

Australian

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I am like a snowball – the further I am rolled, the more I gain.

Susan B Anthony

Forward

The Psychology and Ageing Interest Group has had another productive year. Thanks go to Nancy Pachana, Ed Helmes, Deb Koder and Mary Luszcz for drafting, and later submitting to the APS, a set of Ethical Guidelines for Practice with Older Adults. Thanks also to those who contributed to the development of the final document.

This year the First Biennial Conference of the APS Psychology and Ageing Interest Group will be held at the Deakin Management Centre, Geelong, Victoria on Friday 4th and Saturday 5th November. The registration form is available on the Psychology and Ageing website.

Best wishes to everyone for another successful year in 2006.

Deborah Gardner
Editor

National Convener

A major achievement for the APS Psychology & Ageing Interest Group this year has been the production of a set of Ethical Guidelines for Practice with

Older Adults. A subcommittee of PAIG drafted these guidelines over an 8 month period, working very hard to produce a cogent document which would encompass both clinical practice and applied research concerns. Drafts of the document were discussed not only with the PAIG National Executive but with the entire membership of the interest group via e-mail, making it truly a group effort. Creation of this document was primarily stimulated by a specific call for such guidelines by interest groups in an article InPsych, August 2003 – pg 25, by Graham Davidson called “How Interest Groups can Assist with Ethical Best Practice”. A briefer version of these guidelines is expected to be approved in the near future to be added to the APS list of guidelines in support of the APS Ethical Code of Conduct. Such guidelines will greatly benefit members of the society, particularly students, who are interested in working in a variety of capacities with older adults.

The expanded version of these guidelines, written in a more academic format, was enthusiastically accepted as a paper for publication by the Australian Psychologist in its first issue in 2006.

Elsie Harwood Award

The winner of the Elsie Harwood Award for 2005 was Melanie Burkhardt from Murdoch University. The title of Melanie's thesis was "The Relationship between Androgens, apolipoprotein E Epsilon 4 Status and Cognitive Functioning in Elderly Men with and without Alzheimer's Dementia". Her advisor was Professor Jonathon Foster.

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between testosterone concentrations and cognitive functioning in elderly men, with an emphasis on the interaction between APOE e4 and testosterone. In this cohort, our findings show that there was no difference in CFT between men with AD and older men without AD regardless of genetic predisposition for dementia. As expected there were significant differences in cognitive performance between men with AD and men without dementia. Furthermore, within the group of men free of dementia, μ 4 carriers had lower scores on delayed recall for verbal information and reduced performance on the delayed memory composite compared to non- μ 4 carriers. These observations are consistent with a previous study showing problems with delayed memory performance in otherwise healthy μ 4 carriers (Bondi et al., 1995).

The novel finding in this study is that an interaction occurs between testosterone concentrations and μ 4 status on general cognition and the composite measure of executive function, working memory and attention. In cognitively intact older men without the μ 4 allele, testosterone levels were positively correlated with general cognitive ability as measured by the CAMCOG-R. By contrast, in men who possess the μ 4 allele, testosterone levels correlated negatively with executive functioning, working memory and attention. These observations are of potential clinical relevance as testosterone

supplementation has been postulated to have beneficial effects on cognition (i.e. Cherrier et al., 2001; Kenny et al., 2002; Janowsky, Oviatt, & Orwoll, 1994). As higher testosterone concentrations were associated with worse performance for executive function, working memory and attention in μ 4 carriers, testosterone supplementation may not be beneficial in this group. It may be necessary to stratify men by μ 4 status when examining the relationship between testosterone levels and cognition, or when designing interventional trials of testosterone supplementation for the prevention of cognitive decline in healthy older men. This is the first clinical study to systematically investigate the interaction between genetic risk for AD and testosterone on cognition in men.

These preliminary findings may help to explain some of the inconsistencies previously noted in the literature regarding the effect of testosterone concentrations on cognitive performance. Particular strengths of the study are the careful case selection, allowance for potential confounders including age and mood, detailed neuropsychological assessments and the examination of a cohort of men free of dementia. Additionally, composite measures of cognitive performance were determined a priori and employed to increase the validity of the analysis. Limitations of this study are the relatively small sample size and the cross-sectional nature of the study. It is noteworthy that even with a relatively modest sample size and after adjusting for potential confounds, statistically significant effects were still observed. However, a larger sized study with follow-up to provide a longitudinal or prospective component would be highly desirable to evaluate the significance of these findings.

Melanie Burkhardt

Post Graduate Studies in Geropsychology at James Cook University

James Cook University offers several programs from the undergraduate through postgraduate levels for people interested in training in work with older people. Further information on the entry level Certificate of Ageing and Mental Health can be obtained from psychology@jcu.edu.au or on the web at www.jcu.edu.au/courses/certinfo/.

More information on the Postgraduate Certificate of Geropsychology, Postgraduate Diploma of Geropsychology or the Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Geropsychology is available from postgraduate.psychology@jcu.edu.au or from www.faess.jcu.edu.au/sop/.

Across the Nation

ACT Branch

Kaarin Anstey
ACT Co-ordinator

We had the following speakers:

1. Dr Nancy Pachana, School of Psychology, University of Queensland spoke on "Assessing competency" on August 23rd, 2004
2. On November 1, 2004 we also had a joint half-day workshop approved for PD points with the Ageing Research Unit at CMHR on "Late Life Suicide Prevention" -speaker was Diego De Leo.
3. Lee-Fay Low, Psychologist and PhD candidate CMHR, spoke on "What is Mild Cognitive Impairment?: issues in definition and diagnosis" on December 17th 2004
4. Dr Linda Clare from the UK spoke on "Insight in Dementia" on April 11
5. Affrica Jenkins from the Centre for

Mental Health Research spoke on "A systematic review of the efficacy of distal physical activity interventions for encouraging physical activity" at our June 10 breakfast meeting 2005 Dr Linda Clare from Canada spoke on "Insight in Dementia" on April 13, 2005.

Queensland Branch

Nancy Pachana
Qld Co-ordinator

Late last year the QLD PAIG heard an interesting talk by Associate Professor Louise Hickson, Director of the UQ Communication Disability in Ageing Research Centre at UQ, speaking on her research to help facilitate increased communication skills in older adults with hearing loss living in long term care facilities.

This year our group was pleased to have Associate Professor Candace Konnert, a visiting scholar from the University of Calgary, Canada, present at our March meeting to discuss her research on the use of CBT for preventing depression in nursing home residents. Candace spoke of the many issues surrounding carrying out this type of research, including ethical and clinical concerns, as well as training issues, as advanced postgraduate students were used to carry out the group CBT treatments.

In August Nancy Pachana presented research she is conducting along with her colleague Dr. Mark Horswill, on developing a driving test for older adults. This test is based on a Hazard Perception Test Dr. Horswill worked on in the UK, which now must be passed by all people of all ages seeking registration as a driver in the UK. The Older Adult's Hazard Perception Test is designed to be brief (20 minutes), to be delivered via a computer in the GP's office, and requires only a button press as a response. Older adults taking the test press a button while viewing videos of

road scenes when they perceive a hazard developing.

Professor Bob Knight, of the University of Southern California, is visiting this year. He is not only heavily invested in research, but also in training psychology students to take up careers specialising in older adult issues. Our group hopes to have an informal dinner with Prof Knight to hear about his latest research and training efforts with students.

Victorian Branch

Yvonne Wells
Vic Co-ordinator

The Victorian Branch of the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group meets 3 or 4 times a year. Our meetings are topic-based and we have a speaker or discuss an issue at each meeting. Most meetings attract about 20 people, though the list of members and other interested people is over 100. Meetings have been held in the early evening at the City campus of La Trobe University, a central location that is relatively convenient for most people.

Our September meeting in 2004 was on Sex and the older person. Yvonne Allen, Human Relations consultant and managing director of Yvonne Allen and Associates. Founded in 1976, this agency is one of Australia's oldest and most successful introduction agencies. Yvonne spoke about her experience of issues for older people in forming new relationships and developing and maintaining intimacy.

So far in 2005 we have had two meetings. The first addressed the topic of the interaction between GPs and older people, particularly with regard to diagnosing depression and dementia. This proved to be a very engaging discussion, and we plan to follow it up later in the year at our September meeting (Tuesday 6th September), which we have invited at least one GP to attend.

Our July meeting tackled the issue of why so few psychologists are interested in working with older people, and so few tertiary psychology curricula include a substantial component on older people, even though for 20 years we have been aware that our population is ageing.

As the Coordinator, I maintain an email list of members and other attendees—we encourage people to join our meetings, even though they may not be paid-up members of the Interest Group. Further input is always welcome.

Western Australian Branch

Deborah Gardner
WA Co-ordinator

Western Australian members of the APS Psychology and Ageing Interest Group met twice this year with the WA Health Department Psychology and Ageing Working Group to listen to some very interesting presentations. Hyranthi Kavanagh (WA Health Department) gave a case presentation and Charlotte Bowyer (WA Health Department) talked about her Neuropsychology Masters' thesis, "Comparisons of Executive Dysfunction and Memory in Alzheimer's Disease and Frontotemporal Dementia".

In October the Western Australian Branch of the Psychology and Ageing Interest Group was delighted to sponsor a workshop presented by Professor Bob Knight, University of California, on Psychotherapy with Older Adults. The well-attended workshop was followed by an informal dinner.

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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!