



Psychology and Ageing Interest Group

Newsletter Issue No. 15

2011

*The mind that is wise mourns less for what age takes away; than what it leaves behind.
William Wordsworth*

Forward

Again, I am caught off guard by the arrival of the newsletter deadline. I am most certain that life passes fastest when lived in semesters.

This year looks to be an exciting one for the field of aging, with the 9th Asia / Oceania Regional Congress of Geriatrics and Gerontology coming to Melbourne. The breadth of speakers and activities will ensure there is something new to learn at every turn. Also, the Psychology of Ageing Interest Group will be returning to Melbourne for our own conference the following month. Unfortunately, Inger Hilde Nordhus will not be available as keynote speaker, but Nancy has managed to rearrange things to ensure a fantastic event.

Thank you to all of the contributors to the newsletter and I hope the readers enjoy this latest issue.

Jay Brinker
Editor

Report of the Chair, PAIG AGM, 2010

Dear Psychology and Ageing Interest Group Members,

The 12 months since our last newsletter have been eventful ones for our interest group. As has been the trend in previous years, our interest group has continued to be a very popular one.

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| Victoria | 111 members |
| New South Wales | 113 members |
| Queensland | 54 members |
| South Australia | 18 members |
| Western Australia | 15 members |
| Australian Capital Territory | 15 members |
| Tasmania | 3 members |
| Overseas | 4 members |

Ageing also continues to be an issue for the APS, as reflected in publications and its website. For example, did you know there was a tip sheet from the APS on Positive Ageing? This tip sheet evolved in part from a survey conducted by APS of older Australians. The most commonly reported difficulties included maintaining

health and fitness, maintaining social networks, and feelings of sadness and loss. The tip sheet lists strategies for healthier ageing, including maintaining social connections and keeping mentally active. It is available from the APS website. http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/paig/events_pd/2011_conference/

A new regional PAIG group has been formed. Ian Johnston (Ian.Johnston@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au) is organising meetings for the North Coast PAIG Group. Please contact Ian directly if you are interested. And please contact me directly if you wish to set up your own regional group.

We have also started a broad outreach program to have more student members sign up for PAIG. There is an active student group in Queensland, and special PAIG seminars targeting student members and potential student members were held in Melbourne and Adelaide this past year. Future talks in Perth, Canberra and Sydney are planned.

Finally I'd like to remind members to nominate their students for our Elsie Harwood Award. The award aims to raise awareness in the field of psychology and ageing and to encourage students to carry out research in this field. The award is for the best empirical research project in the field of ageing, submitted as part of an accredited fourth year program in psychology or an accredited Masters by coursework program in psychology. Nominations close 31st October, 2011. Information about eligibility criteria and submission instructions can be obtained at:

<http://www.psychology.org.au/about/awards/harwood/>

This year we are again hosting a National PAIG conference, to be held at Swinburne University in Melbourne on the Friday and Saturday, 18th and 19th of November, 2011. All details about the conference can be obtained from our PAIG website at http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/paig/events_pd/2011_conference/

Hope to see you there!

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who helped with PAIG activities this year – there are too many to thank individually, but I thank you heartily one and all!

Warm regards,



**Nancy Pachana,
National Convener,
APS PAIG**

SA Branch

Carol Hunter

State Convener, PAIG (SA Branch)

2011 has been a good year for PAIG SA – with more members joining and more interest being expressed by clinicians working in the field

Our first meeting of the year was on March 8th, with a presentation by Ruth Walker, looking at health and well-being dynamics within long-term marriages, and the protective role of marriage later in life and how this impacts upon mental health and well-being.

We were delighted to welcome Professor Nancy Pachana from the University of Queensland to our June meeting, who came to speak to us about the assessment of capacity in older adults, addressing such questions as what is the best way to approach such an assessment, are there objective empirically-validated assessment tools that will be of assistance and how can I better structure my clinical interview to address the specific capacity question at hand. Nancy provided us with a thoroughly enjoyable and educational session, followed by a PAIG dinner.

We were also fortunate enough to have Leander Mitchell from the University of Queensland whose presentation highlighted her experiences as a student on placement with Alzheimer's Australia (Qld). Specifically, the presentation looked at the issues with the lack of placement opportunities and supervisors for aged care settings, and what could be successfully used in overcoming these issues to gain the benefits of these types of placement.

We aim to have another meeting before the end of the year, with another fantastic guest speaker!

ACT Branch

Nicolas Cherbuin
ACT Co-ordinator

The ACT Psychology Ageing Interest Group (PAIG) has seen a number of significant changes this year. First, we would like to congratulate Dr Tim Windsor, our departing chair, on his new position as research fellow in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Flinders University after successfully applying for a prestigious ARC Future Fellowship. Tim chaired the ACT PAIG with great enthusiasm and sagacity and we are very grateful for his contribution over the years. He will be missed. As the incoming chair I will ensure the good work done by Tim and others continues and that the psychology of ageing receives as much attention as it deserves. Our first event for the year in fact brought the family together in May when Tim gave a very interesting talk on "Resources, motivation and age-differences in social network characteristics" while visiting the ANU.

Another important change taking place at ANU and of interest to our membership is the creation of a new Centre for Ageing and Wellbeing. Since 2004 Prof Kaarin Anstey has been promoting ageing research and expertly directing the Ageing Research Unit at the Centre for Mental Health Research. A new Centre for Ageing and Wellbeing directed by Prof Anstey has recently been announced by Prof Andrew

Cockburn, Dean of Science at ANU. This new centre in which I, our secretary Dr Kerry Sargent-Cox, and a number of other PAIG members, will also be involved will place an even greater focus on ageing and psychology at ANU and will offer some exciting new possibilities. We will endeavour to keep you informed of our progress and successes in this context and also would like to congratulate Prof Anstey for her exemplary stewardship in ageing research and in the creation of this important new centre.

Finally, a couple of very interesting talks are being planned for the end of the year and we will send out invitations to our members in the very near future.

I look forward to contributing to the promotion and dissemination of ageing research, to enhancing the awareness of ageing issues in the community, to the development of cross-disciplinary collaboration, and in continuing a lively discussion on these topics with our members.

Kind Regards,
Nicolas Cherbuin

QLD Branch

Nancy A. Pachana

This year has been marked by active involvement from our student branch of QLD PAIG (or sPAIG), which has resulted in increased enthusiasm and attendance at meetings.

Two of our meetings were particularly well-attended and generated good discussion. Jay Brinker from the ANU flew up to discuss group psychotherapy. She presented both theoretical and practical considerations in running groups and also related many relevant and illustrative clinical vignettes. Two readings recommended by her include:

1. Nobler, H., (1992). Its never too late to change - A group-psychotherapy experience for older women. *Group*. 16(3), 146 – 155.
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2. Alonso, A., & Rutan, J.S. (1988). The experience of shame and the restoration of self-respect in group-therapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 38, 3 – 14.

Leander Mitchell presented to the group on the issues around lying or deception in nursing home settings. Staff are often faced with situations where there is a temptation to answer residents with dementia who have queries (e.g. “Can I go home?” “Where is my beloved pet?”) with misdirection (“Perhaps tomorrow”) or either an unthoughtful truth (“Your pet is dead.”) or a deceptive statement (“He is coming to visit you tomorrow.”) or possibly these two statements at various times in a single day. More empathic, therapeutic and clinically sensitive approaches to such issues were offered by Leander. An excellent reference on this issue is:

Elvish, R., James, I. & Milne, D. (2010). Lying in dementia care: An example of a culture that deceives in people’s best interests. *Aging and Mental Health*, 14(3), 255-262.

VIC Branch

Yvonne Wells

VIC Coordinator

The Victorian Branch of the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group currently has 109 members (85 Members, 8 Fellows, 5 Student members, 10 Associate members, and 1 Affiliate) from a range of academic, clinical, and business backgrounds. The group meets 3 or 4 times a year at a range of locations in Melbourne, typically a university campus. Meetings usually last for at least two hours and consist of a combination of presentations, informal discussion and networking. Our meetings are topic-based, with invited speakers giving a brief presentation and leading the discussion. We invite non-members who work at the venue to attend the meeting to raise the profile of the group and invite local comments on the topic at hand.

So far in 2011 we have had two meetings. The first, held at Monash University in Caulfield in March, addressed the topic of family caregiving and older people. Virginia Creaser from the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre, Southern Region, spoke to the group about carer needs and issues and how the CRCC Southern Region addresses these needs. Colleen Doyle, a Senior Research Fellow with the National Ageing Research Institute, presented her current project on PTSD and dementia in veterans, in particular the carer questionnaire developed for the project.

Our June meeting was supported by Deakin University’s School of Psychology and held at their Burwood campus. Professor George and Dr Vahid Payman provided valuable insights from their psychiatric practice experience and wider research findings of the relationship between religion, spirituality and the mental health and well being of our ageing population.

Our next meeting in September will address information technology and older people, and cover issues such as confidentiality and other ethical questions, as well as the potential of IT to support older people in the community in a range of ways. We hope that Matilda, a small computer designed for use with older people, will also attend the meeting and demonstrate her capacities.

A highlight of the year is our end-of-year dinner, held in November, where we combine a great meal with a range of speakers on controversial topics. At the end of 2010 we were fortunate to have two challenging speakers: Heather Birch spoke to us on issues related to sexuality and ageing, and Christine Bigby talked about ageing with a lifelong disability. This year’s speakers are currently being finalised but it promises to be another fun and informative evening!

At our recent AGM we elected a new organizing committee, whose members are
Chair: Yvonne Wells
Secretary: Sunil Bahr

Treasurer: Colleen Doyle
Committee Members: Barbara Parker,
Judy Tang, Hema Sivakumaran

Our meetings are open to all interested parties, regardless of whether they are members of PAIG-Vic, and input is always welcome.

NSW Branch

Deborah Koder

State convenor

Attendance at our quarterly meetings has been increasing with input from research psychologists, clinical practitioners and neuropsychologists.

We continue to meet quarterly at various venues across Sydney so as to maximize attendance. The new financial year kicked off with a talk by Deborah Koder of War Memorial Hospital on “Cognitive therapy with older adults: Are adaptations necessary?”. This was followed by a very interesting discussion at RPAH on the use of behaviour management in dementia by several speakers experienced in the area including Brigit Schwartz, Sarah Visser and Tasha Kvelde. The therapy theme continued at Royal North Shore Hospital with Zoe Hill discussing the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with older adults which was very well received by a large audience. Tasha Kvelde spoke on an increasingly important topic –that of decision making capacity assessment. We have just had our August meeting with Maurice Finn presenting on rare forms of dementia and plan for Professor Michael Nicholas to discuss his work in the area of treating pain in older adults at our November meeting.

The group look forward to an exciting National Conference in Melbourne in November with two symposia being presented from members of the NSW PAIG- Dr Viviana Wuthrich and colleagues from Macquarie University will present on their research into comorbid anxiety and depression in older adults and the other symposium (D.Koder, M. Finn,

C. Lorang) involves looking at different approaches to working with cognitively impaired clients, including cognitive rehabilitation. A working party has also been formed to plan for a workshop around the middle of next year.

MEMBER PROFILE



Professor Yvonne Wells is a clinical psychologist by training. She now occupies a Chair in Aged Care Research and Policy Development jointly funded by La Trobe University and Uniting Aged Care Victoria and Tasmania. Yvonne was awarded her PhD in 1995 for a thesis entitled “Caring for a dementing spouse”. She has maintained an interest in family caregiving since then. Yvonne has continuing research roles in a range of projects, including being a principle investigator on the “Ageing Baby Boomers in Australia” project, funded by the ARC Linkages Scheme. She is also the Head of the Lincoln Centre for Research on Ageing at La Trobe University, a position that she has held since 2005.

The centre Yvonne works in does a range of projects. Some involve research (on service provision or healthy ageing), and some are consultancies for government and other agencies (usually evaluations of new service directions). She has recently begun a new exciting longitudinal research project looking at outcomes for older people in a range of housing and service provision contexts.

Yvonne has this year been named a Fellow of the APS. Other members of PAIG recently made fellows of the APS include Kaarin Anstey (ANU, 2010) and Colette Browning (Monash, 2009).

STUDENT PROFILE



Psychologist and APS member Sarah Walker is completing a PhD in Clinical Psychology at the ANU. Her dissertation is examining the lived experience of driving cessation in later life. She is currently employed by Goodwin Aged Care Services and Greater Southern Area Health. Sarah is delighted to be doing her "dream job": her work involves providing psychological services to Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) residents and researching the outcomes of therapeutic interventions. She will be talking about providing psychological therapy to older adults living in RACFs at the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group (PAIG) conference on 18th November in Melbourne.

Originally from the south of England, Sarah migrated to Australia in 1996. She completed her undergraduate education at Adelaide University and her honours degree at the ANU. She is a passionate environmentalist and can be seen cycling all over the ACT.

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Regular meetings of the State Interest Groups are held in Sydney (NSW), Brisbane (QLD), Perth (WA), Adelaide (SA), Melbourne (VIC) and Canberra (ACT). On occasion these forums are held jointly with groups whose interests extend into the Ageing arena. The Interest Group is also active at the National Australian Psychological Society conferences, with symposia and papers of interest to researchers and practitioners as well as those involved in the teaching and supervision of psychologists. Social activities as well as student opportunities such as research and travel awards are also available to members. Contact your local convener for details!