

# ALLIED HEALTH RESEARCH REPORT 2025

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## A brief snapshot

### Key achievements for 2025

- **Expansion of Allied Health research team** following grants awarded with the appointment of a fixed term Post Doctorate Research Fellow – Virtual Health Services (0.8 EFT) position as well as an Allied Health and Nursing Falls Champion
- **>5 successful grant applications totalling \$500K** in support of multidisciplinary research and quality improvement, across orthopaedic care, Motor Neurone Disease, dementia and student training
- **A successful research week** with 7 oral presentations delivered, 5 posters (digital and printed) and one award received
- **The rollout of the Allied Health Research Roadshow**, with 11 sessions delivered across 8 disciplines
- **4 PhDs candidates**; within Allied Health Research, Physiotherapy and Psychology teams
- **The second largest cohort within the Stepping Into Research program to date**, with 11 participants across Physiotherapy, Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Social Work and Mental Health Psychology
- **5 research awards** across allied health
- **Continuation of the research newsletter series**, with 5 distributed across the year
- **41 publications** in total across all Allied Health, including **3 Stepping Into Research publications**
- **>79 staff engaged in conferences**; 71 national presentations, 4 international presentations, 2 workshops delivered nationally and internationally and 2 conference sessions chaired by Northern Health allied health staff
- **4 research-focused workshops** delivered throughout the year

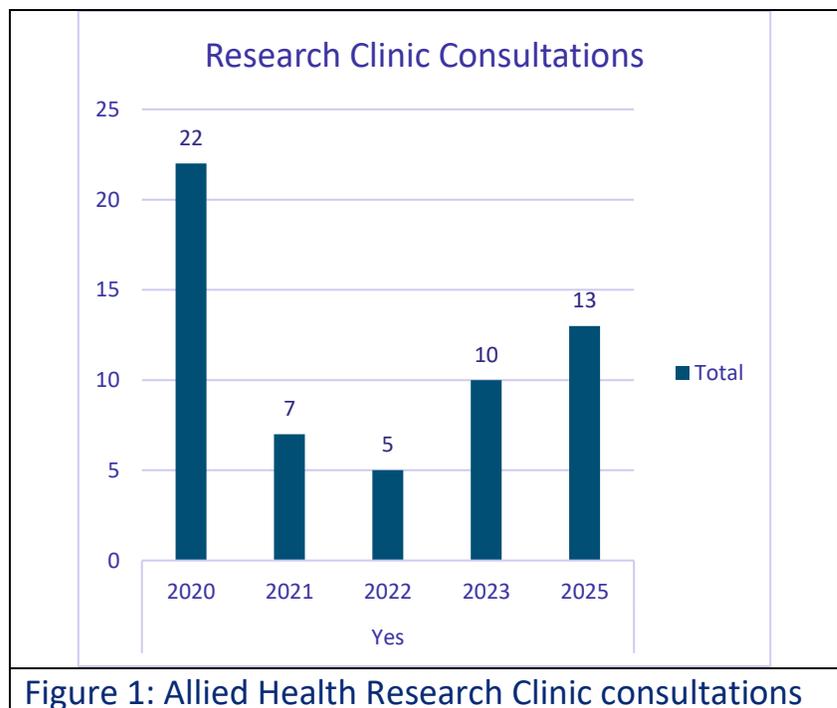
## 2025 reflection

Northern Health continued to strengthen its commitment to allied health research throughout 2025, marked by strong clinician engagement and research output.

More than five successful grant applications were awarded in 2025, totalling approximately \$500K, supporting multidisciplinary research and quality improvement initiatives across orthopaedic care, Motor Neurone Disease, dementia and student training. These achievements reflect the ongoing focus on translating research into meaningful clinical practice and fostering collaboration across disciplines. Research Week was another highlight of the year, with a successful program featuring seven oral presentations, five posters (digital and printed), and one award received in allied health. Congratulations to Dr Swapna Gokhale (Post-Doctoral research fellow, Allied Health) for receiving an award, and to all allied health staff who submitted abstracts and showcased the breadth and quality of research activity occurring across Northern Health.

A key initiative in 2025 was the rollout of the Allied Health Research Roadshow, with 11 sessions delivered across eight disciplines. The roadshow supported research capability building, providing clinicians with accessible, discipline-relevant research engagement and education. The Allied Health Research Clinic also continued to play a critical role in supporting clinician-led research and received increasing interest following the roadshow. 13 appointments were scheduled across allied health in 2025, reflecting growing engagement

(Figure 1). A formal evaluation of the clinic has been completed, with a peer-reviewed manuscript currently under review in BMC Health Services Research. Since 2020, the clinic has provided structured research guidance to 58 allied health professionals across disciplines, supporting skill development and problem-solving while addressing common barriers such as time constraints and competing priorities. At six-month follow-up, nearly three-quarters of participants reported progress in their research projects, with senior clinicians significantly more likely to advance work, highlighting the importance of protected time and mentorship in fostering a research-supportive culture.



Research training and development remained a priority, with four PhD candidates supported across Allied Health Research, Physiotherapy and Psychology teams. The Stepping into Research (SIR) program also continued to grow, welcoming its second largest cohort to date, with 11 clinicians participating across Physiotherapy, Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Social Work and Mental Health Psychology. The program continues to build research confidence and skills among clinicians, with participants encouraged to progress their work towards publication.

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Recognition of excellence was evident throughout the year, with five research awards received across allied health. There has been a steady increase in the number of publications over the past 3 years, with 41 publications produced across allied health, including three publications arising from the SIR program. We produced five editions of the Allied Health Research Newsletter, highlighting key achievements, publications, workshops and conference activity.

Conference engagement was another standout achievement in 2025, with 79 allied health staff involved. This included 71 national presentations, four international presentations, two workshops delivered nationally and internationally, and two conference sessions chaired by Northern Health allied health staff. In addition, research education continued locally, with four sessions delivered across the year to support skill development and knowledge translation.

Overall, 2025 was a year of growth, collaboration and impact for allied health research at Northern Health. We acknowledge and thank all clinicians, researchers and leaders who contributed to, supported and celebrated research throughout the year, laying strong foundations for continued success ahead.

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## New major projects approved with grant funding

### Exploring Stakeholder Perspectives on Virtual Emergency Care for People Living with Dementia: A Qualitative Study

RM Gibson Program research grant

\$10,000.00

Project lead: Stephen Quick (AH Research)

This important study will examine how families, clinicians, and service providers view the role of virtual emergency care in supporting people living with dementia. By capturing diverse stakeholder perspectives, Stephen's work aims to inform future models of care.

### Musculoskeletal Wellness Program: A virtual pre-operative program to support older adults through joint replacement surgery

Ramsay Foundation Grant

\$398,498.00

Project lead: Adam Semciw (AH Research)

The grant will see Northern Health partnering with Northern Private Hospital and La Trobe University to develop Victoria's first personalised digital education pathway for patients awaiting elective joint replacement surgery. This innovative project seeks to address the current challenge that less than half of eligible patients currently access pre-operative rehabilitation due to barriers such as travel and transportation. The digital platform will have the potential to be integrated into both private and public perioperative orthopaedic care, aiming to improve patient readiness, reduce post-surgical complications, and enhance recovery outcomes.

The grant reflects the growing recognition of allied health leadership in translational research—bridging evidence and practice to deliver innovative models of care. This achievement highlights the collaborative strength of our teams and their commitment to advancing musculoskeletal wellness through research that directly benefits patients. We look forward to sharing updates on the program's development in future newsletters and its impact on surgical pathways in future. An overview of the research plan can be viewed in the published protocol:

*Semciw, A. I., Jessup, R., Duckham, R., Gokhale, S., Gray, H., Bell, E. C., Quick, S. M., Gentle, J., Phan, U., See, K., Galea-O'Neill, R., Boyd, J., Heng, H., Webster, T., & King, M. G. (2025). Development of a Cocreated Perioperative Joint Replacement Digital Care Pathway to Improve Surgical Outcomes Following Joint Replacement: Protocol for a Mixed Methods Study. JMIR Res Protoc, 14, e85701. <https://doi.org/10.2196/85701>*



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## Patient Perspectives: Showcasing the Impact of the Musculoskeletal Wellness Program

### Northern Health Grant in Aid

\$10,000.00

Project lead: Rebeca Galea-O'Neill (Physiotherapy)

Northern Health's Orthopaedic, Physiotherapy and Dietetic Departments identified the need to develop a new model of osteoarthritis (OA) service delivery – one that more effectively meets consumer needs, delivers evidence-informed care in a systematic way, and positions Northern Health to respond to the anticipated rise in demand. MSK-Wellness launched in October 2022. The program is a multidisciplinary, clinician-supported, hybrid model of care. It combines education, targeted exercises, and diet and nutrition support, delivered via telehealth and multilingual resources, alongside face-to-face group options for those unable to access digital services. Emerging data indicates that the program is successfully reducing the orthopaedic wait list and that patients are reporting meaningful improvements in their symptoms and general wellbeing.

This grant will enable the collection of lived-experiences of patients participating in MSK-Wellness through semi-structured interviews. Specifically, the project team aims to understand the experience of patients who have taken part in terms of its impact on pain, function, and quality of life, informing iterations to improve our service. Importantly, this project will bring their stories to life through a patient video. By showcasing powerful patient testimonials, the project team hopes to help patients, carers, healthcare professionals, and policymakers better understand the positive impacts of MSK-Wellness. It will support greater awareness, increase referrals, and encourage wider adoption of best-practice OA care for Northern Health's community.

## Communication access in action: Interprofessional training for inclusive health care

### Learning and Teaching Initiatives Grant

\$30,000.00

Project co-investigator: Kathryn McKinley (Allied Health)

Kathryn McKinley, working within a research team at the University of Melbourne, was successful in receiving a grant to implement training in the physiotherapy and music therapy courses to support students to learn the skills to communicate with people with communication difficulty or disability.

In addition, a \$60,000 grant has been awarded to allied health and will be formally announced mid-2026.

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## Ongoing grant funded projects

### Safe Recovery - reducing falls injuries by older people in Australian hospitals. 2024-27 2027.

#### Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) grant

\$1,460,000.00

Project lead: Professor Anne-Marie Hill, in conjunction with Adam Semciw, Uyen Phan and Hazel Heng (La Trobe University and University of Western Australia).

Falls Champions: Narelle Frazer (Allied Health); Lauren Trim (Nursing)

Hospital falls among older adults remain a major safety priority, causing serious injury, loss of independence and increased healthcare use. Despite hospitals spending \$590 million annually on prevention, many common strategies, such as bed alarms, are ineffective. Evidence shows that patient-centred fall prevention education paired with staff support can reduce falls, yet few hospitals currently provide it. Our MRFF-funded project will address this gap by implementing an evidence-based education program across three health services, using co-designed resources, strong consumer involvement and a cluster stepped-wedge trial to evaluate outcomes. The initiative also aims to build workforce capacity through embedded training and mentorship in ageing and hospital care.

In 2025, an MRFF Safe Recovery Falls co-design workshop was held for staff on Friday 30th of May. The workshop was well-attended and included staff across both allied health and nursing. The day was focused on strategies to integrate the Safe-Recovery local at Northern Health. The workshop was by lead investigator Professor Anne-Marie Hill, in conjunction with **Adam Semciw (AH Research)**, **Uyen Phan (Physiotherapy)** and **Hazel Heng** in collaboration with La Trobe University and University of Western Australia). Staff were provided with information and an overview of the project before participating in round table discussions on four key topics: staff training, program delivery at a ward level, communication and organisational support. Information collected will be analysed and used to inform future phases of the project. We would like to thank all staff as well as Uyen for contributing to these discussions and assisting on the day.

Falls champions have been recruited, including Narelle Fraser from Physiotherapy, who began working closely with the Nursing Falls Champion (Lauren Trim) to lead the implementation of the program at ward level. Together, Allied Health Assistants will be trained to deliver a brief falls education program and develop personalised patient plans, which will be reinforced by all ward staff, who will also receive training to support patients in adopting safe behaviours and reinforcing key educational messages. The trial will be implemented in 2026.



## Reducing harm and adverse events in the management of low back pain in the Emergency Department

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) project \$200,000.00

Project leads: Tom Collins - Physiotherapy, Paul Jackson, Uyen Phan and Adam Semciw.

The Physiotherapy Department has been collaborating with the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority. The project's primary objective is to reduce patient harm in Emergency Medicine related to delayed and misdiagnoses of patients presenting with back pain and neurological (dizzy) symptoms. Northern Health has received funding to adapt and improve the VMIA Emergency Care Bundles, implement the VMIA Emergency Care Bundles in their ED including the VVED, and evaluate the clinical and consumer impact of the Emergency Care Bundle relating to back pain after 6 and 12/18-months post-implementation. An evaluation has been completed, with peer reviewed publications being prepared.

## Healthcare of the future: The development of an innovative co-created perioperative digital care pathway to improve patient surgical outcomes

Traffic Accident Commission Grant \$150,000.00

Project lead: Adam Semciw – Allied Health Research

This project aimed to improve surgical outcomes for patients awaiting joint replacement. Supported by Post-Doctoral Research Fellow- Dr Swapna Gokhale, we co-designed educational resources and a digital care pathway for patients undergoing joint replacement; and trialled the pathway on over 200 patients. A final report is being prepared, together with peer-reviewed publications.

Open access resources developed as part of this project:

- Understanding Pain and Pain Relief
  - Northern Health. (2025, 27 Nov). Joint Replacement: Understanding Pain and Pain Relief after Surgery [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLsAi2eOvgQ>
- Moving Safely Before and After Surgery
  - Northern Health. (2025, 27 Nov). Joint Replacement: Moving Safely Before and After Surgery [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6xQMJTkGhk>

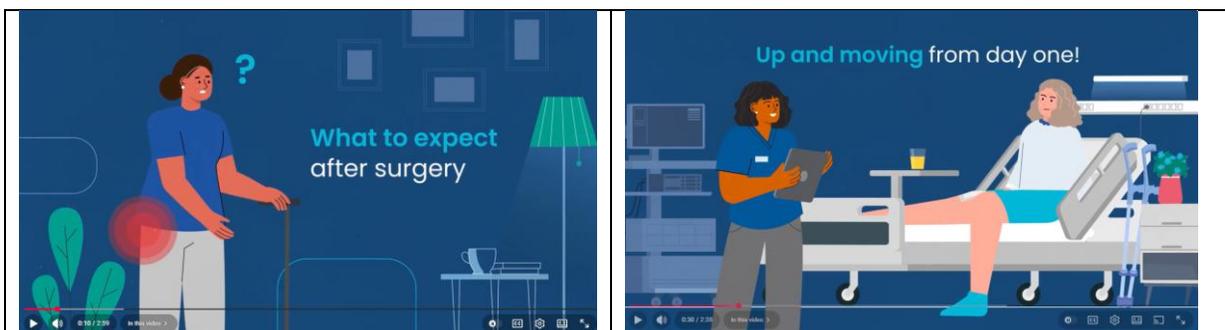


Figure 2: Co-designed educational resources for patients undergoing hip or knee joint replacement

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Determining feasibility of a virtual model of care for people at risk of falls: a mixed-methods approach

Research@Northern Grant

\$20,000.00

Project lead: Hazel Heng – Allied Health Research

This project aims to develop a virtual model of care for older adults at risk of falls by analysing patterns of community based fall-related presentations to the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department and exploring stakeholder perspectives on virtual falls management. It uses a mixed-methods design involving a retrospective audit of medical records to identify presentation characteristics and re-presentation rates, alongside interviews with patients, clinicians and managers to understand current service gaps and the feasibility of a virtual model. The overarching goal is to inform the design of an accessible, co-designed virtual falls clinic that could reduce waiting times, improve referral pathways and enhance outcomes for older people

The project has progressed substantially, with the full retrospective file audit now completed and hospital re-presentation outcomes analysed. Building on this foundation, the team is currently conducting both patient and staff interviews to capture experiences, perceptions and recommendations related to falls care and potential virtual models of support. These interviews are underway and will inform the next phase of analysis and manuscript development later in the year.

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## Northern Health Research Grants Program 2025-2026

Research grants were awarded to support work that benefits Northern Health's surrounding community, supports capacity building amongst staff, increases research productivity and strengthens research culture. Congratulations to **Rebecca Galea** (Physiotherapy) on receiving a Grant In Aid (\$10,000) for her project with the musculoskeletal wellness team (see grants section of this report for details).



Image to left: Grant awardees and presenting staff at Northern Health.

## Allied Health Research Committee Representatives

- Jeff Khoshaba/Samantha Botta (maternity leave) (**Pharmacy**)
- Jaspreet Kaur/Belinda Baines (maternity leave) (**Dietetics**)
- Emily Farrugia (**Dietetics**)
- Rebecca Turnbull (**Exercise Physiology**)
- Adrienne Munro (**Occupational Therapy**)
- Elaine Dos Santos (awaiting new representative) (**Physiotherapy**)
- Brooke Froud Cummins (**Psychology**)
- Miyuki Watanabe (**Speech Pathology**)
- Jack Yeung (**Prosthetics and Orthotics**)
- Yue Hu (**TALS**)
- Alycea Formosa (**Social Work**)
- Justine Slattery (**Allied Health Education**)
- Carolyn Dun (**Mental Health**)
- Tania Barry (**Library**)

## Research week

Northern Health's 2025 Research Week ran over 5 days again this year, with activities scheduled throughout the week. Research Week is a time to showcase the breadth of research occurring across allied health, meet inspiring researchers and learn from others producing research of their own, with this year's focus on innovation, collaboration, and discovery. Congratulations to all allied health clinicians who submitted abstracts and/or were selected to present or showcase their work via a poster or oral presentation throughout the week. Details of all presentations and posters can be found in this newsletter and in the [full event schedule](#).



Image above: featuring awardees from the 2025 Research Week

The week began with a grand opening and keynote speech, followed by the first poster session where selected researchers, students and clinicians had the opportunity to showcase their posters – well done all presenters!

Congratulations to **Nadia Obeid (Dietetics)** on being accepted for a printed poster for this session. Details below:

- **Obeid, N., Evans, R., Gerges, C., Fouhy, R., Parastatidis Frimodt, R., Quinton, E. Malnutrition Point Prevalence Study 2025.**

On day two, we began with a symposium on “Health Research in the Digital Age”, chaired by Prof **Adam Semciw (AH Research)** and A/Prof Rebecca Jessup, featuring a presentation by Professor James Boyd (La Trobe University). This presentation described the transformation of healthcare driven by digital technology and highlighted the move to more consumer-led, digitally connected health care models. The presentation also identified a range of digital health solutions, opportunities and challenges of this shift, with a focus on health equity and the potential for a digital divide.

Image to right: Panel presenters, including Adam Semciw



Image above: Nadia Obeid



The session's focus then moved to sharing key lessons on equity from the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department followed by a panel discussion to conclude the session. **Tom Collins (Physiotherapy)** presented on "Advanced Practice Physiotherapy in the VVED – Providing Emergency Musculoskeletal Care Across Victoria).



Image above: Tom Collins

This was followed by the Stepping Into Research Symposium, chaired by **Adam Semciw** and **Emily Farrugia (AH Research)** featuring the following:

- **Simone LeBel (Physiotherapy):** Does early physiotherapy post discharge from acute hospital improve quality of life and physical function following lower limb elective arthroplasty?
- **Monika Sekulov (Speech Pathology):** What is the impact of parent targeted allied health education delivered in neonatal units on the parenting role and developmental outcomes of high risk infants?
- **Rebecca Turnbull (Exercise Physiology):** Implementation of home-based high intensity interval training in patients with cardiac disease: A systematic review using the RE-AIM framework.
- **Jonathon Citroen (Physiotherapy):** Does physiotherapy contact in the Emergency Department for patients discharged home, reduce representations? Systematic review and meta-analysis. *(Please note: Jonathon's online presentation will be circulated at a later date).*



Image above: Simone LeBel



Image L-R:  
Monika  
Sekulov,  
Rebecca  
Turnbull



Congratulations to **Simone Lebel** on also being accepted for a printed poster for *Poster Session #2* of her systematic review, completed as part of the Stepping into Research program in 2024, now published in [Musculoskeletal Care](#).



Image above: Simone LeBel  
Image below: Swapna Gokhale

Day 3 of poster presentations featured **Swapna Gokhale's** poster (Northern Health/La Trobe University Research Fellow/Physiotherapist) titled “Data-driven risk prediction to optimise delirium prevention”.

Day 4 included a series of oral presentations and poster sessions, both in person and online. Congratulations to the following allied health clinicians accepted for digital posters:

- **Leahy, E., et al.** The effectiveness of online clinical mentoring on physiotherapists’ clinical practice. A randomised controlled trial. (**Edmund Leahy – Physiotherapy**). Details [here](#).
- **Mackley, R.** Boney and Inflammatory Changes of the Ipsilateral Foot Following First Toe and Partial First Metatarsal Amputation: A Case Series. (**Rhiannon Mackley – Podiatry**). Details [here](#).
- **Quick., S.,.. Jessup, R.,.. Semciw, A.** Virtual Emergency Department for People with Dementia: Usage Patterns and Outcomes. (**Stephen Quick and Adam Semciw – AH Research**). Details [here](#).



The final day included “**5-minute funding**” **rapid-fire presentations** from Northern Health Chief Investigators on successful nationally competitive research grants. **Adam Semciw (AH Research)**, currently at the APA conference, presented on “Musculoskeletal Wellness Program: A virtual pre-operative program to support older adults through joint replacement surgery”.

The awards ceremony was then held to conclude Research Week. Congratulations to **Swapna Gokhale** for winning *third place for best oral presentation*.

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## Conference participation

- 2025 MDHS Learning and Teaching Conference (University of Melbourne)
  - **Meg Keage** (Speech Pathology) presented an oral paper titled “Conversations that matter: learning and teaching with lived experience”

- Australian Wound & Skin Alliance Conference

Northern Health was represented by 3 staff attending the conference:

- **Jack Yeung** (Orthotics) presented on “High Risk Foot: Beyond just DFU”
  - **Jaymie Hughan** (Podiatry) presented on “Dermatology: Clinical Case Study”
  - **Nicoletta Frescos** (AH Research) was invited to present on her research titled “Psychological Impact of Wound Related Pain”
- British Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting (United Kingdom)
    - **Sam Holloway** (Podiatry) was accepted for their poster presentation titled “Holistic Management of Wound Related Pain”
  - Australian Podiatry Association Conference (Australia)
    - **Stephen Tucker** (Podiatry) delivered a workshop at this conference titled “The Road to Endorsement”
  - Asia Pacific Conference on Diabetic Limb Problems (Bangkok, Thailand)
    - **Nicoletta Frescos** (AH Research) was invited to present again on her research titled “Psychological Impact of Wound Related Pain”
  - 6th Global Wound Conference (Selangor, Malaysia)
    - **Nicoletta Frescos** (Podiatry/AH Research) was invited to deliver a workshop at this conference which was titled “Non invasive assessments for diabetes foot disease”. She was also accepted for a oral presentation on “Continuous autolytic debridement”
  - D-Foot International – Western Pacific Region Global Meet (Diabetes Awareness Day)
    - **Nicoletta Frescos** (Podiatry/AH Research) was invited to present on “An Economic Viewpoint of Diabetes Foot Care”
  - Diabetes Feet Australia Conference (Sydney)

Northern Health was again well-represented by the podiatry team with multiple staff members attending and presenting at the conference:

- **Jas Kaur** (Podiatry) was accepted for a ‘lightning presentation’ on her research titled “Faster, Smarter, Greener: How 3D-Printed Orthoses are Streamlining High-Risk Foot Management”

- **Rhiannon Mackley** (Podiatry) presented her poster titled “Boney and Inflammatory Changes of the Ipsilateral Foot Following First Toe and Partial First Metatarsal Amputation: A Case Series”
- **Jaymie Hughan** (Podiatry) also presented their poster titled “Not All Wounds Are What They Seem: Navigating the Complexities of Atypical Wound Diagnosis in a Diabetic Foot”



- 11th Biennial Australia and New Zealand Falls Prevention Conference (Sydney)

- **Lauren Mitchell** (Physiotherapy) was accepted to present her poster titled “Vestibular rehabilitation for reducing falls risk in the absence of vestibular dysfunction”
- **Hazel Heng** (AH Research) also presented “Delivering Patient Falls Prevention Education in Hospitals – The Consumer Perspective”



- Victorian Virtual Health Conference

- **Tom Collins** (Physiotherapy), joined by other Northern Health staff attending the day, was accepted to present on his talk titled “Some things I’ve learned about back pain”. Tom presented on the inclusion of Advanced Practice Physiotherapists within the VVED, which was well-received and highlighted the benefit of an advanced practice role in the VVED space.



- COSAIPO 2025 conference
  - **Anastasia Pourliakas** (Psychology) presented her poster titled... “

- Australasian Delirium Society DECLARED conference

- **Swapna Gokhale** delivered her presentation titled 'Delirium risk prediction from routinely collected electronic health records', which demonstrated the model's performance in predicting the risk of delirium within 48 hours of admission. The model was developed using a large sample size and provided a potential impact analysis of net interventions saved on implementation of this targeted delirium risk prediction. Congratulations to Swapna for also receiving an award for 'Best Oral Presentation' at this conference.



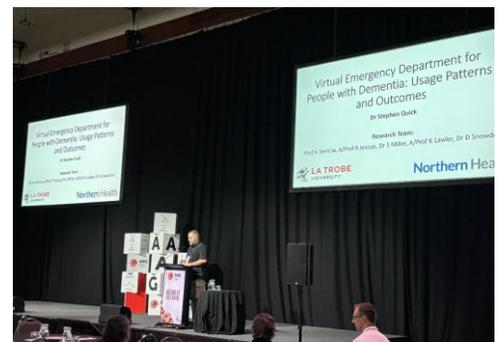
- Australian Physiotherapy Association conference (APASC25)
  - **Shalini Jayasekera** (Physiotherapy) presented “Examining the implementation of digital vestibular rehabilitation using the RE-AIM framework: a systematic review”
  - **Edmund Leahy** (Physiotherapy) “Does online clinical mentoring for physical therapists enhance clinical practice and patient outcomes? A randomized controlled trial”, evaluating the impact of a form of online clinical mentoring on patient outcomes. His results have been published in the Journal of Manual and Manipulative Therapy, available [here](#).



- National Multicultural Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025
  - **Yue Hu** (TALS) was invited to speak as a panellist at this conference...

- Australian Association of Gerontology/AAG Conference (Alice Springs)

- **Stephen Quick** (AH Research Team) presented on his research project titled “Exploring Stakeholder Perspectives on Virtual Emergency Care for People Living with Dementia: A Qualitative Study”. His presentation highlighted the growing need for novel approaches to emergency care in dementia, particularly in rural and remote contexts where access to timely support can be limited. The session sparked valuable discussion among delegates about how technology-enabled care can bridge service gaps and empower both patients and carers.



- Asia Pacific Association for the Diabetes Limb Prevention conference
  - **Nikki Frescos** (AH Research Team) presented her talk titled....



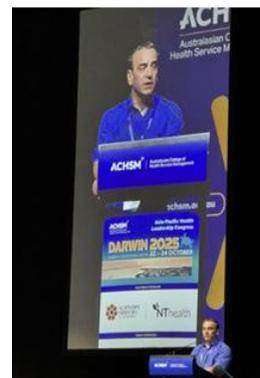
- 2025 Innovations in Allied Health Hospital Workforce National Conference
  - **Emily Farrugia** (Dietetics/AH Research) participated as a panellist discussing her advanced practice role in gastrostomy management within Northern Health
  - **Tom Collins** (Physiotherapy) presented on his role and learnings as an advanced practice physiotherapist working in VVED (“Advanced-Practice Physiotherapy in Virtual ED: Utilising Allied Health Expertise to Manage a Complex Problem
  - **Mary De Gori** (Allied Health Director) chaired the last session on ‘Optimising Wellbeing’.



- World Congress of Gastroenterology and Australian Gastroenterology Week 2025
  - **Hannah Silva** (Dietetics) delivered a presentation on: Implementing a low FODMAP diet: A practical guide, Postgraduate Course.
  - **Hannah Silva** (Dietetics) also chaired a session on “Nutrition: It’s all about the ingredients: Diet and GI disease”. The Gastroenterological Society of Australia’s (GESA) Post Graduate Course is a one-day program aimed towards Advanced Trainees, Fellows, Junior Gastroenterology Consultants, or more experienced Consultants seeking a refresher on the fundamentals of clinical practice in Gastroenterology & Hepatology. The GESA Post Graduate Course is part of Australian Gastroenterology Week (AGW) which this year was combined with The World Congress of Gastroenterology (WCOG) with many international attendees.
  - **Vanessa Inserra** (Pharmacy) presented her poster titled “Rapid Thiopurine-Induced Hair Loss and Leukopenia: Pharmacist-Led Detection and Management of NUDT15 Deficiency”



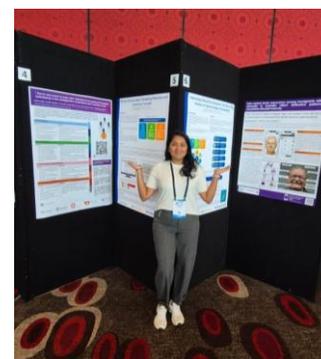
- Oceanic Palliative Care conference 2025
  - **Lucy Forest** (Music Therapist) presented on “Integrating music therapy into an acute-care hospital palliative care service”
- Australian Music Therapy National Conference – Celebrating 50 Years
  - **Lucy Forest** (Music Therapist) delivered two presentations: “The impact of moments of music in end-of-life-care” and “Connecting people and spaces through Environmental Music Therapy (EMT)”
- Australasian College of Health Service Management (ACHSM) conference (Darw
  - **Jason Cirone** (AH Leadership) presented on the future of accreditation for hospitals.



- Advanced Pharmacy Australia Medicines Management Conference 2025  
Well done to the Pharmacy team who presented 6 oral presentations and 18 poster presentations at the conference this year

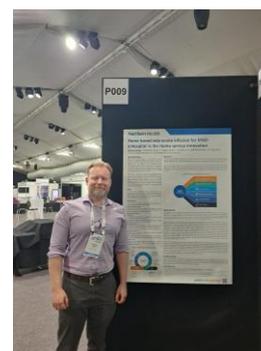
Oral presentations:

- **Sonja Gjorgievski**: Early Eyes for Better Outcomes: Role of a Clinical Pharmacy Technician in transitions of care
- **Tam Huynh**: Medication Returns: Ensuring safe and efficient medication handling in a metropolitan hospital
- **Aleksandar Krstic**: Mind the Gender Gap: A New Ward for Women’s Mental Health
- **Enise Kunduraci**: Double Trouble: Severe Angioedema Triggered by Dual Drug Inhibition
- **Alexandra Brown**: Breathing Room: Virtual Pharmacists Bridge the Gap in Asthma Care
- **Jessica Hart**: Getting the Message Right: Understanding the impact of Medication Alert design in an EMR



Poster presentations:

- **Emma Hatherley**: Streamlining Specialist Appointments – The Role of the Pharmacist in Virtual Specialty Clinics
- **Emma Hatherley**: Byte-Sized Learning: Strategies for educating on a new Electronic Medical Record System
- **Emma Hatherley**: Pharmacy Phonetics: Sounding Out a Pronunciation Guide for Medications
- **Emily Ristovski**: Zilucoplan as a treatment for refractory myasthenic crisis
- **Ginny Dhillon**: Ditching the Logbook: Digitally Tracked and Staff-Backed
- **Ginny Dhillon**: Enhancing Pharmacy Education: The Introduction of a Dedicated Education Pharmacy Technician Role
- **Jeff Khoshaba**: Building Competency: A Prescriber Workshop for Partnered Pharmacist Medication Charting
- **Alexandra Camilleri**: DRESSing up Viral Reactivation
- **Louise Macauley**: Closing the Perioperative Gap with Pharmacist Phone Reviews
- **Sema Akan**: Cost-Effective Analgesia: The role of inhaled Methoxyflurane (Pentrox®) in Patient-Controlled Analgesia
- **Rimsha Kalia**: Enhancing Post-Partum Care: An Audit of VTE Risk Assessment and Prescribing Practices



- **Vanessa Inserra:** Rapid Thiopurine-Induced Hair Loss and Leukopenia: Pharmacist-Led Detection and Management of NUDT15 Deficiency
- **Sonia Wardak:** Two's Better Than One: Evaluating Dual LAI Therapy in Treatment resistant Schizophrenia
- **Alborz Shahsavand:** Optimising Therapeutic Equivalence: Streamlining Stock Management for better Cost Efficiency & Sustainable Healthcare
- **Uyen Hua:** Automate to Innovate: Streamlining Pharmacy Workflows
- **Joyce Anthony:** The Pain of Going Digital: Navigating Obstacles and Celebrating Triumphs
- **Simon Huynh:** Beyond the Tick Box: Boosting VTE Risk Assessment Through Collaboration
- **Jessica Domzalski:** Bridging the Gap: Evaluating the Impact of a Pharmacist-Led Transitions of Care Service



- Hospital in the Home Annual Scientific Meeting 2025
  - **Ashley Webb** (Pharmacy) presented her poster titled “Home-based edaravone infusion for MND: a Hospital in the Home service innovation”
- Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators Conference 2025
  - **Jeff Khoshaba** (Pharmacy) presented on “Shining the Research Light Brighter”
  - **Alexandra Camilleri** (Pharmacy) presented x2 posters titled “Clarity Through Procedure: The Journey Forward to Electronic Medical Records” and “Clinical Mastery: Pharmacists roadmap to success”
  - **Emma Hatherley** (Pharmacy) also presented x2 posters titled: Surveying the Options: Optimising Pharmacy Education Sessions” and “Byte-Sized Learning: Strategies for educating on a new Electronic Medical Record System”
  - **Ginny Dhillon** (Pharmacy) presented their poster titled “Strengthening the Pharmacy Workforce: The Introduction of a New Education Role for Pharmacy Technicians”
  - **Jeff Khoshaba** (Pharmacy) presented his poster titled “Building Competency: A Prescriber Workshop for Pharmacist Partnered Medication Charting”
  - **Samantha Botta** (Pharmacy) also presented her poster titled “Shaping the future: Elevating research in hospital pharmacy”



- Australian Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting 2025
  - **Joyce Anthony Edman** (Pharmacy) presented x2 poster presentations titled “Improving Clinical Care Standards: The Role of Gap Analysis in Opioid Analgesic Stewardship” and “The Pain of Going Digital: Navigating Obstacles and Celebrating Triumphs”

#### Other staff presentations:

- Launch of the Northern Health and La Trobe University Research Partnership – Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Northern Health Epping)
  - The afternoon featured engaging discussions on advancing health research in this important sector, including a keynote presentation by Professor Bianca Brijnath alongside other researchers including **Dr Adam Semciw** (AH Research) and **Fan Hoak** (PhD Candidate) and an inaugural address by Debra Bourne, Chief Executive at Northern Health. This research partnership will help to identify barriers and enablers for our CALD community, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and those living with disability, or remotely, receiving timely access to care, further enhancing strategies through research to improve patient outcomes and care in the future.



- Post Graduate Certificate in Clinical Nursing Practice – Medical/Neurology Study Day
  - Members of the orthotics team, including **Elaina Vatcky** and **Annabella Mansour**, were invited to present at the study day, sharing their expertise and highlighting the important role of orthotic care in supporting neurological patients.

## Research Awards

- **Swapna Gokhale** (AH Research) – Best oral presentation at the Australasian Delirium Society’s DECLARED conference
- **Hannah Silva** (Dietetics) - Allied Health Excellence in Research Award
- **Monika Sekulov** (Speech Pathology) - Allied Health Excellence in Research Award
- **Emily Farrugia** (Dietetics) - Finalist for the Allied Health Excellence in Research Award
- **Swapna Gokhale** (AH Research) - Third place for Best Oral Presentation – Northern Health Research Week



## Research roadshow

2025 included the rollout of our Allied Health Research Roadshow, a combined initiative with the Research Development and Governance Unit (RDGU), aimed at spreading awareness of supports available to clinicians through the allied health research team and partnerships with La Trobe university. A total of eleven sessions were delivered across Speech Pathology, Dietetics, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Exercise Physiology, Podiatry and Orthotics.

The first Allied Health Research Ideas Roadshow was held with the Speech Pathology team and Associate Professor Annie Hill. This session provided time to brainstorm and explore opportunities to develop research questions or small projects within the department. Dr Annie Hill, a speech-language pathologist with more than twenty years of experience in telerehabilitation research, presented at this session and assisted in facilitating ideas considering future project development.



The roadshow continued across May and June with three sessions delivered at Bundoora Centre, Broadmeadows Hospital and The Northern Hospital for the Occupational Therapy team, supported by academics from La Trobe University. Sessions featured Associate Professor Tamara Tse, Professor Leanne Carey and Associate Professor Tracy Fortune, all occupational therapists with extensive academic and clinical research experience. Their combined expertise spanned activity and participation outcomes, stroke rehabilitation and neuroscience, and qualitative approaches to understanding occupation. These interactive sessions enabled clinicians to explore potential research ideas and identify opportunities for quick wins across sites.



From June through to August, the Allied Health Research Team, together with the Ethics and Governance Team, continued the roadshow, facilitating nine additional sessions across Speech Pathology, Dietetics, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Exercise Physiology. These sessions were held at Broadmeadows Hospital, Bundoora Centre and The Northern Hospital, again in collaboration with representatives from La Trobe University. Leaders across all disciplines supported and encouraged attendance, contributing to strong engagement and shared discussions about research priorities.

Across these sessions, clinicians collectively brainstormed several key allied health projects to progress, featuring Dr Gina Trakman, Dr Fiona Smith and Dr Tessa Zirnsak from La Trobe University. Dr Trakman, a lecturer in Dietetics and Human Nutrition, brought expertise in questionnaire development, nutrition knowledge interventions and the role of diet in inflammatory bowel disease. Dr Smith, a social worker lecturing in Field Education, and Dr Zirnsak, also a social worker and interdisciplinary researcher with lived experience expertise in Social Work and Social Policy, contributed insights related to coercion and compulsion in mental illness and intellectual disability. Their involvement provided valuable academic perspectives and helped shape emerging allied health and student project ideas.

We extend our appreciation to all academics for their contributions and to the clinical leaders who supported participation across disciplines.



## Workshops completed

Four workshops were delivered throughout 2025 by the AH Research Team:

- Interpreting Evidence for Clinical Practice (June) – **Emily Farrugia** and **Stephen Quick (AH Research)**
  - This session focused on searching databases for key evidence, reading and evaluating articles effectively with practical strategies and tools to assist with critical appraisal and interpreting basic quantitative data, to assist with appraising and understanding the literature.
  - *Attendees: 5/6 registered*
  - *Feedback: 4.7/5*
- From Ideas to Action (June) – **Nikki Frescos (AH Research)**
  - This session focused on exploring ideas for potential research projects or activities, understanding how to develop a research proposal and identifying key components to be considered when embarking on a research project/activity
  - *Attendees: 15*
  - *Feedback: N/A*
- Turning clinical questions into Quality Improvement or Research Projects (July) – **Emily Farrugia (AH Research)** and **Rachel Ellis (Quality/Physiotherapy)**
  - This session focused on understanding the differences and pathways for quality improvement and research at Northern Health, identifying the steps involved in rolling out projects and completing research project protocols, as well as supports and resources available.
  - *Attendees: 6*
  - *Feedback: 4.8/5*
- Powerful Presentations in Research for Podiatry (October) – **Nikki Frescos (AH Research)**
  - This session focused on understanding the key principles in developing presentation content and structure, including visual aids
  - *Attendees: 9*
  - *Feedback: N/A*



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## PhDs completed

- **Ed Leahy** – Physiotherapy

## Current PhD candidates

- **Lin Tong** – Allied Health Research (Physiotherapy)
- **Fan Hoak** – Allied Health Research (Physiotherapy)
- **Anastacia Pourliakas** – Allied Health Research (Psychology)

## Stepping Into Research (SIR) Program

The SIR Program is a 12-week annual initiative at Northern Health designed to build allied health research capability. The program introduces clinicians to the process of conducting writing a systematic review on a topic of relevance to their clinical area. Participants are supported throughout by senior peers, the Allied Health Research team and experienced academic collaborators from La Trobe University. Due to the high number of applications received in 2025, a formal panel review process was required to determine the final cohort. Applications were evaluated according to three criteria: the value of the proposed review to Northern Health, its relevance and importance to allied health practice, and the overall quality and clarity of the research question.



In 2025, the program accepted 11 participants, representing the second-highest number of applicants since the program began, following 12 participants in 2024. The cohort included four physiotherapists, one dietitian, three occupational therapists working collaboratively on a single project, one speech pathologist, one psychologist and one social worker. This year's program also included three clinical leaders (from occupational therapy), reflecting increasing interest from senior clinicians in developing research skills and contributing to evidence-based practice.

Congratulations again to all 9 participants of the 2025 Stepping into Research Program:

- **Megan Bunting** (Physiotherapy) - The effect of brief preoperative education interventions compared to other prehabilitation interventions on postoperative outcomes in surgical patients.
- **Elise Moyle** (Physiotherapy) - Remote patient monitoring for community-based care following hip and knee arthroplasty: a systematic review.
- **Alison Caldwell** (Physiotherapy) - What is the effect of a virtual observation unit verses standard care on hospital presentation for older adults discharged home from emergency department post fall?
- **Annie Nguyen** (Physiotherapy) - Does skin-to-skin contact (Kangaroo Care) in preterm and low birth weight infants improve developmental outcomes?
- **Jessica Brain** (Dietetics) - How is cow's milk protein allergy diagnosed and managed in preterm and small for gestational age infants in the inpatient setting?
- **Danika Arney, Kate MacIvor and Renee Craig** (Occupational Therapy) - Healthcare Staff, Patients and their Families' Experiences with Virtual Home Visits for Inpatients: A Qualitative Systematic Review.
- **Shiao-Hua Kwong** (Psychology) - How do non-pharmacological RCTs targeting circadian rhythm and sleep in bipolar disorder report and ensure intervention fidelity, and what is the quality of the evidence for clinical efficacy?



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- **Jessica Gillies** (Speech Pathology) - Rehabilitation interventions to prevent and treat depression in post- stroke aphasia: An updated systematic review.
  - **Casey Kiss** (Social Work) - What challenges do health professionals experience when delivering virtual healthcare to First Nations People?

The program, run annually, received positive feedback, with participants surveyed after the program reporting increased research confidence following the program, indicating the SIR program markedly improves confidence to conduct systematic reviews. The majority of participants surveyed reported that outcomes from the program would be a 'stepping stone for research and practice change'. The immediate impact reported was enhanced research literacy and confidence with future impacts linked to publication, advocacy within their roles and the potential for service redesign based on findings from the program.

## External reports

Allied Health research was disseminated more broadly across Northern Health this year with multiple iNews stories throughout the year.

The April Falls Campaign highlighted falls and the significant impact on patients and their families. “This year’s theme, Falls Prevention is Everyone’s Business, highlights the shared responsibility of all staff in keeping our patients safe.”

“Research underpins effective falls prevention by identifying evidence-based strategies that reduce risk and improve patient outcomes. We are determined to work with staff, patients and our community, to implement effective falls prevention strategies to ensure a safe recovery for all patients at Northern Health.” - Prof Adam Semciw

Further details can be found [here](#).

The Joint Replacement Digital Care Pathway received a highlight in daily news. “Rather than replacing existing education services, the DCP aims to give patients the option to access trusted information at home. By analysing who engages with the pathway, how it is used, and what impact it has, the research team hopes to identify which groups benefit most and how it can best complement standard care. “This is about testing what works,” said Professor Semciw. “Our goal is to ensure the pathway genuinely supports patients and fits smoothly into standard care.”

Further details can be found [here](#).

The Allied Health Research Roadshow was publicised on LinkedIn, highlighting the mammoth effort in delivering sessions across allied health from both the research and ethics and governance unit (RDGU) at Northern Health.

Further details can be found [here](#).



MARCH 31, 2025  
April Falls Campaign: Falls prevention is everyone's business



Joint Replacement Digital Care Pathway



Northern Health Allied Health Roadshow Research and Collaboration

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The Stepping Into Research program received recognition at the conclusion of the program, with Speech Pathologist Jessica Gillies reporting the program has been an encouraging introduction to the research space. “Stepping into research has been a great introduction into the world of research. Having support from mentors in my own field as well as the Allied Health Research team has been very helpful and encouraging, making it a great learning experience,” she said. Further details can be found [here](#).



NOVEMBER 20, 2025

## Stepping Into Research (SIR) Program

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## Stepping Into Research Publications

- **Rebecca Turnbull** - Senior Exercise Physiologist and Stepping Into Research Participant (2024)

*Title:* Implementation of home-based HIIT in adults with cardiac disease: a systematic review using the RE-AIM framework

This review examines how home-based high-intensity interval training (HIIT) is implemented for adults with cardiac disease, using the RE-AIM framework to evaluate reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation and maintenance. The included studies showed that home-based HIIT can improve cardiorespiratory fitness and functional capacity, with generally good adherence and safety. However, reporting of implementation processes, long-term maintenance and real-world scalability was inconsistent. In summary, home-based HIIT appears feasible and beneficial, but clearer implementation reporting is needed to support broader uptake. See further details [here](#).

- **Simone LeBel** – Senior Physiotherapist and Stepping Into Research Participant (2024)

*Title:* The effect of early post-operative outpatient physiotherapy on outcomes following lower limb arthroplasty: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

This review investigates whether early outpatient physiotherapy after lower limb arthroplasty improves functional outcomes, pain and quality of life compared with usual care or delayed rehabilitation. Meta-analysis demonstrated small but meaningful improvements in short-term function and mobility for patients receiving early physiotherapy, although long-term differences were less consistent. Variability in program structure and outcome measures limited comparability across studies. In summary, early outpatient physiotherapy offers modest benefits and may support faster functional recovery in the early post-operative period. See further details [here](#).

- **Lauren Roberts** – Senior Dietitian and Stepping Into Research Participant (2024)

*Title:* Risks and benefits of gastrostomy in non-motor neurone disease progressive neurological diseases: a systematic review.

This review aims to evaluate the clinical risks and benefits of gastrostomy placement in people with progressive neurological diseases other than motor neurone disease. Across studies, gastrostomy was associated with improved nutritional status, reduced aspiration risk and enhanced hydration, though complication rates varied depending on disease severity and timing of insertion. Evidence on quality-of-life outcomes was limited and inconsistently reported. In summary, gastrostomy can provide meaningful clinical benefit when carefully timed and supported by multidisciplinary care. See further details [here](#).

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## Selected journal publications of 2025

1. **Leahy, E.**, Chipchase, L., Cavaleri, R., & Blackstock, F. C. (2025). Does online clinical mentoring for physical therapists enhance clinical practice and patient outcomes? A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Manual & Manipulative Therapy*, 1–11.
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4. Talevski, J., Rizk, S., Sher, L., **Jessup, R. L.**, **Semciw, A. I.**, Boyd, J. H., Miller, S. M., & Hutton, J. (2025). Impact of socioeconomic status on utilisation of a Virtual Emergency Department: An exploratory analysis. *Emergency Medicine Australasia*, 37(1), e70011-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1742-6723.70011>
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8. **Baines, B. L.**, Lawrence, J., Hutton, J., Sher, L., Semciw, A. I., Boyd, J. H., **Jessup, R. L.**, Miller, S. M., & Talevski, J. (2025). Self-referral trends to a virtual emergency department following initial presentation: A retrospective exploratory analysis. *Australasian Emergency Care*, 28(3), 221–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.auec.2025.03.008>
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