

REHABILITATION, AGEING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING (RAIL) RESEARCH CENTRE

Member eBulletin #5

A message from the Director

The start of the year is now well and truly behind us as we head into March. February saw a busy month at RAIL with a number of events, forums, and visitors, as detailed below. Of particular note, we are pleased to be involved in hosting another international visitor to Monash (Associate Professor Dawn Mackey from Simon Fraser University in Canada), to have our first international PhD student enrolled (Yulisna Mutia Sari), and to be generating strong interest with our monthly forums. We are also progressing well with planned RAIL Launch activities scheduled for May and June, which we will provide more detail about in the near future. We now have over 90 members of RAIL across the University - please feel free to distribute this e-bulletin within your Monash networks to others who may be interested in being linked to RAIL through our RAIL member network. The link to self nominate to be a RAIL member is [here](#).

Professor Keith Hill

Staff news

Dr Natasha Layton

We are pleased to welcome Dr Natasha Layton to the RAIL team from 16th March.



Dr Natasha Layton is an occupational therapist practicing, researching and teaching in the areas of assistive technology (AT), disability, and outcomes. Her PhD study concerned the costs and outcomes of assistive technology solutions. Specialising in mixed methods and inclusive research approaches, she focusses on the nexus between research, policy and practice. Over the last decade she has worked on research grants worth almost \$400,000, and published 30 peer reviewed publications including six book chapters, several written with consumers.

Natasha works locally in collaboratives with consumers, at state and national level in Australia with disabled persons' associations and peak AT bodies, internationally with the ISO product standards for AT, and globally with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Co-Operation on AT Initiative. She is clinical advisor to Motivation Australia, Polio Australia, and is a member of the International Society of Wheelchair Professionals. Natasha contributes to the World Health Organisation's Family of International Classifications development work through membership of the Australian Collaborating Centre's Functioning and Disability Reference Group. Natasha is current President of ARATA (www.arata.org.au) and Independent Chair of the National Assistive Technology Alliance.



Visiting international researcher - Associate Professor Dawn Mackey

Dawn Mackey is an Associate Professor in Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Dawn is visiting Monash University (School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine and RAIL) until June. She will be working primarily with Dr. Christina Ekegren on studies about older adult trauma, injury, and physical activity. 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 research focus are physical activity promotion and fall and injury prevention.

www.drdawnmackey.com

Program and Economic Evaluations workshop - Alfred Health

Tash Brusco facilitated a full day workshop on Program and Economic Evaluations to the allied health leadership team at Alfred Health on Wednesday the 26th of February. This interactive workshop introduced the concept and stages involved in developing a program and economic evaluation plan and applied these skills to a scenario during the breakout sessions.

Grant success

External grants involving RAIL staff:

Dementia Australia grant

A team led by Dr Angel Lee (SPAHC), and RAIL Director Keith Hill, together with collaborators from Curtin University, Bolton Clarke, Peninsula Health, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, and researchers from Canada and Thailand, were awarded a \$74,000 grant from the Dementia Australia Research Foundation, for a project titled: 'Is there a role for gait aids to improve



stability and reduce falls risk for older people with dementia?' The project will involve surveys of hospital staff, community care staff and caregivers of older people with dementia regarding gait aid use by people with dementia, and a pilot program aiming to improve appropriate gait aid prescription and training of gait aid use for people with dementia.

Grant opportunities

Early to Mid-Career Researcher grants

The next round of RAIL Early to Mid Career Researcher grants will open at the end of March. Details of the grant round and priorities will be circulated to members and available on our website in the near future.

Update on current RAIL EMCR grant project - Dr Em Bould

Fostering and suPAWting engagement in meaningful activity and social connection:

Dogs as a conduit to community inclusion for people with cognitive disabilities

The research team thought it was timely to provide a 'Pupdate' on this project which received funding from the first round of RAIL Early-Mid Career Research grants in October 2019. This helped to build a new industry partnership for Monash and RAIL, with the RAIL grant funding matched by Melba Support Services, a not-for-profit, community based disability support organisation. It also built a new interdisciplinary collaboration with team members from the Monash School of Primary and Allied Healthcare (Dr Em Bould; Associate Professor Libby Callaway; Dr Aislinn Lalor), the Faculty of Arts (Dr Narelle Warren), and the Faculty of Education (Joanne Burke and her retired guide dog, Tammy).

The project is testing an animal-assisted intervention, developed by Dr Em Bould, known as 'Dog Buddies'. Using multiple-baseline Single Case

Experimental Design, this project has been designed specifically to answer the question: *Does walking with a dog foster social interaction for people with cognitive disability?*

In undertaking this project, we are exploring whether a dog accompanying a person with cognitive disability in a community space (such as a shopping centre, park, or local street) helps to break down social barriers and foster convivial encounters between people with cognitive disability and other community members. The baseline period of data collection has been completed, so in the week commencing Monday 24th February 2020, Tammy officially joined the team, putting the 'Dog' into the 'Dog Buddies' program.

We look forward to updating you on the findings of the study once completed. In the meantime, you may wish to read a previous article published on this topic via <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jir.12538>.

If you have questions about this new project, please email em.bould@monash.edu



Handler (Joanne Burke) and Tammy



Tammy accompanying participants in the community



During February, we welcomed newly enrolled RAIL international PhD student and Physiotherapist Yulisna Sari on campus at Peninsula. Yulisna has transferred her enrolment from Curtin University to Monash University. Her PhD title is 'Effectiveness of a physical exercise program on health and wellbeing of community dwelling elderly people with dementia in Indonesia'. Yulisna has a prestigious Australia Award Scholarship for international students, and will be conducting her data collection in Indonesia. Her supervisors are Professor Keith Hill, Associate Professor Stephen Maloney and Dr Elissa Burton (Curtin University). We wish Yulisna well for her PhD journey.

Events

Falls prevention research networking meeting (RAIL/MRFF)

On Thursday 6th February RAIL co hosted with the MRFF / Faculty Research Office a Falls prevention research networking meeting.

The meeting was attended by 26 researchers from a variety of university faculties and external partner organisations. The aim of the session was to increase awareness of the range of research and research expertise in the falls prevention area at Monash and partner organisations, and to initiate opportunity for new collaborations for future collaborative grant applications.

Dr Karen McConologue (Director, Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and Major Research Initiatives) provided an overview of the MRFF strategy, current priorities and application process as well as detailed information about the Dementia Ageing and Aged Care Mission. Researchers shared a brief summary of their current/future falls

prevention activities and research interests. The meeting concluded with networking over a light lunch.

We would like to thank Karen for visiting our campus and providing us with a better understanding of the MRFF process.



Residential aged care forum

Towards the end of April, RAIL will be holding a half day Residential Aged Care Forum at Peninsula campus. The forum will provide an update on current and recent research being conducted by teams at Monash University and will aim to identify research priorities for residential care providers. The program will include a series of presentations, a panel and workshop, as well as opportunities for discussion and networking. Further information about the event will be circulated in March.

Member forums

Emerging technologies for independent living was the focus of our well attended and very interesting February member forum which included presentations by:

- **Emma Gee** - an Occupational Therapist and Young Stroke Survivor talking about her use of Orcam, a new technology for vision support, and other emerging technologies
- **Ben Sinclair** - a Neuroscientist presenting a clinical trial of "The Reviver" device, a novel exercise and rehabilitation machine which uses gravity and the body's

natural reflexes in response to being off balance to both train balance and deliver vigorous isometric exercise

- **Libby Callaway** - RAIL Independent Living Stream Lead, talking about a two year project scoping and evaluating use of smart home and wearable technologies for cognitive support after traumatic brain injury
- **Kylie Rice** - an Occupational Therapist, presenting use of a new vision training technology, called Vision Coach, in acquired brain injury rehabilitation at Epworth, and her planned PhD evaluating this technology
- **Natasha Layton** - an Occupational Therapist talking about her work with the World Health Organisation Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology, and codesign development of an outcome evaluation framework for assistive technology users.



The next RAIL member forum will be held in late March and will include a presentation by visiting researcher Associate Professor Dawn Mackey from the Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Further details will be circulated shortly.

Upcoming conferences

- March 24 2020, Sydney – Dementia Australia National Symposium – Theme: Dementia care is quality care. Early bird extended to Feb 10. <https://www.dementia2020.org.au/>
- March 31 2020, Online - Virtual Disability Conference <https://virtualdisability.conferenceworks.com.au>
- 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>
- May 12-13 2020, Melbourne - ATSA independent living expo <http://atsaindependentlivingexpo.com.au> Free exhibition
- May 12-13 2020, Melbourne - Biennial Universal Design Conference <http://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/australian-ud-conference-ud2020/>

- May 27-29 2020, 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/>
- May 31 – 1 June, 2020, 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/>
- July 12 - 15, 2020. Australian & New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators (ANZAHPE) 2020 Conference, hosted in Melbourne, <https://www.anzahpe.org/2020-conference>
- Latest NDIS-hosted events for Scheme participants, families and/or providers See <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/events>
- Nov 17-20, 2020. Australian Association of Gerontology conference – Hobart. Theme: A climate for change in Ageing. Abstract submission opens Feb 17, closes April 27. <http://2020.aagconference.aag.asn.au/>
- Nov 29- 1 Dec 2020. 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/>

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

