

Research News

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Next edition: September

Welcome to Issue #9 *from Kathryn McKinley* **Acting Director of Allied Health**

I am so pleased to be introducing this issue of our Allied Health Research Newsletter. I have just returned from the National Speech Pathology Australia Conference in Tarntanya | Adelaide, where I had the opportunity to connect with clinicians and researchers across Australia. I have come back inspired, energised and excited about what allied health can do to improve outcomes for our community, across the continuum of care. I also had the pleasure of meeting Maggie Beer AO and hearing her talk about her project 'Maggie Beer's Big Mission', which aimed to transform the meals and dining experience in an aged care facility. I love that she had a 'big idea' – and then went through the steps to make it happen. And importantly, she found some excellent clinicians and researchers to work with to evaluate and write up the project for publication so that the outcomes and impacts can be shared more broadly.



It has been a hive of activity in allied health over the past couple of months, with the introduction of Allied Health Research Roadshows across Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy. These roadshows are aiming to build understanding and knowledge of the supports available to our clinicians and to build partnerships with research academics at La Trobe University, looking at potential projects and ideas and how we can work together to strengthen research capacity within allied health. A huge thank you to Adam, Nikki, Emily and Steve for their all their work driving this initiative.

Northern Health acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land (the Wurundjeri people) on which Northern Health's campuses are built.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to our lives and we embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

Northern Health celebrates, values, and includes people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

A big congratulations to Rebecca Galea (Physiotherapy) on being awarded a NH Grant in Aid, to focus on the musculoskeletal wellness (MSK) program at Northern Health. And congratulations to Rachel Nolan (Speech Pathology), Anna Connolly (Occupational Therapy) and Emily Farrugia (Dietetics & AH Research) who were all invited to join the Clinical and Content Advisory Group to contribute to a National Motor Neurone Disease (MND) guideline. This is the first guideline to be developed in this space and it's wonderful to have our clinicians recognised for their knowledge and expertise in this area.



HOT OFF THE PRESS: Allied Health Research Roadshow making headway

The roadshow continued across May and June with three sessions held across Bundoora Centre, Broadmeadows Hospital and The Northern Hospital for the Occupational Therapy team alongside academics from La Trobe University. These sessions aim to spread awareness of supports available to clinicians from both the allied health research team, ethics team and La Trobe University. Time is also allocated to brainstorm problems or ideas to prioritise in the form of a research question together as a discipline.

These sessions featured Associate Professor Tamara Tse, Professor Leeanne Carey and Associate Professor Tracy Fortune, occupational therapists by background and academics working within La Trobe University. A/Prof Tse holds interests in understanding and measuring activity and participation and her research has focused on related outcomes whilst Prof Carey's research spans 30 years with key focuses around stroke rehabilitation and neuroscience. Further to this, A/Prof Fortune brings qualitative research experience in using this approach to understand occupation. With a diverse range of experience, additional support and guidance is available to clinicians thinking about future projects. All sessions were interactive and we thank both sites for engaging with us on exploring potential research ideas and quick wins across sites.

Images to right: Occupational Therapy roadshow sessions featuring Justine Ellis from the RDGU team.

Upcoming sessions are planned for Social Work, Dietetics, Physiotherapy and Exercise Physiology. If your discipline has not been in touch around a research roadshow, please reach out to the Allied Health Research team.



Northern Health Grants Program 2025

Applications for the Northern Health Research Grants Program 2025 have been announced. Well done to all applicants who applied and were successful in a NH Foundation Grant (\$50,000), Research@Northern Support Grant (\$20,000) or Grant in Aid (\$10,000). **A special congratulations to Rebecca Galea (Physiotherapy) who was successful in her application for a Grant in Aid, focusing on the musculoskeletal wellness (MSK) program at Northern Health.** Further information to follow.

Missed the boat? Reach out to the Allied Health Research Team if you would be interested in other upcoming potential funding opportunities or have any questions about grant applications.

MND National Guidelines

Congratulations to Rachel Nolan (Speech Pathology), Anna Connolly (Occupational Therapy) and Emily Farrugia (Dietetics/AH Research), all working within the PND Clinic, who were invited as members of the Clinical and Content Advisory Group to contribute to a national Motor Neurone Disease (MND) guideline, the first of its kind in Australia. This project is supported by Fight MND and The University of Adelaide.

Allied Health clinicians across Australia who are recognised as experts in the clinical care and management of MND and involved in delivering care in the community/acute setting will collaborate on a guideline that will shape the future of MND care across Australia. A kick-off event was held in Adelaide and virtually on the 1st of May, bringing together health professionals, researchers in the field and those with lived experience to the table to improve care outcomes for people living with MND in the future.



Professional photo credit: Nelson Da Silva, Richards Rose.

MRFF Safe Recovery Falls Workshop - Clinicians

A MRFF Safe Recovery Falls 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 preventing falls and promoting safe recovery and was led by project lead 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 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.

This workshop forms part of the "Safe Recovery - reducing falls injuries by older people in Australian hospitals 2024-27" project, funded through a \$1.46M Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) grant.

Open Access with Springer and Oxford Journals

Limited slots remaining – get in quickly to take advantage of this opportunity!

Northern Health Library is pleased to announce a *Read and Publish* agreement with Springer and Oxford University Press for 2025, which includes a limited open access publishing component. This provides Northern Health staff with the opportunity to publish their work as open access in eligible Springer and Oxford journals at no additional cost.

Springer Journals:

Open Access Publishing: Available on a *first-come, first-served* basis.

Eligibility: Applies to articles accepted for publication in eligible Springer journals during 2025 (note – full OA titles are excluded).

Action Required: Submit your manuscript to an eligible journal and select Northern Health as your institution when prompted. Springer Journals Author Submission process:

<https://www.springernature.com/gp/authors/publish-an-article>

Oxford Journals:

Open Access Publishing: Available on a *first-come, first-served* basis.

Eligibility: Applies to articles accepted for publication in eligible Oxford journals during 2025 (list here: [Victorian Health Libraries Consortium \(VHLC\) | Oxford Academic](#)).

Action Required: Submit your manuscript to an eligible journal and select Northern Health as your institution when prompted.

We encourage researchers planning submissions to Springer and Oxford journals to act quickly to take advantage of this valuable opportunity. For more information, please contact NHLibInfo@nh.org.au.

Victorian Virtual Health Conference

The Victorian Virtual Health Conference was held in May, with a few NH staff in attendance. The day featured a series of presentations, discussing how virtual teams can work better together, research updates, artificial intelligence as well as project updates on diabetes and chest pain.

Well done to **Tom Collins (Physiotherapy)** who presented on the inclusion of Advanced Practice Physiotherapists within the VVED, with his talk titled “Some things I’ve learned about back pain”. The presentation was well-received and highlighted the benefit of an advanced practice role in the VVED space.

Presenting at a future conference? Let the Allied Health Research team know.



Dr Nikki Frescos – Allied Health Research

Hi everyone,

I'm thrilled to join the NH Allied Health Research team (covering Hazel's maternity leave across 2025)! By way of introduction, I'm a podiatrist with experience across clinical, academic, and advisory roles—including work in community and hospital settings, teaching at La Trobe University, and most recently, as the Research Development Lead at the Faculty of Pain Medicine (ANZCA).

I'm a strong advocate for collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to both healthcare and research. My research interests are diverse but predominately focused on wound-related pain, diabetes-related foot disease, prevention and management, and wound care. I'm also passionate about my volunteer work in the Western Pacific Region where I help train healthcare professionals in wound care and diabetes foot disease.

Like many clinicians, I never planned on a research career. I was a hands-on clinician and educator, far more comfortable with practice than publications. Research just wasn't "my thing." But curiosity and a drive to improve outcomes led me from small projects to a PhD.

I know that research can feel intimidating, especially for those grounded in clinical work. But it helps to remember that research is simply a structured way to ask and answer the questions that matter to us and our patients. You don't need to be an expert to start — you just need curiosity, commitment and a willingness to learn.

During my time here, my goal is to support and inspire you to engage and explore research in any form—be it quality improvement, audits, or applied research. Start small, stay focused on what matters to you, and remember: your clinical insights are invaluable.

Looking forward to working with you all!

**Stepping Into Research (SIR) update**

The SIR program is a 12-week program designed to introduce allied health clinicians to the process of conducting and writing up a systematic review in a topic of their interest, relevant to their area of work. Participants receive 4 x 3-hour small group training sessions and weekly mentoring throughout the duration of the program from senior peers, the allied health research team and more experienced researchers through collaboration with La Trobe University.

Thank you to all allied health who have reached out to schedule your drop-in session as part of your application. Submissions close **COB Friday 13th of June**.

Here's some success stories below from previous SIR participants.

- **Iryoung Fan (Physiotherapist)** published his systematic review in Osteoarthritis and Cartilage, the top 2nd ranked journal in Orthopaedics. See link to article [here](#).
- **Rebecca Turnbull (Exercise Physiologist)** presented her research at ESSA Research to Practice Conference last year and is currently in the process of submitting her review for publication.
- **Miyuki Wanatabe (Speech Pathologist)** published her review in the International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders before assisting as a mentor in the SIR program. See further details [here](#).

Struggling to access full-text articles? Let LibKey Nomad

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Current Allied Health low risk research projects

- ✓ Falls and Body Schema Research Project **(Physiotherapy)**
- ✓ Relationship between back pain beliefs, health literacy and presentation to ED with low back pain **(Physiotherapy)**
- ✓ Understanding the feasibility of implementing an electronic Health Passport for people living with disability and/or complex needs accessing Victorian public healthcare organisations **(Physiotherapy)**
- ✓ Allied Health Research Clinic **(Physiotherapy and Orthopaedics)**
- ✓ Web based resource for people with osteoarthritis: a pragmatic feasibility study **(Physiotherapy and Orthopaedics)**
- ✓ HIPSTER: HIP fracture Supplemental Therapy to Enhance Recovery **(Physiotherapy and Orthopaedics)**
- ✓ The association between toe-brachial index results and haemodialysis in patients with End Stage Kidney Disease **(Podiatry)**
- ✓ Australian Diabetes High Risk Foot Service Database **(Podiatry)**
- ✓ Establishing if a bespoke focused rigidity cast containing an air gap reduces pressure at the posterior heel **(Podiatry and Orthotics)**
- ✓ Guardianship in Hospitals – A Health Services / OPA Hospital Pilot Program **(Social Work and Psychology)**
- ✓ Implementing cognitive intervention for older people in Memory Clinics: A pilot feasibility study **(Psychology)**
- ✓ Participation in the electronic Persistent Pain Outcomes Collaboration (ePPOC): An initiative to support continuous improvement in the quality and effectiveness of pain management in Australia **(Psychology)**
- ✓ An analysis of the Safer Care Victoria and Alfred Health collaboration to facilitate implementation of analgesics stewardship programs in Victorian Health Services **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ Consumer led teach-back to improve recall and retention of health information: A mixed methods randomised controlled trial **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ Medication transcription errors associated with electronic prescribing during internal hospital transfers of care: a multi-centre study **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ Investigation of on-site food purchasing behaviour and attitudes at Northern Hospital **(Dietetics)**
- ✓ Victorian ICUs' Nutrition Practices Survey **(Dietetics)**
- ✓ Investigating Malnutrition Australian Diabetes High Risk in Victorian Cancer Services: Malnutrition Prevalence Study 2018 **(Dietetics)**
- ✓ Digital Remote Patient Monitoring for the Progressive Neurological Disorders Clinic at Northern Health **(Speech Pathology, Occupational Therapy & Community Therapy Services)**
- ✓ Measuring occupational therapy practice in acute and sub-acute inpatient healthcare settings **(Occupational Therapy and Hand Therapy)**
- ✓ Factors associated with research interest, confidence and experience in allied health clinicians **(Allied Health)**
- ✓ Staff attitudes to using technology to support evidence based medicine and virtual care delivery **(Allied Health)**
- ✓ Setting health service research priorities: a three-step participatory study **(Allied Health)**
- ✓ Understanding the driving support perspectives of community dwelling people living with a mental health condition **(Allied Health Mental Health)**

Approved allied health research projects (non-HREC)

- ✓ Evaluating time efficiencies following the introduction of an Automated Dispensing Cabinet within a mental health ward **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ Assessing the impact on Pharmacist involvement in clinical transition during an organisation wide electronic medical record implementation **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ An analysis on the degree of variation in dosing carboplatin using creatinine clearance, CKD-EPI and CamGFR v2 **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ Partnered Pharmacist Medication Charting (PPMC) during Hospital in the Home (HITH) inpatient stay **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ The impact of Pentrox® as an effective patient control analgesia alternative and its cost-saving benefits **(Pharmacy)**
- ✓ Evaluation post-stroke communication and swallowing care: is it feasible? **(Speech Pathology)**
- ✓ MRFF Safe Recovery Reducing Falls Injuries by Older People (Phase 1) **(Physiotherapy)**
- ✓ Factors associated with research interest, confidence and experience in allied health clinicians **(Allied Health)**
- ✓ Determining care outcomes of patients seen by podiatry during an admission after peripheral arterial disease is identified **(Podiatry & Orthotics)**
- ✓ Musculoskeletal Wellness Program Evaluation **(Orthopaedics, Physiotherapy & Staying Well)**
- ✓ A Retrospective Cross-sectional Study on the Outcomes and Associated Factors of Bodily Restraints in the Emergency Department for patients with Mental Health Disorders at The Northern Hospital **(Mental Health)**
- ✓ Mental Health Outlier Program (MHOP) evaluation **(Mental Health)**
- ✓ Community follow up of mental health consumers discharged from forensic services **(Mental Health)**
- ✓ Medtasker and Allied Health **(Informatics)**
- ✓ Advanced Practice Paediatric Dietitian (Nasogastric Tube Insertion and Management) Evaluation **(Dietetics)**
- ✓ Northern Health Spasticity Clinic Review and Recommendation for Redesign **(Community Therapy Service)**

Your Allied Health Research Committee Representatives

- Jeff Khoshaba/ Samantha Botta (Pharmacy)
- Jaspreet Kaur (Podiatry)
- Rebecca Turnbull (Exercise Physiology)
- Miyuki Watanabe (Speech Pathology)
- Emily Farrugia (Dietetics)
- Adrienne Munro (Occupational Therapy)
- Elaine Dos Santos (Physiotherapy)
- Brooke Froud Cummins (Psychology)
- Alycea Formosa (Social Work)
- Carolyn Dun (Mental Health)
- Jack Yeung (Prosthetics and Orthotics)
- Yue Hu (TALS)
- Justine Slattery (AH Education)

Allied Health Research Clinic:

Are you:

- ✓ Thinking of starting a research project or have a burning question you're not sure how to answer?
- ✓ Seeking help on an ethics application, whether that be non-HREC, HREC or a QA?
- ✓ Data collecting and wanting extra assistance with interpreting statistics?

The Allied Health Research Clinic is jointly funded by Northern Health and La Trobe University and aims to promote and support research at Northern Health by providing clinicians with the necessary information, education and often the starting point to commence or plan their research projects or ideas.



How to book?

Allied health clinicians can book an appointment via the QR code below. Registration is online and involves providing information about your (i) general and professional demographics; (ii) current research skill/capacity; (iii) specific research question or project (takes approximately 15 minutes).

What happens next?

Once completing your registration, the Allied Health Research Team will contact you via email to schedule an appointment which is approximately 50 minutes, in NCHER or via Teams. The appointment is with at least two experienced allied health researchers, including Associate Professor Adam Semciw. Additional members may include a biostatistician, allied health research lead and/or an ethics representative, depending on your research project requirements and phase.

Contact our team if you would like any further information prior to scheduling an appointment ☺

<https://redcap.nh.org.au/surveys/?s=JN4RRT8MA4>



Birat Sharma and Sarah Wotherspoon – Senior Social Workers**1. What led you to completing research and what was your role at the time?**

Birat: I always had an interest in quality improvement and research in acute as a social worker, so the SIR program was the next step for a taste in research. It is available to all staff and can often lead to other projects (see below). It helped me to understand the basics of research with a better foundation, and I would encourage anyone to apply. I acknowledge that I could not have completed the program without the help of mentors

Rebecca Jessup, Adam Semciw, Stephen Quick and biostatistician support from Mani Suleiman.

**2. Since completing the Stepping Into Research program in 2021, how has your role changed?**

I'm currently working as a senior social worker in mental health. Since completing the program, I've completed two research projects with the help and support of my colleague Sarah Wotherspoon.

Firstly, we initiated a systematic review on "What interventions could Emergency Department staff use to reduce re-presentations by people experiencing homelessness?". This aimed to create an understanding of managing homelessness interventions in the emergency department setting and allowed us to explore different forms of interventions being done around the world. Some of the intervention ideas include a discharge checklist for homeless patients, maps to specialist homeless general practitioner surgeries and homeless day centres, information on other inclusion health services, copies of a local rough sleepers' magazine and oral hygiene supplies.

Our second research project was a retrospective audit which aimed to examine the impact of COVID-19 on emergency department presentations by survivors of family violence and was published [here](#). Key findings include a statistically significant decrease in the number of patients identified as being affected by family violence in 2020 compared to 2019, which was a pleasant surprise. Further to this, this was during a time when social worker's mode of practice changed from face to face to virtual in the emergency department. We found the lack of physical presence of social workers here appeared to be a key factor impacting the identification of family violence and demonstrates the importance of the role of social work in emergency department care.

3. What have you both learnt working together in research?

Birat: there are challenges working in a role with part-time capacity for research, but that's where you need to focus and target your non-clinical priorities with management support. The culture in allied health and my current role in mental health hasn't always been research-led, but changing our practice to be evidence-led is important. One of my key take homes is that there is a research team here to help you navigate projects, mentor and support you. It's helped me to be more a role model in this space and encourage others to use these supports available.

Sarah: as a co-author with Birat in both projects, it was beneficial to work as a team and support each other. We're the first acute social workers (for a long time if at all!) to have published. Data analysis and interpretation was tricky, but mentoring was absolutely crucial and without help from the Allied Health Research Team, a publication would not have happened. The more social workers engage in quality and research, the more experience we'll get and capacity we'll have to complete projects in future. Additional links to universities and mentors in future would also help to support ongoing research.

Conference news

Please see recent and upcoming conferences below – if you would like advice on an abstract or are curious about ethics approvals required prior to presenting, reach out to the AH Research Team.

May-June	- Dietitians Unite 2025 (Dietetics) – May; https://dietitianconnection.com/event/dietitians-unite-2025/ - OTA 31st National Conference and Exhibition (Occupational Therapy) – June; https://otaus.com.au/cpds/ota-31st-national-conference-and-exhibition-2025
June onwards	- National Allied Health Conference (Allied Health) – August; https://nahc.com.au/ - Pan-Asian Consortium for Treatment and Research in ALS (PACTALS) and biennial 12th MND Australia Care Forum (Allied Health) – September; https://www.pactalscongress.com/registration - PACTALS Congress 2025 in conjunction with the 12th MND Australia Care Forum (Allied Health) – September; https://www.pactalscongress.com/ - APASC25 – Lead the physiotherapy evolution (Physiotherapy) – October; https://australian.physio/pd/conferences - Australian Association of Gerontology/AAG Conference (Allied Health) – November; https://www.aagconference.asn.au/

Have you attended a conference recently or presenting in future?

Northern Health recommends staff who attend conferences share relevant knowledge and resources to their relevant teams when taking conference leave. If you have news to share, please use this platform and get in touch with Emily.farrugia@nh.org.au for the next edition.

Cartoon Of The Quarter



Publications (January-May)

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.
2. Raghunathan, K., Morris, M.E...**Heng, H.W.F.**, et al. (2025). Using artificial intelligence to improve healthcare delivery in select allied health disciplines: A scoping review protocol. *BMJ Open*, 15(3).
3. Talevski, J., Rizk, S., Sher, L...**Semciw, A.I.**, et al. (2025). Impact of socioeconomic status on utilisation of a Virtual Emergency Department: An exploratory analysis. *EMA - Emergency Medicine Australasia*, 37(1)
4. Thwaites, C., Shaw, L., Lui, R...**Heng, H.**, et al. (2025). Boosting hospital falls prevention using health assistant staff alongside usual care. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 130.
5. King, M.G., van Klij, P., Hoak, F...**Semciw, A.I.**, et al. (2025). Are Women Less Likely to Return to Sport Compared to Men Following Hip Arthroscopy. A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Journal of Orthopaedic and Sports Physical Therapy*, 55(3); 193-205.
6. Golledge, J., Parra, S., Aldons, P.M...**Frescos, N.**, et al. (2025). A randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to determine the analgesic efficacy, safety and tolerability of VPX638 administered topically to painful wounds. *Wound Repair and Regeneration*, 33(1).
7. **Baines, B.L.**, Lawrence, J., Hutton, J...**Semciw, A.I.**... **Jessup, R.L.**, et al. (2025). Self-referral trends to a virtual emergency department following initial presentation: A retrospective exploratory analysis. *Australasian Emergency Care*.
8. Munteanu, S.E., Cotchett, M... **Frescos, N.**, et al. (2025). Key capabilities required for podiatry graduates: A Delphi consensus study. *Journal of Foot and Ankle Research*, 18(1).
9. Matt, A.-R., Kemp, J.L., Mosler, A.B...**Semciw, A.**, et al. (2025). Do preoperative interventions affect patient satisfaction or expectation fulfilment following total hip arthroplasty? A systematic review. *JSAMS Plus*, 5.
10. **Dun, C.**, Palmer, C., Turville, M. (2025). Driving a motor vehicle and living with a mental health condition: The personal and professional experiences of consumer lived experience staff. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 72(2).
11. **Quick, S.M.**, Lawler, K., Shannon, M.M., et al. (2025). Reply to letter to the editor regarding article, “Physiotherapy students are underprepared to work with people living with dementia: a qualitative study”. *Physiotherapy (United Kingdom)*, 126.
12. **Quick, S.M.**, **Sharma, B.**, **Wotherspoon, S.B.**, **Suleiman, M.**, **Jessup, R.L.** (2025). Family Violence Presentations to a Metropolitan Emergency Department During COVID-19: A Retrospective Audit. *Australian Social Work*.
13. Hutton, J., Michael, V., Miller, S.M... **Semciw, A.I.**... **Jessup, R.L.**, et al. (2025). Establishing trust in emergency telehealth consultations. *EMA - Emergency Medicine Australasia*, 37(1).
14. Wong, D., Sanders, L.M., Beauchamp, A...**McKinley, K.**, et al. (2025). “When the Word Is Too Big, It’s Just Too Hard”: Stroke Survivors’ Perspectives About Health Literacy and Delivery of Health Information †. *Healthcare (Switzerland)*, 13(5).

Congratulations to all published authors at Northern Health!