



Ageing Well

National Ageing Research Institute

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Our Vibrant AGM...

A new vision

NARI is entering a new phase and adopting strategies based on collaboration, co-operation and coordination.

This was the positive message from NARI Board President, the Honourable Michael MacKellar, to the Annual General Meeting, in October.

He described the Institute as a focal point for research into healthy ageing.

“We are constantly reminded of the ageing nature of society, and this emphasises more than ever the critical role NARI plays in enhancing the quality of life for older Australians. “The numerous opportunities to work with other major research institutions, in Australia and overseas, augur well for NARI’s role of adding to, and bringing together, research results and providing realistic workable policy outcomes for governments at all levels,” said Mr MacKellar.

Important lessons for healthy ageing

Substitute hospital and nursing care with well-developed community aged care services, and provide serious funding of realistic health ageing programs, advocated AGM guest speaker Professor John McCallum, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University.

These lessons emerge from the 15-plus years of the Dubbo Longitudinal Study of Older Australians to identify patterns and predictors of mortality, hospitalisation and need for residential care.

A professorial associate of NARI and head of the Dubbo study, Professor McCallum provided a fascinating insight into the ageing life journey of 2805 residents, aged over 60, from this NSW town. When the project began in 1987, “interest in ageing was more rhetoric than reality”. He indicated the differing disease profiles for death, hospitalisation and nursing home care. For instance, heart disease and cancer were the major causes of death, but heart disease and digestive problems led to the highest hospital admissions. Depression was identified as a critical risk factor for healthy ageing.

In 2000, the study began investigating how financial resources and informal care services modified people’s expected changes in health or family circumstances.

“It is an honour and a privilege to have succeeded Alan Castleman as Board President. Alan deserves the highest commendation and praise for his untiring service as President since 1999. We look forward to his continuing contribution as a Board member.



Alan oversaw the successful changes to the challenges that were presented, financially and organisationally, after the Department of Human Services’ review. He worked effectively with NARI management and the Board in keeping the Institute financially afloat. Now, NARI’s directions have changed and the Board is delighted that Alan is a continuing part of this new vision.”

The Honourable Michael MacKellar
(NARI BOARD PRESIDENT)

“Best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. Thank you for generously supporting NARI.”

PROFESSOR ALLAN MCLEAN AND STAFF



NARI Board President, the Hon Michael MacKellar, and guest speaker Professor John McCallum

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Enjoying the AGM



Andrew Scaramuzzino from the Department of Human Services and NARI Director, Professor Allan McLean

NARI Board member, Professor Fred Mendelsohn, and Professor David Pennington

NARI research officer Dr Bruce Barber and immediate past president of the Association of Independent Retirees, Joan Heard

NARI Deputy Director, Associate Professor Stephen Gibson, and President of the Australian Association for Gerontology, Pam Johnson



\$540,000 grant for falls study



Associate Professor Keith Hill has received a \$540,000 NHMRC grant to tackle the major problem of preventing falls in people when they return home after having a stroke.

This is the first major intervention study targeting falls prevention in this group of people.

The project stemmed from research by PhD student Shylie MacKintosh, who used two simple measures before stroke patients were discharged from hospital, to successfully predict those most likely to have multiple falls when they returned home. One of the measures involved a simple balance test developed by NARI several years ago.

The three-year study will begin in 2006 and involve 220 participants identified as being at risk of falling. They will take part in a comprehensive falls prevention program designed to reduce their risk.

Collaborating on this project with Associate Professor Hill are Dr Cathy Said (senior physiotherapist at Austin Health), Ms MacKintosh and Dr Craig Whitehead from the University of South Australia.

More new studies

NARI is sharing its expertise in physical activity and balance assessment in two other new NHMRC-funded collaborative projects.

One study is assessing the effectiveness of tai chi for people in retirement villages in preventing functional decline and maintaining independence. Associate Professor Keith Hill is working with several investigators, including Dr Lesley Day from Monash University Accident Research Centre.

The link between the effect of anti-epileptic medication on bone strength and balance is also under the spotlight. Associate Professor Hill is collaborating with Professor John Wark, from the University of Melbourne, on this large study.

Key role in national guidelines

NARI played a key role in devising new national guidelines to better manage pain in patients in residential aged care homes.

Developed by the Australian Pain Society, *Pain in Residential Aged Care Facilities – Management Strategies* was recently launched by the Federal Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop, at the Royal Freemasons Home in Melbourne.

The guidelines, which offer a multidisciplinary approach, describe different types of pain and symptoms to assist staff to more quickly identify residents in pain. Research highlights that about 40 per cent of residents in high level residential care are cognitively impaired and unable to report pain.

Ms Bishop said the guidelines focused on the psychological and physical consequences, such as sleeplessness, depression, anxiety and the distress for family members.

"NARI's research provided an understanding of how older people experience pain, but implementing the results through

these guidelines will help improve people's quality of life," says Associate Professor Stephen Gibson, who heads NARI's Clinical Research.

Attending the launch were Associate Professor Gibson, NARI Board President, the Honourable Michael MacKellar, and NARI's Deputy Director, Dr John Barlow.



The Federal Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop, launches the national pain management guidelines.

The word on pain management



Associate Professor Stephen Gibson is spreading the word about pain management in older people in the first comprehensive book on this subject.

Associate Professor Gibson, the head of NARI's Clinical Research, co-edited – with Dr Debra Weiner from the University of Pittsburgh – *Pain in Older Persons*, recently published by the International Association for the Study of Pain.

The publication comprises 20 chapters by international experts, including several from NARI, on a broad range of topics, including assessing and treating pain, age differences in pain and common painful disorders.

"Such a book was well and truly due. I hope it makes a difference to managing pain in older people, locally and internationally," says Associate Professor Gibson.

"This evidence-based text will particularly interest researchers and clinicians but the topics will appeal to anyone working in pain management in older people. There are chapters from various professional disciplines including medicine, psychology, occupational therapy, nursing and physiotherapy."

Preventing a second stroke

Stroke is a major cause of death in the Western world. Survivors of a first stroke have a high recurrence rate that increases their disability level and need for nursing home care.

Simply reducing the risk

A best practice management project to prevent patients having a second stroke is attracting widespread national and international interest. This joint venture, involving NARI, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Broadmeadows Health Service, has now extended to include Austin Repatriation Hospital, Eastern Health and Royal Perth Hospital.

The project stemmed from earlier research that showed the possibility of a stroke recurring was significantly lower when the risk factors – high blood pressure (hypertension), raised cholesterol, atrial fibrillation (chaotic heart beat), diabetes and smoking – were correctly managed.

The project uses a simple integrated model of care, with stroke coordinators being the link between the patient's GP (the primary medical carer) and specialist stroke services. The coordinators use a telephone-tracking system to maintain contact with patients at designated times, and update the stroke unit and GP about their patients' progress.

The project is lead by neurologist Dr Jacques Joubert (pictured) from Royal Melbourne Hospital, Broadmeadows Health Service and NARI.

"The project aims to support GPs in implementing best practice management when patients return to their care after a stroke. It is also investigating the detection and early management of depression in stroke survivors," says Dr Joubert.



"About 40 per cent of stroke survivors develop post-stroke depression that may be related to structural changes in the brain or social or environmental factors, like losing their job."

The project has attracted interest from Hong Kong, Singapore, China, France, Canada and Africa.

Photo courtesy of Medical Illustration Department, The Royal Melbourne Hospital.

International ideas for stroke prevention

NARI hosted a major stroke seminar at the World Neurology Congress in Sydney, in November. The seminar, featuring noted speakers from Canada, France, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia, created the foundation for extensive international collaboration on new treatments in preventing strokes recurring.

"The seminar highlighted the international treatments that exist and the opportunity for improving standards of care for stroke victims throughout the world," says neurologist Dr Jacques Joubert.

Interest from China

Senior Chinese geriatrician, Dr Li Sun, plans to implement the best practice management plan for stroke prevention in her home province of Shaanxi.

Dr Sun, who is the Director of the Department of Gerontology at Xiaan Hospital, has spent the last six months at NARI as a visiting fellow, sponsored by the World Health Organisation. She is interested in systems of care in geriatric medicine and establishing an ageing research institute in Shaanxi.



We are leaders in ageing research.

Your donation will help us maintain the pace.

Looking to the future, Australia will have six million people over the age of 65 by the year 2050. They will comprise 25 per cent of the population.

The issues surrounding ageing are complex. At this time of life, the major health concerns include diseases of ageing, dementia, falls, wounds and pain management.

NARI leads the way in Australia as the only Institute for ageing that takes research from cell biology to service delivery and public health. We need your support to continue our work.

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Thank you

NARI news

In profile: Dr John Barlow



John enjoys family life with wife Judy, his five children and four grandchildren.

Dr John Barlow fittingly describes his 30-year career in research and management as eclectic.

"I'm a basic scientist but I assumed that ultimately I would end up in management," says Dr Barlow, who was appointed NARI's Deputy Director (Operations and Development) in June.

His early years in research were spent at Prince Henry's Hospital and the Alfred Hospital specialising

in endocrinology and diabetes. After completing a PhD, he received the prestigious NHMRC Neil Hamilton Fairley Fellowship and worked in Brussels investigating diseases of the thyroid.

Before joining NARI, he was Divisional Manager of the new Australian Genome Research Facility, responsible for its expansion to a multi-million dollar organisation churning out millions of genetic data points.

"It had new technology and cutting-edge science – and I loved being part of such a successful venture."

At NARI, he is drawing upon his keen interest in science and management to make the community more aware of the Institute's innovative work in healthy ageing.

Do you suffer from osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis?

NARI is seeking volunteers for a study to:

- Identify if balance is affected differently if people have osteoarthritis compared with rheumatoid arthritis
- Participate in an exercise program to try and improve balance

You benefit by:

- Being better informed about your balance
- Having the opportunity to improve your balance with a home-based exercise program

Your involvement:

- To be eligible you must have a diagnosis of osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis from your GP.
- After an initial assessment, you receive a simple balance program to do at home for four months. A physiotherapist reviews your progress during this time.

The study is supported by a \$75,000 grant from the JO and JW Wicking Trust.

Congratulations

Keith Hill was recently appointed an Associate Professor in the School of Physiotherapy at the University of Melbourne.

"I am extremely pleased about the appointment, which is also a reflection of the productive team working with me," says Associate Professor Hill, who is the Director of NARI's Preventive and Public Health Division.

Talking together

NARI and the CSIRO highlighted their collaborative partnership when Professor Allan McLean and Professor Richard Head shared the podium at a symposium in September.

They spoke about healthy ageing at the Australian Association of Medical Research Institutes' symposium – ***A long and healthy life: the contribution of medical research to Australian community health.***

A large Chinese delegation



The delegates included Dr Li Sumei (left), the Director of International Relations at Beijing University's first affiliated hospital and Dr Du Zhi Quin.

NARI's international reputation in ageing research recently attracted a 17-member delegation from China's Ministry of Health.

The group, which was headed by Dr Du Zhi Quin – the Deputy Director-General of the Bureau of Health Care in Beijing's Ministry of Health – comprised senior officials, geriatricians, nursing staff and hospital directors.

"The visitors gained an insight into age-related diseases and how NARI applied its research findings to improve older people's health. They were also interested in collaborative research programs with NARI," says Dr John Barlow, NARI's Deputy Director.

NARI speakers included Director Professor Allan McLean, Associate Professor Keith Hill, Dr Jacques Joubert and Dr Irene Blackberry.

A young Secretary-General



NARI research fellow Dr Irene Blackberry had the honour of being elected the youngest Secretary-General of the Asia Pacific region of the Clinical Nutrition Society.

While she light-heartedly admits that a passion for food and healthy eating prompted her interest in the top position, there is a more serious side. As part of its work in health and nutrition, the society provides expert advice during natural disasters to assist people with their water and food requirements.