



# Ageing Well

## National Ageing Research Institute

www.nari.unimelb.edu.au



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## Working together - NARI and the AAG

NARI was the obvious choice when the Executive Officer of the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG), Dr Tony Coles, was seeking a Melbourne-based office.

"Being at NARI gives me the opportunity to integrate into the research community and extend my networks for the AAG. Already, there is a nice synergy between the two organisations and I look forward to this evolving further," says Dr Coles.

The arrangement is ideal for other reasons. Dr Coles is working closely with the AAG's Victorian branch chairman and NARI principal research fellow, Professor Keith Hill, in organising the 9<sup>th</sup> Asia/Oceania Regional Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics, in Melbourne in 2011. The event will attract about 1200 delegates.

"From NARI's perspective, the AAG is the peak body for research into ageing in Australia and hosting Dr Coles links us into an even broader network. We are delighted to be providing such key support to the AAG," says NARI Executive Manager, Debra O'Connor, (pictured with Dr Tony Coles).

AAG President, Professor Laurie Buys, commented, "The AAG's mission is to expand knowledge in ageing and promote the ageing research agenda. Having our Executive Officer embedded in NARI ensures we are engaged at the forefront of cutting-edge research."



### In profile

Dr Tony Coles' interest in older people and research stemmed from his PhD thesis, on how men adapt over the lifespan to notions of masculinity, and continues in his present role as AAG Executive Officer.

He also worked for three years in policy development for the Office for an Ageing Australia, at the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Here, he liaised with the research community while developing key research grants, including the dementia research grants program. Prior to coming to the AAG in February, he taught professional development at the University of Helsinki.

Dr Coles is developing several projects, including a workshop on the impact of the economic crisis on older Australians – to be featured at the AAG national conference in November – and a publication based on the results of the Ageing Well, Ageing Productively research projects.

## Ground-breaking study needs volunteers

Volunteers are needed for an innovative study investigating whether physical activity can benefit people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease.

NARI research fellow, Dr Elizabeth Cyarto, is coordinating Fitness for the Ageing Brain Study II, which involves NARI, the WA Centre for Health and Ageing and the University of Queensland. The three-year study is funded by NHMRC.

About 230 volunteers are needed for the randomised control trial that involves moderate physical activity at least three times a week for people in the intervention group. The physical activity will probably comprise walking but will be tailored to each person's interests.

"We hope to show that physical activity can decrease the participants' rate of cognitive decline. The study is also looking at physical aspects like improved fitness, wellbeing and quality of life for participants and also their carers," says Dr Cyarto.

The study stems from earlier research by Professor Nicola Lautenschlager where older adults with mild cognitive impairment showed improved memory after taking part in a six-month physical activity program.

Also on the NARI research team are Professor David Ames (NARI Director), Professor Lautenschlager, Dr Dina LoGiudice, Professor Keith Hill, Courtney Hempton and Emma Renehan.

### To volunteer for the study

Participants must:

- Have mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease
- Have a carer for at least 10 hours weekly to assist them in the physical activity program
- Be physically well enough to take part
- Live at home or in a retirement village

For more details about participating

Dr Elizabeth Cyarto or Courtney Hempton: 8387 2305

## Leading role for Professor Gibson



"The easiest way to make change and improve service provision in pain management is to be in an executive position and make our views known to government. Being the new President of the Australian Pain Society (APS) enables me to do this," says NARI Deputy Director, Professor Stephen Gibson.

Professor Gibson, who heads NARI's Clinical Research Division, was appointed to this two-year, honorary position in April. The APS is the peak body for health

professionals working in pain management in Australia.

He intends to expand the organisation's traditional approach of focusing on one project at a time. The present project, *Waiting in Pain*, is assessing the waiting time for access to services. He is interested in developing an initiative for cancer pain, a model for sub-acute pain services and joint projects with the Royal Australasian College of Anaesthetists Faculty of Pain Medicine.

As APS President, he is also on the steering committee for the National Pain Summit to assist government in developing a policy on pain management services and funding.

## Did you know?

NARI developed a new set of *Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Australians* that was launched by the Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, in March. The research team, led by Professor Keith Hill, comprised Betty Haralambous, Sue Hunt and also Dr Jane Sims from Monash University.

### The physical activity recommendations include:

- Do some type of physical activity, no matter your age, weight, health problems or abilities.
- Be active every day in as many ways as possible, doing a range of physical activities that incorporate fitness, strength, balance and flexibility.
- Do at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity daily, if possible.
- If you have stopped a physical activity or are starting a new one, begin at a level that you can easily manage and gradually build up to the recommended level.

## Thank you

Thank you to everyone who returned the Volunteer Expression of Interest form included in the December issue of *Ageing Well*.

### To join our volunteer database

Ph: 8387 2305 E: [info@nari.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:info@nari.unimelb.edu.au)

## Joining the Board



Professor Bruce Singh has joined the NARI Board of Directors as the delegate of the Dean of the University's Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, replacing Professor James Angus. Professor Singh brings to the Board a wealth of experience in research, administration and health care, and he is one of the most respected academic psychiatrists in Australia.

## New grants

NARI received several grants recently, including the following:

### Let's play

What are the benefits when children from a playgroup and residents in an aged care facility interact with one another? A study involving NARI and Playgroup Victoria has received \$28,000 in funding from the Count Us In initiative from the Victorian Government Department of Human Services to explore this concept.

### Helping veterans

Is there a link between falls and sleeping difficulties? A nine-month NARI project, with the Institute for Breathing and Sleep at the Austin Hospital, has been funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

### Reviewing the Dementia Guide

NARI is updating its *Dementia Resource Guide*, developed in 2007, with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

## Education scene

NARI's education and training program presents these workshops...

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR THE OLDER PERSON: July

For community health professionals Venue: NARI

### MANAGING FALLS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES: August 4 -5

For residential care managers and staff

Venue: Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Preston

### ASSESSMENT AND CARE PLANNING: August

For community care workers Venues: Bendigo and Ararat

### MANAGING PAIN IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

For residential care managers and staff

Venue: Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Preston

## How's your health?

Improve your chances of ageing well by volunteering to complete NARI's Healthy Ageing Quiz. Your involvement will help NARI to evaluate the effectiveness of the quiz. The project has been funded by the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre.

### Obtain your Healthy Ageing Quiz from:

Freda Vratsidis – Ph: 8387 2596 E: [f.vratsidis@nari.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:f.vratsidis@nari.unimelb.edu.au)

Claudia Meyer – Ph: 8387 2614 E: [c.meyer@nari.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:c.meyer@nari.unimelb.edu.au)

## Key research events



There is considerable and diverse research on many aspects of ageing taking place at the University of Melbourne. This was the clear message from researchers from numerous departments of the university, during an inaugural meeting in February, initiated by NARI. Likely outcomes from this event are the creation of a university-wide ageing research network and the hope of improved support for ageing research across the university.

Presentations on the initial results from the Australian Imaging Biomarkers and Lifestyle (AIBL) study of ageing, that I lead, created interest at the Alzheimer's Disease/Parkinson's Disease Conference in Prague and also the Alzheimer's Disease International Meeting in Singapore, during March.

## Spreading the word



NARI principal research fellow, Dr Colleen Doyle, has highlighted advancements, barriers and gaps in dementia training and education, as guest editor of a journal supplement in *International Psychogeriatrics*, published in April.

The supplement titled, 'International perspectives on dementia education, training and knowledge transfer', was funded by the Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing, and co-sponsored by NARI. Experts from Australia, the United Kingdom and United States contributed papers.

"With dementia on the rise, it was timely to present a wide range of training programs offered in various countries and provide an insight into the best ways to transfer knowledge," says Dr Doyle.

"Australia has led the way worldwide in implementing a Dementia Initiative so creating an international profile for this work was also important."

Journal articles include the importance of leadership in dementia training, university dementia training programs in the United Kingdom, the concept of educating general practitioners in the management of Alzheimer's disease, and a dementia learning program for healthcare assistants in hospitals in Scotland. Another paper describes dementia education and training as a responsibility of the whole community, from policy-makers to family carers.

*\*Dr Doyle is the project manager for a consortium evaluating the effect and benefits of the Government's \$320 million Initiative, comprising research, training and care for people with dementia.*

Our attempts to secure funding to extend the study into 2010 and beyond have received encouraging support in recent weeks. We hope it will be possible to continue the study and reap the benefits of the initial investment of time and money in assembling this enthusiastic group of 1112 volunteers. An abstract describing the initial findings will soon be available at NARI's website or via [www.journals.cambridge.org/jid\\_IPG](http://www.journals.cambridge.org/jid_IPG).

Some elements of the AIBL study were incorporated into a successful University of Melbourne Dean's Lecture forum that I presented with Professor Nicola Lautenschlager in April. The topic was 'Cognitive decline in late life: from ignorance and despair to understanding and hope'. The sophisticated questions from an enthusiastic audience of over 180 people showed that they grasped the importance of this topic for the future of our society. To view what they gleaned on the day, go to the slide presentation at the NARI website: [www.nari.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.nari.unimelb.edu.au).

**PROFESSOR DAVID AMES, NARI DIRECTOR**

## Thank you

We wish to thank the following NARI supporters for their recent generous donations.

Mrs Dorothy Birch    Mrs Noel Eury

Mrs Margaret R Janes    Mrs Anne Menzies    Mrs Jean Thomas

## 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.

### I/We would like to donate \$ .....

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Please tick (✓) the box if you consent to your name/s being published in future NARI publications.

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PO Box 2127, Royal Melbourne Hospital Victoria 3050

**Donations of \$2 and over are fully tax deductible** AW 50

*Thank you*

## NARI is delighted to welcome four new staff members...

### Passionate about women's health



Corry Garamszegi is as passionate about women's health now, as in 1991, when she became involved in the pioneering Melbourne Women's Midlife Health Project.

Back then, her background in nursing and computer programming complemented her role as database manager, fieldwork supervisor and interviewer for the first

population-based longitudinal study of Australian-born women and their experiences of menopause.

"The women were lovely – they told me so much about themselves. It was exciting to be part of the project for nine years and to work with Professor Lorraine Dennerstein," she says. During this time, she also completed her Masters of Women's Health.

Corry is based at NARI as a project coordinator for the Women's Health Ageing Project, which is an extension of the original study. She is assisting senior research fellow, Dr Cassandra Szoeko.

"I know the data and the study so well. There is so much information that has the potential to inform women on every aspect of healthy ageing," she says.

### Changing careers



NARI research assistant Paul Jeffery had no qualms about swapping the security of a 12-year career in the air force to one in health research.

For the past three years, he juggled his work commitments – he is experienced in aeronautical engineering, project management and IT – to complete a Masters of Nutrition.

"I am keen to make a difference to people's lives because everyone deserves to enjoy optimum health," he says. His particular interests are nutrition and physical activity.

Paul started at NARI in April and is pleased to be in such a dynamic research setting. He is working on several projects, including the *Dementia Resource Guide* review and the Launceston Hospital Falls Project.

### A great combination



Mark Bradbeer has what it takes for his role as a nurse educator for a major NARI study – a combination of nursing experience and research expertise in pain management.

Since October, he has been working with carers and nursing staff at the Royal Freemasons' Homes as part of NARI's Encouraging Best Practice in Residential Aged

Care (EBRAC) project in pain management.

"To some extent, this project is about empowering the caring staff so they realise that they are at the heart of pain management for their patients," he says.

His first stint at NARI was from 1991 to 2002. During these years, he worked in the pain clinic once a week. For the rest of the week, he was involved in clinical drug trials (relating to pain or memory), pain research with Stephen Gibson, and government-funded projects, such as the Personal Alert Systems and a scoping study of Australian ageing research.

He also co-authored the Pain Management Guidelines on which the EBRAC project is based.

### Enjoying NARI



Linda Emmanuel is enjoying her busy and varied role as the newly appointed administrative assistant at NARI.

Exuding a warm and personable approach, Linda brings to this position extensive experience in local government and the health sector. Previously, she worked with the Moonee Valley Melbourne Primary Care Partnership service.

"NARI is a great place to work – so interesting and friendly," she says.

## Congratulations

Dr Melissa Russell and Dr Sandy Petty have each been awarded a PhD for their research. Read about their work in September's *Ageing Well*.