



Ageing Well

National Ageing Research Institute

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NARI receives \$2.38 million to improve care for older people

NARI's prominent reputation in pain management and falls prevention has received a \$2.38 million boost for projects to improve care in residential facilities.

The Institute scooped the pool under the Encouraging Best Practice in Residential Aged Care project from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, by receiving two of five grants awarded.

About \$1.22 million was allocated to the falls prevention project and \$1.16 million for pain management. Both projects span two years and involve an Australia-wide collaborative team of researchers and a wide range of residential care facilities

"Many issues contribute to achieving best practice," says Professor Keith Hill, who is associated with NARI, La Trobe University and Northern Health.

"Working across three states and nine residential care facilities adds to the challenge but also to the value of the outcome – the new falls prevention model will be transferable to residential care facilities throughout Australia."

Heading the pain management project is NARI Deputy Director, Associate Professor Stephen Gibson, who envisages the six participating residential care facilities in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia becoming centres of excellence.

"The pain management model will be based on the Australian Pain Society's evidence-based guidelines that NARI had a major role in developing," says Associate Professor Gibson.



"The \$2.38 million grants acknowledge NARI's national and international reputation in pain management and falls prevention."

PROFESSOR DAVID AMES, NARI DIRECTOR



"Research shows that up to 80 per cent of residents in aged care have an ongoing problem with pain, and 25 per cent are not given any analgesics."

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR STEPHEN GIBSON



"Older people in residential care have a higher falls rate than those living at home due to a combination of factors including health-related falls risk, and behavioural and environmental issues."

PROFESSOR KEITH HILL

Falls prevention research team

Professor Keith Hill
(Project Manager)
Kirsten Moore
(NARI)
Dr Terry Haines
(University of Queensland)
Professor Andrew Robinson
(University of Tasmania)

Pain management research team

Associate Professor Stephen Gibson
(Project Manager)
Dr Bruce Barber
(NARI)
Professor Jenny Abbey
(Queensland University of Technology)
Dr Roger Gouke
(Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital)

Professor Linda Kristjanson
(Curtin University)
Professor Rhonda Nay
(La Trobe University)
Dr Christine Toye
(Edith Cowan University)

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New Executive Manager



Debra O'Connor brings diverse professional expertise and a keen sense of social justice to her new role as NARI's Executive Manager.

A social worker by profession, she has delved into community and consumer health, lectured in health disciplines at La Trobe University and been active in community health management.

Passionate about consumer rights, she participated on state and

- national committees that helped to shape Australia's health
- policy in e-health (the electronic management of patients' medical information), consumer participation in research and general practice reform in the early 1990s.
- In 2000, Ms O'Connor was appointed the Director of Health Promotion at Dianella Community Health Services in the City of Hume, and later became the Deputy CEO. In these roles, she worked with all ages and cultural groups in a myriad of programs.
- "Despite our ageing population, research for this age group is still undervalued," she says.
- On the educational scene, Ms O'Connor has a Masters of Social Work and she is completing a Masters of Business Leadership. She is also a member of course advisory committees at La Trobe University and RMIT University.

Best wishes for the Festive Season and the New Year

PROFESSOR DAVID AMES AND STAFF

From Dr Barlow



"As a biological scientist, I never realised the importance of public health and social research until I went to NARI," says Dr John Barlow, reflecting on his two years as NARI Deputy Director (Operations and Development).

"The way older people are treated indicates the health of a society."

Although his appointment coincided with a challenging time of organisational change at NARI, he stresses the innovative research that

was emerging from the talented research teams.

A key achievement for Dr Barlow was the \$1.4 million grant to develop the ICARUSS stroke prevention project headed by neurologist Dr Jacques Joubert.

"I still keep in touch with the NARI staff and how the ICARUSS project is progressing," he says.

***Dr Barlow is the Director of Laboratory Services at Cancer Trails Australia.**

Professor Ames in Osaka

NARI Director, Professor David Ames, attended the Silver Congress of the International Psychogeriatric Association that attracted a record 3000 delegates.

As a member of the IPA Board of Directors and editor of *International Psychogeriatrics*, he attended a series of management meetings. He also chaired two conference sessions.

Professor Ames shares two of many conference highlights: "Researchers from St George's Hospital in Kew outlined the effectiveness of non-drug therapies for agitated behaviour in residential care, and a San Diego study reported remarkable improvements in people with chronic schizophrenia when they were encouraged to cease smoking and engage in activities."

Conference presentations

8th Asia/Oceania Regional Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics – Beijing

PROFESSOR KEITH HILL

Results from the Emergency Department falls prevention randomised trial

XIAO JING YANG

Early balance identification and exercise intervention project

PAMELA JOHNSON

Reviewing pain assessment charts for people with dementia and unable to speak

40th National Conference of the Australian Association of Gerontology – Adelaide

DR BRIONY DOW

An innovative approach to providing health services in rural areas

PROFESSOR KEITH HILL

Home-based balance exercise approaches for older people

DR JEAN TINNEY

Implementing person-centred care in Victoria

Finding meaning in being old and in care

The best bid

Professor Keith Hill co-presented the winning bid for Melbourne to host the 9th Asia/Oceania Regional Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in 2011 that will attract about 1200 delegates.

As chairman of the Victorian branch of the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG), he made the presentation with the national AAG President, Associate Professor Laurie Buys, at the recent Asia/Oceania Regional Congress in Beijing.

"We highlighted our expertise in organising conferences, our high quality research education, policies and practice in ageing, and the \$100,000 grant from the State Government to assist participants from developing countries.

"Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau supported us in producing the bid and obtaining funding," says Professor Hill, who heads the conference's local organising committee.

Other members of the Victorian AAG Executive with NARI links are PhD student Pamela Johnson, Dr Briony Dow (Acting Director of Preventive and Public Health), and Board member David Simmons.



Taking time out after winning the conference bid. Professor Keith Hill and Associate Professor Laurie Buys at the Great Wall of China.

Three more grants

NARI received more than \$40,000 in grants for three projects.

- NARI's computer system is being upgraded with a \$16,500 grant from the Ivy H Thomas and Arthur A Thomas Trust.
- Participants in the ICARUSS stroke prevention program can accurately measure how much they exercise after the project received \$15,000 from the Fred P Archer Charitable Trust to buy pedometers. Lifestyle factors, like diet and being physically active, are important for stroke prevention.
- Dr Bruce Barber received \$8,800 from the Lynne Quayle Charitable Trust to buy electrode caps for the new EEG system being used for the music therapy and dementia research project.

Planning ahead for NARI



Several major developments have occurred at NARI during the past three months.

On 3 September, I became the NARI Director, having been the acting director for the previous four months. I was also appointed as the University of Melbourne's foundation Professor of Ageing and Health in the Department of Psychiatry.

My four predecessors had concurrent appointments in the Department of Medicine at the University as professors of geriatric medicine, but as a psychiatrist, it was inappropriate for me to hold such a position.

Consequently, I requested that this new chair be created as a condition of accepting the appointment as NARI Director. I believe it is vital for the University to have a clearly identified academic who can provide leadership in research and teaching in the broad clinical area of ageing and related health issues.

Although my expertise is in dementia and old age psychiatry, it is essential that the next generation of doctors, from the

University's new graduate medical course, to commence in 2011, should be thoroughly trained in all aspects of aged care. This will equip them for the realities of medicine in the middle of the 21st century when it is expected that more than a quarter of Australia's population will be aged over 65 and nearly 3 per cent of Australians will be affected by dementia.

It is with regret that Dr John Barlow, the Deputy Director (Operations and Development), resigned to return to laboratory research at Cancer Trials Australia. I sincerely thank him for his sterling support, sage advice and historical knowledge that he shared with me during the early months of my appointment.

To fill John's capacious role, I am delighted to announce the appointment of our new Executive Manager, Debra O'Connor, who started on 21 October. Debra brings tremendous experience and expertise in health services management and tertiary education that will be a huge asset to NARI.

Her first task was to attend NARI's planning day, where Board members, senior staff members, and some of our professorial fellows considered the Institute's future directions. I was encouraged and enthused by the prospects and possibilities that emerged. In a future newsletter, I will share some of these exciting prospects.

PROFESSOR DAVID AMES
NARI Director

Talk about a \$134,000 grant



NARI researcher Dr Jean Tinney is pursuing her passion to improve communication between staff and residents in aged care facilities, after receiving a \$134,400 grant from the JO & JR Wicking Trust.

The 18-month project will investigate staff-resident communication in four residential aged care settings, and identify communication and

environmental barriers. Educational resources will also be developed and staff training provided.

Assisting with the project are NARI researchers Leslie Dowson and Betty Haralambous.

"The role of communication in nursing home care in sustaining residents' sense of self (or identity) and wellbeing was the theme of my PhD. It is an important but under researched area," says Dr Tinney.

"Studies have shown that good resident-staff relationships are a factor in staff satisfaction which, in turn, impacts on staff recruitment and retention. This research has also revealed that some staff rate their relationships with residents as the most rewarding part of their work in aged care."

Dr Tinney describes the barriers to communication as diverse. They include environmental aspects (such as building layout and noise) and the facility's practices that can affect staff willingness and capacity to establish relationships with residents. Other barriers relate to residents' health and cognitive abilities.

A leader in ageing research

Your donation will help NARI achieve its vision of healthy ageing

Australia will have six million people over the age of 65 by the year 2050 and 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 dementia, falls, stroke prevention and pain management.

NARI is a self-funding research institute and relies on donations and research grants to continue its work.

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Thank you

Donations of \$2 and over are fully tax deductible AW 44

NARI news

Composing for carers

NARI PhD student Loretta Quinn played the right notes for people caring for someone with dementia.

Over three years, she wrote the lyrics for a series of songs based on the experiences, feelings and frustrations that carers revealed during music therapy sessions organised by Carers Victoria.



Loretta also composed the music and coordinated the professional production of the 11 songs onto a CD titled, **Catching dust in mid air**, that was launched in mid-November. "The songs explore with honesty the issues facing carers, like loss and grief, anger and knowing when to ask for help," she says.

"The CD's title comes from one of the songs and was sparked by a carer's comment about having high expectations but achieving nothing – just like catching dust in mid air."

Professional singers volunteered their time for the project.

Catching dust in mid air is available from the Carers Association of Victoria. www.carersvic.org.au phone: 1800 242 636

**Loretta was recently awarded a three-year TIME-Dementia Scholarship for her PhD studies into music therapy for people with dementia.*



On the production side of Catching dust in mid air, Loretta Quinn with sound engineer from Box Hill TAFE, Jimmi Wyatt.



Enjoying all that NARI offers. From left, Kay Ledgerwood, Gihan de Mel and Karen Borschmann.

Familiar with clients' needs

Physiotherapist Karen Borschmann's previous experience in rehabilitating stroke patients fits in well with some NARI projects. At Tasmania's Launceston General Hospital, Karen provided support to stroke patients returning home. At NARI, she is working on falls prevention after a stroke and the effectiveness of a screening program to identify early balance problems.

"I enjoy being at NARI with such a dynamic group of people," she says.

Stepping off at NARI

When English-born Kay Ledgerwood took a break from her world travels, she headed for a research position at NARI.

With an anatomy honours degree and qualifications in science education, two projects were appealing – the Living Longer Living Stronger strength training program and physical activity for people from Polish and Macedonian backgrounds.

"I am working with such great researchers and the program participants are inspiring," says Kay.

A good career move

Gihan de Mel considers his research position at NARI as invaluable experience. A biomedical science graduate with strong IT skills, his versatility shines through.

He is involved in the Emergency Department falls screening project and the Older Australian Twins Study. Gihan also administers NARI's website.

"I enjoy the variety of challenging experiences that NARI offers and the dynamic environment," he says.

Making research relevant



Research assistant Simone Mangelsdorf prefers research projects where results have immediate relevance to people's lives.

She is completing her doctorate in clinical neuropsychology, investigating cognitive functioning in people with type 1 diabetes. At NARI, she is working on the Older Australian Twins Study to better understand the ageing brain.

"I enjoy the personal contact with people and spending time with them – it can be a rewarding experience for them and me," says Simone.

Taking the next step



Soon after submitting her honours thesis, Chathushka Fonseka became a NARI research assistant for a project that she thoroughly enjoys.

Her honours project explored the effects of music therapy and diversional therapy on memory for people with dementia. Now, she is focusing on a larger study that is assessing the effects of music on memory, mood and behaviours.

"It's a great opportunity to be involved in such challenging research," says Chathushka.