



# Rehabilitation, Ageing, and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre

## Member and Partner eBulletin – April 2026

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

Partners of RAIL are people outside Monash University from various types of organisations/background across rehabilitation, ageing and/or independent living, including academics from other Australian and international Universities, industry leaders, clinicians and other health and care providers, service providers and those involved in policy and planning.

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### A message from the Director

The last few months have been very busy for the RAIL team with a number of new state-based and national projects commencing! Highlights include Associate Professors Christina Ekegren's \$1.4M Idea's Grant focused on the "Smart Ward" where she will use advanced localisation-based technologies to understand patient movement and predict adverse events; Associate Professor Tash Layton's "Fight MND" grant that will examine MND and Assistive Technology Evidence (MATE) to establish the lifetime costs and outcomes of equipment for people with MND; as



well as Professor Keith Hill and Dr Angel Lee's project which will deliver a falls tools-based package for Hume Local Health Service Network.

The RAIL team has also recently welcomed four new staff, Dr Michelle Shannon, who has returned to RAIL to work on Christina's Smart Ward project, Jo Wickramaratne, who has joined RAIL as our new Marketing and Communications Officer, Lane Meyer who is working on the Smart Ward project and Dr Sandra Hakim who is working on the MND project with Tash Layton.

## RAIL eForum

Please join us for our next eForum titled "**Exercise innovation for health: New perspectives on diabetes management, tendon pain and falls prevention**" on Tuesday 12th May, 12.00pm - 1.00pm AEST.



### Exercise innovation for health: New perspectives on diabetes management, tendon pain and falls prevention

Exercise is widely recognised as a cornerstone of contemporary healthcare, underpinning the concept of "exercise as medicine." However, despite the benefits, people often respond to exercise in unexpected ways. In this RAIL eForum, leading experts will address three conditions that contribute substantially to the global population health burden - diabetes, tendinopathy and falls, presenting recent advances in exercise-based interventions.

#### Event details

**Date and time:**  
Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2026,  
12.00-1.00pm AEST

**Venue:** Online Via Zoom

**Register:** [Select here](#) to register or scan the QR code



#### Is less more? Optimising physical activity for type 2 diabetes

**Dr. Martin Sénéchal** is a Professor at the University of New Brunswick and co-leads the Cardiometabolic Exercise and Lifestyle Laboratory. His research focuses on inter-individual variability in exercise response and the mechanisms that drive metabolic adaptations in people living with obesity or type 2 diabetes. He has led several RCTs of exercise in the field of obesity and diabetes.

This presentation will emphasise the need to individualise exercise prescription, demonstrating why a one-size-fits-all approach does not always apply to the treatment and management of type 2 diabetes. The presentation will also explore innovative exercise strategies with strong potential to enhance health outcomes.



#### Falls prevention and exercise: Please tell me something I don't already know!

**Dr. Danielle Bouchard**, PhD, a Professor of Kinesiology at the University of New Brunswick, co-directs the Cardiometabolic Exercise and Lifestyles Lab with Dr. Sénéchal. Trained in exercise science and gerontology, her research currently focuses on evidence-based exercise programs for ageing adults and strategies to implement these. She is currently a visiting scholar at Monash University working with Dr Melanie Farlie.

In this presentation, Dr. Bouchard will explore a key paradox: although it is well known that regular exercise reduces the risk of falls, the proportion of fallers and regular exercisers remains stable. What are we doing wrong?



#### Exercise for tendinopathy: is it as effective as we think, and how can we optimise it?

**Professor Peter Malliaras** is an internationally recognised clinical and research leader in tendinopathy (tendon pain). He consults to elite athletes worldwide, while also working extensively with non-athletes who live with persistent and disabling tendon pain. He is a Professor of Physiotherapy at Monash University, where he leads and collaborates on multiple national and international research programs focused on understanding patient experiences of tendon pain and testing education- and exercise-based interventions.

This presentation will highlight that exercise may be less effective than commonly assumed for improving pain and self-reported function in tendinopathy. It will then explore how to optimise exercise for specific outcomes and enhance its delivery to maximise overall effectiveness.



#### Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre

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

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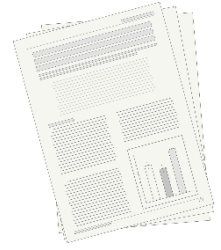
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[Select here to register for this eForum](#)

## Highlighted publication

**Sloan, S., Bould, E., & Callaway, L.** (2026). Enhancing participation outcomes for people with acquired brain injury, high and complex daily support needs and challenging behaviour: a qualitative study of Australian allied health practitioners. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1–22.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2026.2650821>



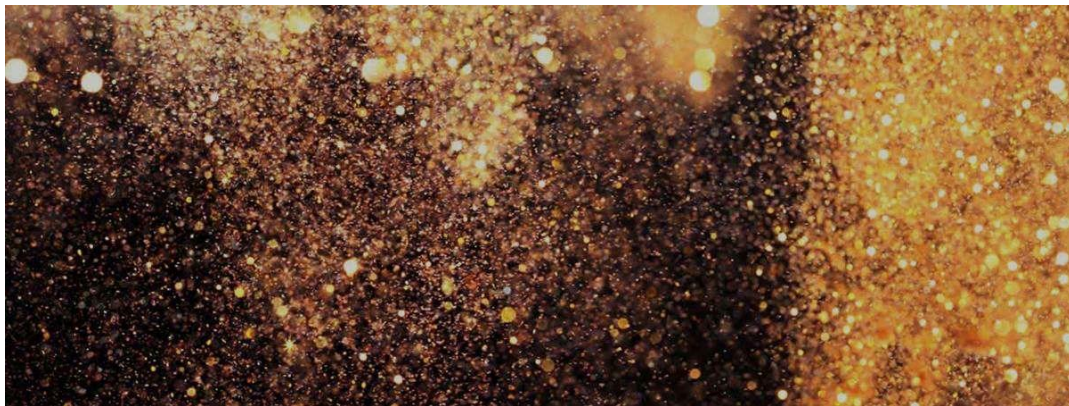
Our recently published study in *Disability and Rehabilitation* explored how experienced allied health practitioners (AHPs) support community-dwelling adults with extremely severe acquired brain injury, high daily support needs, and challenging behaviour.

Through in-depth interviews with 23 AHPs across Australia, we identified eight key themes underpinning successful participation and behavioural outcomes. Central to our findings was confirmation of a bidirectional relationship between challenging behaviour and participation, with each directly influencing the other. When behaviour escalates, participation suffers. However, when people receive structured support to engage in meaningful activities and life roles, challenging behaviour reduces. Behaviour and participation must be addressed and measured together.

This research is part of Sue Sloan's PhD program in the RAIL Research Centre at Monash University, supervised by A/Prof Libby Callaway and Dr Em Bould. The published study provided a foundation for developing an interdisciplinary education program which is now being piloted and evaluated as part of Sue's PhD, to guide allied health practice with this complex population.

[Select here to read the publication](#)

## Successful grants/projects



RAIL team members were involved as lead or chief investigators on a number of new successful grants/projects including:

- A \$1.4M [NHMRC Ideas Grant](#), *The Smart Ward: Using advanced localisation-based technologies to understand patient movement and predict adverse events*, **led by the RAIL Rehabilitation Stream Lead, Associate Professor Christina Ekegren with other investigators including, Professor Keith Hill and Dr Michelle Shannon from RAIL.**
- A [Fight MND grant](#), *The MND and Assistive Technology Evidence (MATE) Research Program: Lifetime costs and outcomes of equipment for people with*

**MND, led by RAIL Associate Professor Natasha Layton with other investigators including, Associate Professor Libby Callaway, Associate Professor Tarsh Brusco and Dr Em Bould from RAIL.**

- *Delivering a falls tools-based consultancy package for Hume Local Health Service Network* led by **Professor Keith Hill and Dr Angel Lee** with **Dr Aislinn Lalor**, Professor Raphaëlle Ashley Guerbaai and Dr Nathan Johns as advisors.
- [A Dementia Australia Research Foundation - Dr Stuart and Bonnie Bartle Research Translation Grant in Dementia Care](#), *Dementia rehabilitation knowledge hub: a co-designed hub for the translation of evidence-based care to practice* led by Associate Professor Nathan D’Cunha from the University of Canberra with **other investigators including RAIL Senior Research Fellow Dr Angel Lee.**
- A [Monash University Incubator grant](#), *Creating a dementia-friendly eyecare workforce in Southeast Asia*, led by Dr Marianne Coleman from the Peninsula Clinical School and NCHA with **other investigators including former RAIL PhD student Yulisna Mutia Sari from Monash Indonesia and RAIL Senior Research Fellow Dr Angel Lee.**

## Media outputs

Check out the latest media outputs involving the RAIL team:

- Associate Professor Libby Callaway spoke to ABC Radio about the Federal Government’s NDIS reforms and wrote a commentary in *The Conversation* with Associate Professor Lloyd Walker.
  - [Select here](#) to read the commentary.
  - [Select here](#) to listen to the radio interview on ABC North and West regional South Australia (SA).
  - [Select here](#) to listen to the radio interview on ABC South East SA.
- Associate Professor Tash Layton was invited to participate in an interview for an article published in The Guardian. [Select here](#) to read the article titled “**‘Prosthetics aren’t made for people like us’: the brothers creating innovative artificial limbs for Africans**”

## Designing health economic evaluations short course 2026

Registration for the RAIL Research Centre "Designing health economic evaluations" short course 2026, to be held on Friday 19th June on the Monash University Peninsula campus, is now open and will close on 29th May.

[Select here to visit the course registration page](#)



## Designing health economic evaluations short course

### About this short course

Economic evaluations of health interventions provide useful information to policy makers, payers, health professionals, patients and the public regarding the choices that affect health and the use of finite resources.

This course will introduce participants to the foundational concepts of health economics. Topics that will be covered include:

- Introduction to health economics
- Economic evaluation reporting guidelines
- Critical review of published economic evaluations
- Social return on investment
- Health economic data demonstration
- Designing an economic evaluation

The course will take a practical applied approach that includes a combination of interactive seminars, case studies, and small group activities.

### Who should attend?

- Health care and social service clinical staff, leaders, managers and quality team members
- University academics (researchers and teaching staff)
- HDR students (e.g. PhD or Masters students)

### Short course details

#### Date

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2026

#### Time

9.00am – 4.00pm AEST  
(registration opens 8.30am)

#### Venue

Monash University Peninsula Campus  
47 - 49 Moorooduc Hwy  
Frankston VIC 3199

#### Cost

- Standard **\$880** (incl. GST)
- Monash University RAIL Research Centre [Members](#) (Monash) and [Partners](#) (non-Monash) **\$790** (incl. GST)
- Group booking discount: 10 participants for **\$6,000** (incl. GST) – contact us at [spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu)

#### Course fee includes:

- a one-on-one 30-min post course consultation in the following 3-month
- catering and parking throughout the day

[Select here to register for this course](#)



Or scan the QR code

Registration closes Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026  
(unless quota reached prior)

## Speaker profiles



### Associate Professor Natasha Brusco (RAIL Research Centre, Monash University)

Associate Professor Natasha (Tarsh) Brusco, Director of the Rehabilitation, Ageing and Independent Living (RAIL) Research Centre, is an experienced physiotherapist and health economist, with 20 years of health service experience in clinical, management and leadership roles across multiple public and private services. Associate Professor Brusco's expertise in health economics includes statewide cost-effectiveness evaluation within the public health sector, international economics evaluation across the UK and Canada as well as providing health economics workshops and mentoring across Victoria and New South Wales.



### Dr Sara Whittaker (RAIL Research Centre, Monash University)

Dr Whittaker is an occupational therapist who conducted a process and economic evaluation of a rehabilitation self-management intervention, My Therapy, as part of her PhD program of research. Sara has previously held senior and leadership roles in acute, subacute and community rehabilitation settings. She is passionate about evidenced based practices in healthcare and is currently working as a research fellow and health economist at the RAIL Research Centre.



### Professor Terry Haines, AM (School of Primary and Allied Health Care, Monash University)

Professor Haines is the Head of the School of Primary and Allied Health Care, Monash University. He has a professional background in physiotherapy and has worked in research roles embedded within health services for over 15 years. Professor Haines has expertise in health economics and has developed innovative health economics evaluation and modelling techniques. His primary research interest is in improving the allocation of health care resources to better meet emerging community needs and reducing waste.

## Contact us

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If you have any questions about this short course, please don't hesitate to contact us at [spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu) and please share with your network as relevant.

## RAIL Seed Grant – Outcomes from a previously funded project



In the past years, the RAIL Research Centre funded a number of seed grants to support early-mid career researchers by funding and piloting quality research projects on a competitive basis. In this eBulletin, we are pleased to report the outcomes of a RAIL seed grant awarded in 2023.

### **Biopsychosocial effects of formal volunteering in older adults: what does the evidence tell us and what can we learn from the communities we work with?**

**Lead Investigator:** Dr Marcelo Maghidman (Department of Social Work, Monash University)

**Other investigators:** A/Prof Libby Callaway (RAIL Research Centre & Occupational Therapy Department, Monash University); Dr Em Bould (RAIL Research Centre, Occupational Therapy Department, Monash University)

**Project summary:**

Despite growing recognition of formal volunteering, gaps remain in understanding its health and wellbeing impacts for adults aged 65+, particularly during COVID-19. This study examined the experiences, enablers, and barriers to volunteering among older adults in Victoria, Australia, and the implications for individuals, organisations, and policymakers.

A mixed-methods design included a statewide survey (n = 97, mean age 73) and interviews with 20 participants. Key motivations were helping others, personal satisfaction, and maintaining activity and social connection. COVID-19 significantly disrupted engagement due to health risks, restrictions, and loss of momentum. Barriers included physical limitations and administrative burden.

Findings showed that volunteers experienced personal benefits, including emotional fulfilment, social connection, and a sense of purpose, which they often described as being as meaningful as the benefits their volunteering delivered to organisations and communities. Many participants contributed substantial time despite challenges.

Results suggest that reducing administrative barriers, adopting inclusive practices, and supporting post-COVID re-engagement could enhance wellbeing. Recommendations include improving recruitment and retention, aligning roles with skills and purpose, strengthening communication and induction, recognising contributions, offering practical supports, and incorporating volunteer feedback and training.

**Outcomes:**

- Oral presentation at the 58th Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) Conference, held from 11–14 November 2025 in Alice Springs. The presentation, titled “Exploring the Biopsychosocial Impacts of Volunteering in Older Age: Barriers, Enablers, and Benefits Post-COVID” generated strong interest among attendees.
- Lead investigator supervising PhD student working on a topic connected to the work of this RAIL seed grant which led to a [peer-reviewed article published in The Gerontologist](#).

**Upcoming online event of interest on MedManageSCI**

Associate Professor Linda Barclay from the Monash University Department of Occupational Therapy is hosting a collaborative online presentation on MedManageSCI.

[Select here](#) to join the event via Zoom on 12th May AEST.

## Co-design and evaluation of MedManageSCI: A medication self-management toolkit for adults with spinal cord injury/ dysfunction

Join us for this exciting online presentation about **MedManageSCI**, a co-designed self-management toolkit for adults with spinal cord injury/ dysfunction. Associate Professor Linda Barclay from Monash University will host an online presentation by Dr Sara Guilcher, Lauren Cadel, and Kiesha Mastrodimos from the University of Toronto, Canada.

They will present on the development and evaluation of MedManageSCI. They will also provide an orientation of the toolkit and share practical learnings from engaging people with lived experience through the design and implementation process.

### Event Details

Host:	Associate Professor Linda Barclay Monash University
Date & time:	<b>Australia:</b> 12 <sup>th</sup> May at 10am AEST <b>Canada:</b> 11 <sup>th</sup> May at 8pm EST
Venue:	Online via zoom
Join:	Using <a href="#">this link</a>



**Sara Guilcher**

Dr. Guilcher is the Scientific Director of the Optimizing Health and Healthcare Experiences (OPTI-HEX) Laboratory at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on understanding what matters to people about their medications and care.



**Lauren Cadel**

Lauren recently defended her PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences at University of Toronto. Her PhD work focused on co-developing, revising, and evaluating a toolkit that aims to improve medication self-management among adults with spinal cord injury.



**Kiesha Mastrodimos**

Kiesha is a 29-year-old living with tetraplegia after a car accident with a moose in 2013. She is a published author, psychology student, and part-time employee at Costco; living her life to the fullest with this injury.



## Participants sought

### Mental health service use after minor to moderate motor vehicle crash injury: Qualitative insights from people with injuries and insurers

Monash University researchers from the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine are conducting a study on mental health service use and are looking for research participants who have used mental health services after sustaining a minor to moderate motor vehicle crash (MVC) injury to be involved in a 45-60 conversation with a researcher (Project ID 50050).

[Select here](#) or scan the QR in the flyer below to express your interest.

# Help improve mental health services after a motor vehicle crash



## About the study

Your experience with mental health services after a crash matters.

We're conducting a study at Monash University to better understand how people access and experience mental health services after minor to moderate motor vehicle crash injuries.

## What's involved?

A one time, 45 - 60 minute conversation with a researcher from Monash University, conducted over Zoom or phone.

Participation is completely voluntary and confidential.

## Who do we need?

People who:

- Experienced injuries such as whiplash, soft-tissue injury, sprains, or bruising after a motor vehicle crash within the last five years; and
- Have accessed mental health services to support recovery with their injury (e.g., psychologist, psychiatrist, GP mental health plan).

## Why?

We want to learn about your experience using mental health services after your injury.

Share what helped, what didn't, and what could be improved to better support recovery. Your story could help someone else in your position in the future.

## Interested? Get in touch!

Contact the Monash University Research Team to express interest by scanning the QR code on the right, emailing [hwlg-injurystudy@monash.edu](mailto:hwlg-injurystudy@monash.edu), or calling (03) 9903 0660.

This project is approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: 50050)



## Perceptions and experiences of aquatic therapy among adults with complex cerebral palsy and their caregivers

A team of researchers from the Monash University Department of Physiotherapy is currently conducting a study to expand the evidence around aquatic therapy as a physical activity option for adults with complex cerebral palsy (CP) and is seeking research participants for a 30–45 minute interview.

[Select here](#) to express your interest.

**MONASH University**

Calling adults with cerebral palsy!

Do you have cerebral palsy?	Are you aged 18 years or over?	Do you use a wheelchair or have trouble walking?	Do you do, or have you done aquatic therapy?	Have you ever considered it?
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**Share your experiences with us!**

- We are a team of researchers from Monash University, and we want to know what you think about aquatic therapy.
- You will do a one-off 30-45 minute online interview using any communication method that works for you!
- You will receive a **\$25 gift voucher** for participating

Scan the code or click the [link](#) to register. To find out more contact Isabel Huf at [isabel.huf@monash.edu](mailto:isabel.huf@monash.edu)

**MONASH University**

Calling caregivers of adults with cerebral palsy!

Are you aged 18 years or over?	Do you care for an adult with cerebral palsy? (paid or unpaid)	Do they use a wheelchair or have trouble walking?	Do they do, or have they done aquatic therapy?	Have they ever considered it?
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**Share your experiences with us!**

- We are a team of researchers from Monash University, and we want to know what you think and feel about aquatic therapy.
- You will do a one-off 30-45 minute online interview and you can participate on behalf of the person you care for if they do not have any communication strategies.
- You will receive a **\$25 voucher** for participating

Scan the code or click the [link](#) to register. To find out more contact Isabel Huf at [isabel.huf@monash.edu](mailto:isabel.huf@monash.edu)

## Member and Partner contributions

We would love to showcase current research from our members and partners. We invite you to submit ([spahc.rail@monash.edu](mailto:spahc.rail@monash.edu)) a short story (and relevant images) about any research you are working on that aligns with RAIL.

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

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

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