Welcome to the 3rd edition of the PCR Team Newsletter, updating on progress of various studies and activities over the last 3 months. It has been a very active period preparing for the year ahead with new grant applications, and seeing the results of earlier work beginning to come to fruition.


- **Grants**: Our team are founding members of the Northern Rehabilitation Consortium (consisting of AUT, UoA + Cavil ABI). This group has been commissioned by ACC to establish a National Centre of Excellence that will work with ACC and a wide range of services providers to deliver best practice and optimum outcomes for people with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury throughout New Zealand. The CoE will be operational at the beginning of 2008. For more details contact Kath McPherson Kathryn.McPherson@aut.ac.nz.

- **Stop Press!**: The PCR team has just been awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Excellence Award for 2007 on the basis of its performance as a research team. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the group and supported us along the way to make this possible including colleagues in the HRRC and elsewhere, participants and supporters of our studies as well as those who have funded our work. Thank you!

### 2. FOCUS .....

Each issue we focus in a bit more depth on a particular researcher or project, and this month we look at some of the work being done by Nicola Kayes. Nicola has a health psychology background, and was one of the first people to join the PCR Team in 2005. Since then she has worked on a number of research projects and been pivotal in the growth and development of our team. In addition to research, Nicola makes a significant contribution to the School through teaching and mentorship and as a result, she has recently been appointed to a permanent post as Senior Research Officer.

**Facilitating Activity for Well-being in people with Multiple Sclerosis**

Nicola’s main project (which also forms her PhD) is focused on enhancing activity engagement for people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). MS is a chronic disabling condition of the central nervous system, affecting an estimated 2500 New Zealanders\(^1\). Despite the growing body of literature confirming the benefits of exercise and physical activity in people with MS\(^2\) they continue to engage in particularly low levels of physical activity when compared with the general population and other chronic illness groups\(^3\)\(^-\)\(^6\). Nicola’s research explores the variables which affect participation in activity amongst people with MS with a view to developing and testing interventions which address these issues.

The initial phase of the work, funded by the Health Research Council (HRC)*, used both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews) methods to explore the barriers/facilitators to goal-directed physical activity for people with MS from the perspective of those living with the condition. This phase is now complete with over 280 people with MS taking part and contributing to the study. The findings from this phase and existing knowledge have informed the design of a novel intervention and the development of a treatment manual to ensure standardised delivery of the intervention - The Facilitating Activity for well-Being (FAB) Programme.

* ‘Addressing barriers to physical activity in multiple sclerosis.’ Applicants: Prof Kathryn McPherson, Dr Denise Taylor, Dr Harry McNaughton, Ms Nicola Kayes, Prof Philip Schluter, & Prof Gregory Kolt.
2. FOCUS CONT.

The FAB programme is designed to facilitate people with MS to take part in physical activity. It combines activity scheduling with explicit management of the barriers/facilitators to physical activity identified by people with MS and uses a modular approach to balance the need for an individualised programme, whilst maintaining standardised delivery. The FAB programme is currently being piloted with a small number of people with MS to further refine it and ensure its acceptability to participants with MS and the clinicians delivering the programme. Nicola and the team working on this project have recently submitted an application to the HRC to test the FAB programme in a full definitive trial to determine the impact it has on facilitating activity in people with MS.

Facilitating participation in physical activity for people with complex neurological conditions such as MS will contribute to reduced risk of secondary impairments as well as enhanced functional, psychological and social outcomes.

The first publication to arise from Nicola’s current work is cited below[7]. For more information about this or the FAB intervention please contact Nicola: nkayes@aut.ac.nz

Papers referred to on the previous page

3. NEW PROJECTS

Two newly funded projects have been granted ethics approval over the last few months and are now underway:-

Factors influencing the decision to seek employment or return to work after spinal cord injury: A qualitative pilot study

Applicants: Joanna Fadyl, Kath McPherson, Nicola Kayes, Sridhar Atresh, Julian Verkaaik, Arron Perriam
Funding—AUT University

A common outcome measure in spinal cord injury rehabilitation is return to work, yet rate of return to work in this population is low. Studies have attempted to identify factors that indicate whether someone is likely to return to paid employment following a spinal cord injury. Despite this, it is still unclear what factors influence the actual decision-making for individuals. This study, using qualitative methodology, aims to explore the factors influencing people’s decisions to seek paid employment after spinal cord injury.

Having received ethical and DHB clinical board approval, we are currently recruiting for the first stage of interviews through the Auckland branch of the Kaleidoscope Vocational Programme based at Auckland Spinal Unit.

The purpose of this project is to inform further research into what supports or interventions may be most effective when assisting people back into work following spinal cord injury.

For more information contact: Jo Fadyl /fadyl@aut.ac.nz

Improving pre-pregnancy, maternity and early childcare health interventions and support for women experiencing disability.

Applicants: Kath McPherson, Debbie Payne, Ruth DeSousza,Lynne Giddings, Dianne Roy (UNITEC), Cynthia Farquhar (University of Auckland), Matire Harwood (MRINZ), Research Officer: Bernadette Guerin
Funding - Health Research Council

To date little research has been carried out to indicate or respond to the issues for women with disability considering or pursuing pregnancy, birth and motherhood. This study is designed to identify the physical, emotional, and social issues that arise for women with physical or sensory disabilities throughout pregnancy, birth and mothering their pre-school children.

A qualitative approach will be used to explore the views of: 1) New Zealand women who have physical or sensory disabilities and 2) health professionals involved in maternity, child care, and health and disability services. This data will then be used to identify and develop strategies to minimize avoidable disabling consequences in order to promote wellbeing for the woman with disabilities as well as her child and family.

It is hoped that the findings will directly improve wellbeing for New Zealand women with impairment and their families and inform future intervention research, professional education and policy.

For more information contact: Kath McPherson Kathryn.McPherson@aut.ac.nz , Debbie Payne dpayne@aut.ac.nz or Bernadette Guerin bguerin@aut.ac.nz
Peer reviewed articles


Pengel, L., C.G. Maher, Refshauge, K. McPherson, M. Nicholas, R.D. Herbert, and P. McNair, Randomised controlled trial comparing the efficacy of exercise, advice, or both for sub acute low back pain. Ann of Internal Medicine, 2007. in press.


Book chapters


Commissioned reports


Conference presentations and posters


In National Institute of Rehabilitation Research and New Zealand Rehabilitation Association Conference. Rotorua, New Zealand, 16-18 February 2007:-


Jones, K. on behalf of the EVRNZ Group. Return to work after injury: a return to the same employment role for most working people. Disability and Rehabilitation: 29, 1646.


This month we are very pleased to welcome a new member to our team, Bernadette Guerin. She will be joining us to manage the Mothers and Disability study, and brings considerable skills to the team.

As noted in Focus on page 1, our team is also leading a study exploring barriers and facilitators to physical activity for people with MS, and the interest and support we received from the MS Society has been invaluable. Taking part in the MS Footloose Funwalk was one way of saying thank you to all those who have helped us with our research.

On the 11th November 2007 sixteen of us (AUT staff, friends and families) plodded cheerfully round the track during the MS Footloose Funwalk at Alexandra Park in Auckland. We all had a great time and completed over 100 laps! All funds raised from this event will go towards the many crucial support services and programmes that MS Auckland provide for the hundreds of people living with this debilitating condition in the Auckland region.

Our fundraising page stays open for a little bit longer so if you would like to make a donation feel free to visit!!

http://www.fundraiseonline.co.nz/AUTUniversityThePersonCentredR/

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>7th World Congress on Brain Injury [<a href="http://internationalbrain.org/news.php?depid=0&amp;page=1&amp;list=85">http://internationalbrain.org/news.php?depid=0&amp;page=1&amp;list=85</a>]</td>
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<td>25 - 28 August 2008</td>
<td>Disability Rights and Social Participation: Ensuring a Society for all. 21st RI World Congress [<a href="http://www.riquebec2008.org/">http://www.riquebec2008.org/</a>]</td>
<td>Quebec City, Canada</td>
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