



Ageing Well

National Ageing Research Institute

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Making old age better

People's experience of old age should be better and NARI has a key role in making this happen.

This was the message from NARI Director, Professor David Ames, speaking at the Institute's AGM in November and at the 'thank you' afternoon tea for NARI volunteers in December.

"NARI has magnificent expertise in falls prevention and balance, pain management, preventive health, music therapy and project assessment," he says.

- "One issue in getting older is the high rate of illness. It is important for research to address health issues, such as dementia, Parkinson's disease, vascular disease, diabetes, arthritis, pain and wound healing so that more people can live independently for longer."
- Looking ahead for the Institute, he highlighted more research into dementia and the health needs of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and a larger role in educating medical professionals and the community about ageing well.
- In addition, NARI plans to expand its collaborative research with universities and community health services.

NARI AGM

"NARI has an air of vibrancy. Professor David Ames is providing strong leadership and positive changes are taking place – more staff, expansion of the students' program and new research programs.

The Board's professional expertise also continues to expand. We are delighted to welcome Associate Professor Elizabeth Ozanne, head of the School of Social Work at the University of Melbourne.

Overall, it looks set to be an exciting year for NARI."

THE HON MICHAEL MACKELLAR (NARI BOARD PRESIDENT)



At the AGM.
NARI Board Treasurer Colin Smith with (from left) Yvette Montell, researcher Sue Hunt and Dr Briony Dow (Director of Preventive and Public Health).

Supporting NARI's work.

Among the guests were (from left) Chris Puckey and Andrew Scaramozzino (Aged Care Branch, Department Human Services) and Wendy Bateman (RSL Victorian Headquarters).



Alzheimer's disease - page 3

Handy guide for dementia care - The research team reviewed about 700 resources in 12 months to create this one-stop Dementia Resource Guide.

Defeating Alzheimer's disease - To prevent or delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, people at high risk need to be identified. Will you consider volunteering for this important study?

'Thank you' afternoon tea for volunteers

"NARI is many things but without volunteers our research couldn't happen. Your commitment to NARI and enthusiasm in assisting us are deeply appreciated."

PROFESSOR DAVID AMES (NARI DIRECTOR)



Sharing research results.

Loss of control over their life and lack of sleep were two major problems identified by caregivers looking after a partner, according to NARI researcher Claudia Meyer (pictured). In another presentation, research assistant Chathushka Fonseka revealed that people with dementia showed substantial cognitive improvements with music therapy.



Improving care for older people.

Volunteers (seated from left) Zelma Riddell, Stan Johnston and Faye Brassington were members of NARI's Consumer and Carer Advisory Committee for the person-centred care project that was recently completed. The research team, headed by Dr Jean Tinney (left), also included Dr Briony Dow (Director of Preventive and Public Health) and Leslie Dowson.

Keen to learn more.

Volunteers Elaine Tunnell-Jones (left) and Elizabeth Lindeman enjoy being part of NARI's research projects and having the chance to share their views and learn more about healthy ageing.



NARI's second director remembered

Professor Ronald Cape, a former director of the National Research Institute for Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine (NRIGGM), died in November. He headed the Institute from 1986-87, after the retirement of foundation director Professor Derek Prinsley. NRIGGM was renamed NARI in 1994.

Ron Cape graduated in science and medicine from the University of Edinburgh in 1944. After serving with the RAF, he worked in Scotland and Canada. He was a pioneer in developing geriatric medicine in Birmingham and then became professor and chief of geriatric medicine at the University of Western Ontario in London (Canada) from 1975 to 1986.

After leaving NRIGGM, Ron worked as a geriatrician for several regional aged care assessment teams in Victoria. He was chairman of the NRIGGM Institute committee from 1987 to 1992.

Among his many achievements were the publication of his textbook *Ageing: its Complex Management* (Harper and Rowe, 1978) and being awarded the British Geriatrics Society's 50th Anniversary Medal for outstanding service to geriatric medicine.

He is remembered as an outstanding clinician, teacher, researcher, administrator and passionate advocate for high quality, publicly-funded health care for older people.

He is survived by his wife Pat, two sons and six grandchildren, to whom all at NARI extend their sincere condolences.



** Compiled from material supplied by Professor Rob Helme (NARI Director 1987-2000) and Mrs Pat Cape. Extensive obituaries were published in The Age (28 November 2007) and the ANZSGM December 2007 newsletter. Ron Cape's life is recounted in Who's Who in the World.*

Ronald Duncan Thomson Cape
BSc (Hons) MD FRCP (Ed) FRCPC FACP
9-2-1921 - 9-11-2007

Let's exercise

People from Polish and Macedonian backgrounds are participating in a NARI study into falls prevention and physical activity.

"The project extends our previous research involving people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds," says researcher Kirsten Moore, who heads the project.

When a person with dementia is in pain...

"It really comes down to just the eyes. When we move her, she just looks at us. How much pain is that?"

"We need the education but we just learn on the job"



These are among the comments from nurses to NARI PhD student Pamela Johnson who has been researching pain assessment in people with dementia and limited communication.

"Looking at a person's face is a good way to realise that someone is in pain. However, nurses don't have the time to do this, they're too busy caring for the residents' needs," says Pamela.

"Nurses need more education about how to recognise pain in older people, and especially in those with dementia and loss of verbal skills and mobility. For this group, pain is usually evident in their face, voice and body language."

Her research also highlighted that nurses wanted formal pain assessments to occur every two months because people with dementia could deteriorate quickly. For accreditation, residential care homes are required to do only one assessment annually on residents.

\$550,000 grant

A \$550,000 NHMRC grant will investigate whether memory training is beneficial for people with mild cognitive impairment, a condition that can sometimes lead to Alzheimer's disease.

NARI Director, Professor David Ames, is involved in the three-year study that is headed by Associate Professor Glynda Kinsella of La Trobe University.

- "This collaborative research with Westbay Alliance and Brimbank/Melton Primary Care Partnerships is
- challenging the barriers that prevent people being more physically active, which includes the misconception that
- exercise aggravates existing health problems.
- "The randomised trial involves an educational component
- and developing individual exercise plans to motivate
- participants to be more active."

Alzheimer's Disease

Defeating Alzheimer's disease

Millions of people worldwide would benefit if Alzheimer's disease – the main cause of dementia – could be delayed or prevented.



It is a realistic goal because the events that cause brain cells to die and lead to symptoms of Alzheimer's disease occur decades before memory loss becomes evident. This process is well understood from the extensive work of researchers, such as Melbourne's Professor Colin Masters.

However, to prevent or delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, we need to be able to identify people at high risk.

PROFESSOR DAVID AMES (NARI DIRECTOR)

Handy guide for dementia care

The *Dementia Resource Guide* produced by NARI will make it quick and easy for people caring for someone with dementia to find information they need.

More than 300 resources are recommended in the guide that will be available on a website and as a publication.

The project was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing as part of its national policy to improve care of people with dementia.

The topics include clinical care, quality of life, transition to residential care, working with people from different backgrounds, early onset dementia and explaining dementia to children.

"Although there are many resources and websites about dementia, this *Dementia Resource Guide* brings all the relevant information together in a one-stop shop on dementia care," says Kirsten Moore, the project manager.

"The guide will be particularly useful for staff in residential care or community care settings, though hospitals and family carers will also find it helpful."

The project team evaluated more than 700 resources for possible inclusion in the kit, with each being reviewed by two team members. Each resource was then coded into categories ranging from help sheets and posters to clinical guidelines. The guide was piloted in numerous community, health and residential care settings in Australia.

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing is currently reviewing the *Dementia Resource Guide*.



Developing the *Dementia Resource Guide*. From left, Courtney Hempton, Sue Hunt, Kirsten Moore and Professor Keith Hill.

You can help this important study

The CSIRO-funded Australian Imaging Biomarkers and Lifestyle (AIBL) study of ageing, that I head, is aiming to develop reliable pre-symptomatic diagnostic tests for Alzheimer's disease.

Already, we have exceeded our target of recruiting 600 healthy people aged over 60 years for the control group.

However, for AIBL to achieve its aim, we are now seeking people who have:

- Mild Alzheimer's disease, live at home and are capable of doing up to two hours of memory and concentration tests
- Mild Cognitive Impairment diagnosed by a specialist neurologist, geriatrician, psychiatrist or memory clinic

If you or someone you know fits into either category, please consider becoming involved in the study.

FOR DETAILS: Dr Kathryn Ellis

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In other research into Alzheimer's disease, trials of new therapies that can be added to existing treatments, such as aricept and reminyl, are set to start in Melbourne.

FOR DETAILS: Bernadette, Anita, Liz and Maree

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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 45

NARI news

Keen to go green

NARI is keen to play its part in caring for the environment.

"We have an enthusiastic committee developing a green policy to promote ways that NARI can be more energy efficient. We want to raise awareness about the simple things that staff can do to reduce the carbon footprint," says PhD student Melissa Russell, who initiated the idea.



Creating a green policy for NARI. Committee members include (from left) Courtney Hempton, Debra O'Connor (NARI's Executive Manager) and Melissa Russell.

Aussie research

"I was interested in coming to Australia, and the idea of gaining research experience was appealing because it isn't normally part of our clinical internships back home," says Makenzie Womer, a final-year physical therapy doctorate student from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania (USA).

"Many physical therapy (physiotherapy) techniques originate from Australia so I wanted to experience it firsthand."

Makenzie will spend almost four months in Melbourne, dividing her time between NARI and the Vestibular and Falls and Balance Clinics at the Royal Melbourne Hospital (Royal Park campus). She is researching the prevalence and predictors of the fear of falling in older people who come to an emergency department after a fall, and the outcomes of an intervention program.



Congratulations

NARI's Director of Preventive and Public Health, Dr Briony Dow, and Dr Jean Tinney have been appointed senior fellows in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Melbourne.

Delighted to be back

Welcome back to researchers Betty Haralambous and Marcia Fearn, and administrative assistant Lynette Bon.

"It's great to be back at NARI. I like the work and the dynamic team. My experience during the past 12 months has certainly enhanced my skills in the area of residential care," says Betty.

Betty is involved in three projects – assessing the effects of a community-based strength-training program for older adults, improving communication between staff and residents in aged care facilities, and an Australia-wide best practice program for falls prevention in residential care.

Marcia has also been working on the latter project since returning part-time to NARI after maternity leave.

"It's wonderful being part of such a friendly and professional workplace," she says.

"I like the atmosphere at NARI and I really believe in the Institute's research mission of healthy ageing," says Lynette. After two years away, she is enjoying her administrative role, while Beata Werner is on maternity leave.



Enjoying NARI's friendly and dynamic atmosphere. From left, Marcia Fearn, Betty Haralambous and Lynette Bon

Returning to do a PhD

Thai physiotherapy lecturer Plaiwan Suttanon may have only briefly visited NARI in 2006, but she was captivated by the diverse research projects.

With funding from the Thai Government, Plaiwan has returned to do a PhD. She is investigating whether people with early memory problems also have early balance problems and if an exercise program can improve their balance when problems are detected early.

