Freezing of Gait Questionnaire and the Dynamic Parkinson Gait Scale. Both outcome measures demonstrated sufficient structural validity, internal consistency, reliability, construct validity, and responsiveness. The Freezing of Gait Questionnaire was supported with mostly moderate to high quality of evidence, but the evidence for the Dynamic Parkinson Gait Scale was of low quality due to inadequate sample size.

**Conclusions:** Content validity and measurement invariance remain unknown for all outcome measures. The Freezing of Gait Questionnaire is the best measure currently available. Further external validation and reliability studies would strengthen the evidence to support the use of the Dynamic Parkinson Gait Scale.

## **Staff presentations to external groups**

### **Monash Partners, Melbourne Academic Health Centre, Western Alliance Forum: Falls prevention in hospital settings: current evidence, challenges and future directions**

On Friday 24 April, an online forum was conducted to discuss strategies to reduce the high numbers and impact of falls in hospital settings. The forum commenced with a consumer presentation by Margaret Thomas, who is a consumer representative on the RAIL External Advisory Committee. Professor Terry Haines and Professor Keith Hill (SPAHC and RAIL) and presented at the forum. Almost 300 people participated in the online forum. It is planned that the forum will be a catalyst to build momentum and increased activity and resourcing to reduce falls in hospitals in a systematic way.

### **Falls prevention presentation to Healthscope**

On Tuesday April 27th, Professor Keith presented to a forum of Healthscope hospital clinicians (23 attendees across their sites) about recent research to reduce falls in hospitals. The presentation provided an update on some of the research evidence, as well as highlighting some learnings from research trials that did not achieve positive outcomes in terms of reducing falls.

## Monash Partners Consumer and Community Involvement seminar series

Monash Partners 'CCI lunchtime seminar series' is a monthly online Consumer and Community Involvement (CCI) seminar. The seminars highlight principles, practices, frameworks and resources for CCI in health and medical research and healthcare improvement. Seminars are hosted by the Monash Partners CCI team and include a 35-40-minute presentation, followed by questions and facilitated discussion. Seminars run from February to November.

The CCI seminars are for healthcare providers, researchers, managers and consumers across Monash Partners organisations and beyond, who are practising CCI and/or wanting to increase CCI in their work. There are ten CCI seminars in 2021, and you are welcome to attend based on your interest and availability. Everyone is welcome.

### Seminar 4: Navigating power imbalances in Consumer and Community Involvement

Thursday 13th May

1pm - 2pm AEDT

Presented by Dr Rhonda Garad, Monash University

[REGISTER HERE](#)

For further information about this seminar series, see: [Consumer and Community Involvement Lunchtime Seminar - Monash Partners](#)

## 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](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)

