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PRODUCTS, SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR A BRIGHTER AGED CARE FUTURE

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HOW UNTREATED HEARING
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HEALTH AND MOBILITY

IN CONVERSATION WITH
CAMERON McPHERSON —
PUTTING ESG INTO PRACTICE

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the November 2025 edition of *Aged Health*.

In our lead feature, Gerald Quigley — this year's Musculoskeletal Health Awareness Month Ambassador — sets out the benefits of embedding chair-based movement in aged care. Also relevant to movement, Emma Scanlan, Principal Audiologist for Adults at Hearing Australia, explains the link between untreated hearing loss and mental health and mobility in aged care.

Other topics explored include infection prevention and control, as we look at a recent Australian trial in which germicidal ultraviolet appliances already used in a wide range of clinical and commercial settings — including hospitals — have been used to 'zap' airborne viruses in four residential aged care facilities across metropolitan and rural South Australia.

In our regular series, we are In Conversation with Medical & Aged Care Group CEO Cameron McPherson, who explains how providers begin to embed ESG in a meaningful and practical way; for Design Matters, we immerse ourselves in the designs for Uniting Waverley Estate, which has a care, community and heritage ethos; and for A Day in the Life, we meet Brooke Edwards, Resthaven's new Wellness & Active Ageing Manager.

We also have some interesting case studies and recent research.

Happy reading.

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NEWSLETTERS



MAGAZINE



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GENTLE, SEATED MOVEMENT

— FOR HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN AGED CARE

Running in October, this year's Musculoskeletal Health Awareness Month Ambassador **GERALD QUIGLEY** sets out the benefits of embedding chair-based movement in aged care.

There are many ways to define and interpret movement. In my view, body movement is about understanding how our bodies move to enhance performance, prevent injuries and support rehabilitation. It encompasses everything from sports and exercise to everyday functional activities, helping us move more efficiently and safely in all aspects of life.

However, the idea of movement in its gentle, natural form has often been hijacked by the exercise industry. Special shoes, colourful lycra, intense workouts, and the pressure to 'sweat it out' can make exercise feel overwhelming or unachievable, particularly for older adults. Many may feel self-conscious about their bodies or worry that they are not capable of keeping up, which can discourage them from engaging in even light physical activity.

This societal pressure reinforces the misconception that movement must be strenuous or painful to be beneficial, rather than recognising that gentle, accessible activities — like chair-based exercises — can provide meaningful health benefits and improve quality of life.



After all, there's a section of the pharmaceutical industry which seems to have taught us that there's a pill for every illness. Overweight? Then take a pill. Low energy? Another pill. But there's no pill that can make us move — and movement is something our bodies were designed to do.

THE POWER OF HUMAN MOVEMENT

Human movement is the change in position or posture of our actual body, driven by our musculoskeletal structure of muscles, bones, joints and ligaments. This is all controlled by our nervous system and it involves the complex interaction of these systems to produce coordinated, purposeful motions; from simple actions like blinking our eyelids to complex athletic feats. The study of human movement analyses the mechanical, physiological and neurological factors involved in these processes.

As Australia's population continues to age, maintaining mobility and independence has never been more important. For many older adults, especially those living in residential aged care or receiving home support, traditional exercise programs can be difficult to sustain due to reduced balance, chronic pain or limited mobility. That's where chair-based exercise offers a safe, accessible and highly effective alternative.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVEMENT AND CHAIR-BASED EXERCISE

Reduced movement as we age has serious health implications. Chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes and obesity are closely linked to inactivity, highlighting the importance of regular exercise at every stage of life. However, for many older adults, traditional exercise can be challenging due to mobility limitations, balance issues or chronic pain. Chair-based workouts offer a safe, accessible and effective alternative — allowing older adults to stay active, build strength and maintain flexibility from a stable seated position.

Aged care facilities and home care providers have a vital role to play in embedding these programs into daily routines. By encouraging gentle, seated movement, they can help residents preserve mobility, reduce the risk of disease and enhance overall quality of life — promoting healthy aging for all levels of ability.

THE CHALLENGES

Despite the well-documented benefits of movement, various barriers hinder individuals from engaging in regular physical activity. These can include societal factors, environmental limitations and personal challenges such as a lack of motivation or understanding of effective exercises. Overcoming these barriers through education and community programs is essential for fostering a culture of movement.

Research shows that in approximately one-third of countries and territories worldwide, population aging was the largest contributor to the growing burden of musculoskeletal disorders from 1990 to 2021. A new study in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, published by Elsevier, is poised to inform targeted public health strategies and healthcare resource allocation to alleviate the global burden and economic impact of these disorders.



The key findings include:

- In about one-third of countries and territories, population aging was the largest contributor to the increasing burden of musculoskeletal disorders.
- Middle-income countries bore the highest proportional burden of musculoskeletal disorders from population aging, despite having younger populations than high-income countries. This reflects the rapid demographic shift in these countries combined with limited health system readiness to meet older adults' needs.
- Globally, men experienced greater impact of population aging, particularly in high- and high-middle-income countries. Women were more affected in low- to middle-income countries.
- Osteoarthritis was the most affected musculoskeletal disorder globally, followed by gout and rheumatoid arthritis.
- Population aging-related musculoskeletal disorders cost US\$96 billion in global healthcare costs in 2021, equivalent to 0.10% of the gross global domestic product, surpassing the costs attributed to common modifiable risk factors.

Lead investigators noted that these results can help policymakers prioritise interventions tailored to sociodemographic context, sex differences and specific musculoskeletal disorders, including strengthening preventative measures, improving long-term management and ensuring sustainable financing to address the rising costs attributed to an aging population. Ultimately, this could reduce disability, improve quality of life for older adults and make healthcare systems more resilient. You can read the study at doi.org/10.1016/j.ard.2025.08.002.

THE WAKE-UP CALL

The study is a wake-up call for politicians and other stakeholders to focus research efforts on understanding, preventing and treating musculoskeletal disorders such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis in an aging population to ensure aging in health with good quality of life. With this, aged care facilities and home care programs also have a crucial role to play by implementing early intervention programs, promoting physical activity, and supporting residents with tailored rehabilitation and pain management plans.

SIMPLE STEPS TO SUPPORT MOVEMENT IN CARE SETTINGS

Aged care facilities and home care providers have an important role in promoting mobility. By embedding short, engaging chair-based programs into daily life, they can help residents and clients stay active, confident and connected.

Here are four simple ways to get started:

1. Incorporate short, daily movement sessions

Even 15–30 minutes of chair-based activity can improve circulation, flexibility and muscle tone. Encourage residents to move little and often; for example, before meals or during group activities, to build consistency without fatigue.

2. Focus on functional movements

Prioritise exercises that mimic everyday activities such as seated leg lifts (for walking strength), arm raises (for reaching) or gentle torso twists (for balance and posture). This helps maintain independence in daily living.

3. Add music and social interaction

Pairing exercise with familiar or upbeat music can make movement sessions more engaging and enjoyable. Group-based chair exercise classes can also boost mood and social connection, increasing participation rates.

4. Tailor to individual ability and track progress

Adapt exercises to residents' mobility levels and health conditions, using resistance bands or light weights where appropriate. Simple progress tracking (eg, number of repetitions, range of motion improvements) helps motivate participants and demonstrates benefits to staff and families.

MOVEMENT = EMPOWERMENT

Chair-based exercise isn't just about physical health; it's about empowerment. It helps older adults maintain independence, enhances quality of life, and creates moments of joy and connection in care environments.

As aged care providers continue to focus on holistic wellbeing, simple programs like these can be the key to keeping Australia's older generation moving safely, confidently and with purpose. ■



Gerald Quigley is a health expert, community pharmacist, accredited herbalist and media health commentator. As Musculoskeletal Health Awareness Month Ambassador, he brings knowledge and experience to highlight why

musculoskeletal health must be a top priority for all Australians. Gerald has also been championing the World's Biggest Sit-In, a nationwide initiative to raise awareness of the importance of movement.

COULD A 'ZAP' FROM THESE APPLIANCES CURB RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS?

Germicidal ultraviolet (GUV) appliances already used in a wide range of clinical and commercial settings, including hospitals, have been used to 'zap' airborne viruses in four residential aged care facilities across metropolitan and rural South Australia. This was part of a trial — run by scientists from Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute and SAHMRI — that found the technology reduced rates of viral respiratory infections in these facilities by more than 12%; findings that, the researchers believe, could pave the way for smarter infection control.

The GUV appliances were by LAF Technologies and are already used in a wide range of clinical and commercial settings, including hospitals. These appliances work by purifying the air with UV-C light rays, deactivating harmful micro-organisms like viruses and bacteria. Able to be mounted to ceilings or walls, fitted into ventilated AC systems, and harmless to people, these appliances are already proven to reduce levels of airborne pathogens in laboratory and hospital settings.

"Some of the key advantages of germicidal ultraviolet air-treatment appliances are that they are easily installed into existing facilities and cost effective to use," said Dr Andrew Shoubbridge from Flinders and SAHMRI's Microbiome and Host Health Programme, and lead author of the study. "When used in conjunction with existing infection control measures, they could be transformative in reducing rates of seasonal respiratory viral infections and protecting residential aged care facilities against emerging pathogens."



For the trial, GUV appliances were installed and tested in communal areas that were exposed to high volumes of people — where the transmission of airborne viruses is usually greater. “We designed a randomised clinical trial to compare the same environments with and without the appliances tracking infection rates over two years,” Shoubridge explained. “While the appliances didn’t seem to lower infection rates during short study periods, they did help reduce overall numbers of respiratory infections by 12.2%, or roughly 0.3 fewer cases per week.

“This means GUV technology could make a noticeable difference in protecting people in aged care facilities, especially when we consider there are 250,000 Australians currently living in them,” Shoubridge said. The collaborating aged care facilities were: Barmera Health Service Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF), Riverland Mallee Coorong Local Health Network (RMCLHN);



Shoubridge with a GUV appliance and Professor Geraint Rogers, who conceived the trial.

Allambi Residential Care Home (Eldercare); Lightsvie Residential Care Home (Helping Hand); and Golden Grove Residential Care Home (Helping Hand).

The study was published open access in July 2025 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*—you can read it at doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2025.3388.



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The dressing protector that keeps wounds dry while showering

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104 CLINICAL TRIALS REVEAL BEST WAYS TO PREVENT AGED CARE FALLS



A Flinders University-led international review has analysed data from 104 aged care facility clinical trials to reveal the best ways to prevent falls. The trials involved almost 69,000 older people living in care facilities across 25 countries and showed tailored exercise programs, vitamin D supplements and better nutrition to be the proven paths to falls prevention. The study, lead author Dr Suzanne Dyer said, is the most comprehensive of its kind and offers clear guidance for aged care providers, policymakers and families.

“Falls are one of the most common and serious health risks facing older Australians; they can lead to broken bones, hospital stays and a loss of independence,” said Dyer, from Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute (FHMRI). “Our findings show that preventing falls isn’t about a one-size-fits-all solution but there are some simple, easily deployed and targeted ways to make a real difference in reducing falls,” said Dr Jenni Suen, another author of the review — also from FHMRI.

Approaches tailored to each resident’s needs and delivered with strong support from aged care staff were found by the review to be the most effective in preventing falls in residential aged care — with exercise and nutrition being common themes. “One of the most effective strategies was regular, supervised exercise, which reduced falls even in residents with cognitive impairments, like dementia,” Suen said. “We found that this type of exercise, especially when done consistently, and in groups or for more than an hour a week, were shown to reduce the number of falls.”

The addition of vitamin D supplements has also proved helpful in reducing the overall number of falls, the researchers found — with many older Australians in care having low vitamin D levels, which can affect muscle strength. To strengthen bones with the result being fewer falls and fractures, nutrition was shown to also play a role — with an increase in dairy servings that were high in calcium. “By adding more calcium and protein-rich foods like milk, cheese and yoghurt, aged care homes were able to improve residents’ bone health and stability,” Dyer said.

Giving each resident an environmental assessment, medication review and an exercise plan based on their individual needs — delivered with strong staff engagement — was also shown by the review to significantly reduce falls. “As part of our research, we wanted to see what types of programs weren’t working as effectively in preventing falls,” Dyer said. “Programs such as improving medication use (deprescribing or reviewing prescriptions) and staff training, and changes to care models on their own didn’t consistently reduce falls,” Dyer added. “We now have strong evidence that some approaches work better than others.”

Dyer concluded: “Tailored exercise programs, vitamin D supplements and better nutrition can make a real difference. With the right mix of strategies, it’s possible to reduce risks and help older people in care stay safer and more independent.” The review was published open access in August — in *Cochrane Database of Systematic reviews* — and you can read it at doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD016064. ■

CARE, COMMUNITY AND HERITAGE

Architectus has released designs for Uniting Waverley Estate — a transformative renewal of the War Memorial Hospital site as integrated seniors living in Sydney's East. The historic Vickery Estate has been reimagined to seamlessly integrate residential aged care, independent living, wellness services, the hospital, and community infrastructure as a connected and contemporary seniors' community. >>

Render (courtesy) Architectus and Shadowline



The design is spread across six new buildings on a 43,076 m² site. Ranging from four to seven storeys, the development is planned to support aging in place and includes a 105-bed residential aged care home, 231 independent living apartments — comprising one-, two-, and three-bedroom layouts, including 23 units — alongside car parking and the adaptive reuse of the site's existing heritage buildings.

"This is more than a redevelopment," Architectus Principal Farhad Haidari said. "It's a long-term investment in place, in care, and in community. This project is about creating a future-focused village grounded in respect for the past. It balances architectural clarity with care-centred thinking, integrating the existing hospital within an important health precinct and residential community where older Australians can live with dignity, independence and connection."

Within walking distance of Bondi Junction and bounded by Bronte Road, Birrell Street, Carrington Road and Church Street, the design intends to preserve and celebrate four heritage-listed buildings — Ellerslie, Banksia, Wych Hazel and the Church Street Cottages, via sensitive residential adaptive reuse designed by Welsh + Major. Removal of non-significant structures is intended to celebrate the Chapel and increase landscape amenity, opening up garden views and enhancing pedestrian connectivity.

Two core principles ground the Uniting Waverley design: social and environmental sustainability, and a deep respect for Country.



Renders: Courtesy Architectus and ShadowLine



“IT’S A LONG -TERM INVESTMENT IN PLACE, IN CARE, AND IN COMMUNITY.”

A geothermal system for heating and hot water, rainwater harvesting, passive stormwater management, energy-efficient fittings, and a native planting strategy to support biodiversity are among the site’s sustainable initiatives; materials being selected for durability, low embodied energy and local sourcing.

The principles of the Connecting with Country Framework have been embedded throughout the site in close collaboration with Yerrabingin and through First Nations-led consultations. It is through the landscape that Indigenous storytelling is expressed; the architecture also reflecting Country in quiet, restorative ways — such as framed views to the sky that connect residents with seasonal light, the sun’s path and the night sky. With the State Significant Development Application having been lodged and currently under review by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, a decision is expected during 2026. ■

THE MISSING LINK IN AGED CARE



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— HOW UNTREATED HEARING LOSS IMPACTS MENTAL HEALTH AND MOBILITY

EMMA SCANLAN, Principal Audiologist for Adults at Hearing Australia, explains the link between untreated hearing loss and mental health and mobility in aged care.

Underdiagnosed hearing loss and the underuse of hearing aids is prevalent in aged care homes, which can limit the ability for residents to hear, connect and engage. It's estimated that up to 85% of residents living in Australian aged care facilities have a hearing loss and the number of residents that have hearing aids is substantially less.

Hearing loss is often dismissed as a normal part of aging but ignoring it can have serious effects on an individual's mental health and physical safety. It's hard to talk about quality of care in aged care without addressing hearing health.

For older Australians, especially in aged care settings, hearing loss is more than just a physical issue. Untreated hearing loss can negatively impact communication and social engagement, which leads to poorer health and wellbeing. This can lead to social isolation, loneliness and can reduce quality of life.¹

Despite hearing loss being a major issue impacting older Australians, it continues to be under-recognised. Hearing health must be seen as a core part of care not just an optional extra. The assumption that hearing loss is a normal part of aging can lead to missed opportunities for early intervention and prevention.

THE LINK BETWEEN HEARING LOSS, SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

A study² by National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL), the research division of Hearing Australia, found that hearing loss increases the risk of elderly adults feeling lonely. The study also showed that the risk of loneliness increases if their hearing problems affect their ability to communicate with people and take part in everyday activities with others.

In positive news, a key message from the NAL study is that using hearing aids regularly can reduce the risk of loneliness.

HOW UNTREATED HEARING LOSS AFFECTS MOBILITY AND THE RISK OF FALLS

For older Australians, untreated hearing loss can impact their ability to perform simple daily tasks. Research shows that individuals with severe hearing loss can have impaired mobility and physical performance.³ In fact, research shows that older adults with hearing loss are at 2.4 times greater risk of falls than their normal hearing peers.⁴

This can mean that those with a hearing loss can have a more sedentary way of life, are less independent and have reduced social interactions, which has an adverse effect on an individual's overall mental health. This is why we need to move away from the idea that hearing loss is just part of getting older, as it has a big impact on all areas of health and wellbeing.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE: WHY ROBUST HEARING HEALTH PROGRAMS IN AGED CARE SETTINGS ARE CRUCIAL

The key to lifting the low rates of hearing loss diagnosis and increasing intervention is having a strong hearing health program in residential aged care facilities. Robust hearing health programs that start at the resident's intake would ensure that they have a hearing test at the outset followed by annual hearing checks.

Staff play a crucial role in assisting residents to navigate and access hearing services, from finding out what funding is available, to maintaining devices such as hearing aids, and supporting residents in their communication goals.

Hearing health needs to be part of the broader mental health conversation. For overall health and wellbeing, early intervention and prevention can help keep elderly Australians stay connected to the people and things they love. ■

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Emma Scanlan is Principal Audiologist for Adults at Hearing Australia, mainly responsible for service delivery and quality for adults with complex needs. She has delivered clinical services in the paediatric and adult areas for many years, and manages policy and practice for clients who have severe and profound hearing loss, have poor communication ability, or have other impairments in addition to hearing loss.



A DAY IN THE LIFE



Images: Supplied

BROOKE EDWARDS

SUPPORTING ACTIVE AGING

Brooke Edwards, Resthaven's new Wellness & Active Ageing Manager, is an occupational therapist (OT) with over 13 years' experience working in acute, sub-acute, community and residential care. She has worked in inpatient and community rehabilitation roles, and more recently, specialised in dementia care and behaviour support. She has a Master of Public Health qualification.

In her new role, Brooke is tackling the question: How can we shape residential aged care to better match each person's abilities, interests and drive?

"At the centre of active aging at Resthaven is supporting individuals to continue to engage in the things that are most important to them," Brooke says. "It's about person-centred care — understanding residents, their interests and strengths, and facilitating opportunities for each person to remain engaged and active in what lights them up and gives them a sense of identity, purpose and enjoyment.

"Enabling meaningful engagement — supporting people to engage in activities that matter to them — is at the heart of being an OT and fits in well with my new role as Wellness & Active Ageing Manager. I have an interest in healthcare systems and how they can be designed to provide equitable and efficient care to those who need it, when they need it. I enjoy learning about different models and understanding how policy, technology and economics intersect healthcare delivery."

On a day-to-day basis, Brooke balances her time between Resthaven's 12 residential sites and head office. She oversees and supports Resthaven's lifestyle, allied health and chaplaincy teams, and is developing a wellbeing strategy which will streamline processes and support consistency across all Resthaven's residential care homes and optimise wellbeing for residents.

She regularly interacts and engages with residents to hear directly from them their concerns and interests.

"It's important to recognise the changing demographics of our residential communities, expectations and standards around wellbeing and meaningful engagement," Brooke says. "I'm reviewing what is on offer and we will optimise and strengthen this for all residents.

For example, we can see generational changes in residents who come to live at Resthaven, and we also see that individuals are coming into residential care later in life, after they have experienced changes in their abilities and function. There is often a wide spectrum in terms of interest and ability across all residents, so we need to support everyone, individually."

Brooke says the collaboration across the teams is essential in delivering this.

"We work together to incorporate physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and social wellbeing in the programs on site," Brooke says. "Ageism is also being challenged, and we are creating more inclusive, empowering environments where older people can continue to embrace new opportunities." ■



Brooke and Resthaven resident Elizabeth Searle.

PROVIDER PARTNERS WITH MELBOURNE FRINGE OVER-60S DANCE PIECE

CASE STUDY

PROBLEM:

Provider seeks opportunities for residents to stay active and connected.

SOLUTION:

Partners with an over-60s Melbourne Fringe Festival dance piece.



Some of the *FreeSteps – Swinging Years* dancers. From left to right: HongHong Guo (Elena), Marylla Powell, Lee Klein and Debra Batton.

Care Connect partnered with a 2025 Melbourne Fringe Festival dance piece in October for *FreeSteps – Swinging Years*, a work guided by Taiwanese choreographer Wei-Chia Su and created by dancers aged 60 and over. Local participants joined Su to explore the language of the body — bones, muscles and postures. Its final performance, on 18 October, was a mass celebration of the beauty and wear accumulated through decades of life.

“We are delighted to be partnering with Melbourne Fringe Festival to bring *FreeSteps – Swinging Years* to Melbourne this year,” Care Connect CEO Lynda Chalmers said. “Aging well means more than just staying healthy. It’s about staying connected, active, and living a life you love. *Swinging Years* beautifully encapsulates and celebrates this.”

One of the performers — Debra Batton, in her mid-60s — said she believes the performance highlights the value of coming together as a collective. “What I find really special is getting to dance with people that are my age or older. The experience they bring to the room, the conversations during our lunch break, watching people learn and transform across the process under wise direction has just been the most exciting thing. I feel enriched every moment.”

Simon Abrahams, Creative Director & CEO of Melbourne Fringe, said *FreeSteps – Swinging Years* captured a festival ethos of democratising the arts. “Melbourne Fringe believes anyone can be an artist, and this project embodies that beautifully. Its dancers include people performing for the very first time alongside others with decades of experience. That’s what Fringe is all about: celebrating the extraordinary in the everyday.”

Jenny Dykstra, Care Connect Care Manager, said she has seen firsthand how staying active and connected can significantly improve wellbeing in older Australians. “A few of my clients in their seventies and eighties regularly attend dance lessons and exercise classes — and they absolutely love it. For many of them, social activities and hobbies are an important part of their lives. “They bring joy, purpose and connection, which are all essential to wellbeing as we age. It’s just one of the many reasons why being supported to live independently at home leads to such positive outcomes.” Chalmers added: “We often think of aging in terms of loss or limitation, but performances like this remind us of the incredible strength and wisdom that comes with age.” ■

COULD OLDER AUSTRALIANS SOON REACH FOR EYE DROPS INSTEAD OF READING GLASSES?

Presbyopia — a difficulty in focusing on near objects and text — develops for all as they age, leading many to need reading glasses. Now, a study suggests the solution could lie in the use of special eye drops two or three times a day. This is according to a retrospective study of 766 patients, the majority of whom were found to be able to read an extra two, three or more lines on the Jaeger chart — used for testing near visual acuity — after using specially formulated eye drops, an improvement that was sustained for up to two years.

“We conducted this research due to the significant unmet medical need in presbyopia management,” said Dr Giovanna Benozzi, Director of the Center for Advanced Research for Presbyopia in Buenos Aires, Argentina. “Current solutions such as reading glasses or surgical interventions have limitations, including inconvenience, social discomfort, and potential risks or complications.

“There is a group of presbyopia patients who have limited options besides spectacles, and who are not candidates for surgery; these are our primary focus of interest. We sought to provide robust clinical evidence supporting an innovative pharmacological solution to offer patients a non-invasive, convenient and effective alternative.”

Developed by Benozzi’s father, the late Dr Jorge Benozzi of the same centre, the eye drops contain a combination of two active agents: pilocarpine — a drug that constricts the pupils and contracts the ciliary muscle controlling the eye’s accommodation for seeing objects at varying distances — and diclofenac — a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug that reduces inflammation and the discomfort that pilocarpine often causes.

The eye drops were administered to patients twice a day, usually on waking and again approximately six hours later, with an optional third dose if symptoms recurred or additional visual comfort was needed. Divided



into three groups, the patients consisted of 373 women and 393 men (with an average age of 55), and were to receive one of three eye drop formulations. There was a fixed dose of diclofenac in each formulation, but concentrations of pilocarpine were 1%, 2% and 3%.

“Our most significant result showed rapid and sustained improvements in near vision for all three concentrations. One hour after having the first drops, patients had an average improvement of 3.45 Jaeger lines. The treatment also improved focus at all distances,” Benozzi said. “Impressively, 99% of 148 patients in the 1% pilocarpine group reached optimal near vision and were able to read two or more extra lines. Approximately 83% of all patients maintained good functional near vision at 12 months. Importantly, no significant adverse events like increased intraocular pressure or retinal detachment were observed.”

No patients discontinued the treatment and adverse side effects were mild — the most common being temporary dim vision, which occurred in 32% of cases, irritation when the drops were instilled (in 3.7%) and headache (in 3.8%). The improvement in the patients’ vision was sustained for up to two years, with a median duration of 434 days. The study is said to be significant as the first systematic evaluation comparing three different pilocarpine concentrations in combination with diclofenac. That it is a retrospective, single-centre study is a limitation, which could limit the generalisability of the findings and introduce selection bias. ■

CREATIVE ARTS PROGRAM ENRICHES QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA

CASE STUDY

PROBLEM:

Every person living with dementia is unique.

SOLUTION:

A creative arts program seeks to support this individuality.



Queensland aged care provider Lutheran Services is developing creative, research-based engagement programs designed to enrich the quality of life for residents with dementia. Including art, dance, music, storytelling and theatre, these targeted creative arts initiatives are intended to empower residents to express themselves, find purpose and experience moments of joy, regardless of their cognitive ability.

"There is significant evidence supporting the value of creative health programs for older Australians living with dementia," Lutheran Services CEO Nick Ryan said. "The innovative programs developed by our dedicated staff go beyond basic care to deliver real and lasting impacts on quality of life."

Natalija Pearn, Lutheran Services' Creative Engagement Lead, is overseeing the program. "Creative activities stimulate parts of the brain that remain strong as dementia progresses," Pearn said. "Our programs nurture social connection, offer emotional outlets and foster a sense of accomplishment. Even as abilities decline, residents can engage meaningfully through art and creative activities."

"The power of creativity is that it doesn't rely on memory to allow feelings to be expressed and a sense of accomplishment to be felt even when verbal communication becomes limited."

Pearn led a pilot program at Orana Aged Care, Kingaroy focused on creative engagement during afternoons and evenings — critical times when residents living with dementia can be more vulnerable to stress and experience increased restlessness.

"Activities later in the day might include home-like tasks such as setting tables for dinner, or art making, singing and reminiscing. These activities are adapted by staff into one or two steps, making them achievable as dementia progresses to create a real sense of purpose," Pearn said. "The trial is having positive results. Staff and family have noticed a reduction in stress and changed behaviours, along with improved sleep, but most importantly, a marked increase in joy, social connection and engagement."



Natalija Pearn



Images: Supplied

To further enhance comfort, communication and connection for residents living with dementia, other Lutheran Services sites are trialling innovations such as doll therapy with weighted, heartbeat sensory companions and VR experiences. A range of training sessions for carers and support staff that focus on empathetic, often non-verbal communication have also been developed by Pearn, who brings expertise in community health and positive aging, and postgraduate studies in her interest field of dementia.

“Supporting a workforce that understands and connects with every resident is central to Lutheran Services’ approach,” Pearn said. “Ongoing training empowers staff with skills to interact positively with residents and create opportunities to make everyone’s day a little happier. We consider topics for conversation, validate their feelings and learn to understand and mirror body language. This says to the resident ‘I see you, I am here with you’.

“Such positive engagement improves relationships, lifts morale and results in a happier environment for both residents and staff. Every person living with dementia is unique, and our approach supports this individuality.” Pearn also said a dementia diagnosis does not define the individual — “With empathy and creative connection, every day offers new opportunities for purpose and joy.” ■



AI-powered compliance platform

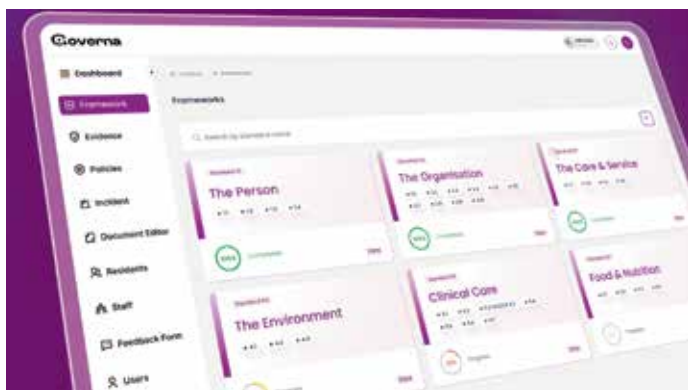
Governa.ai is an AI-driven platform designed to streamline compliance, risk management, incident reporting and continuous improvement in aged care. By integrating multiple solutions into a single system, it aims to reduce reliance on multiple vendor apps, enhancing efficiency and eliminating fragmentation.

Purpose-built for residential, community and home care providers, Governa.ai leverages advanced AI and is designed to help providers navigate the growing complexity of aged care regulation while lifting the burden of manual administration.

Using AI to monitor changes to standards, automate documentation workflows and identify gaps before they become compliance issues, Governa.ai is intended to empower board members, executive teams and frontline leaders with real-time visibility into governance risks, policy alignment and operational compliance — all in one platform.

Key features include AI-powered policy intelligence that automatically updates and aligns internal policies with national standards and best practices; governance dashboards that track policy alignment with the Aged Care Quality Standards in real time, including evidence uploads and compliance progress; and audit readiness, which aims to centralise documentation, track actions and ensure continuous improvement is always demonstrable.

Governa Pty Ltd
www.governa.ai



Full face CPAP mask

The Resmed AirTouch F30i Comfort full face CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) mask has a soft, breathable and moisture-wicking fabric and is designed to help more people start and stay on CPAP therapy.

Designed to gently contour to the face, Resmed's patented ComfiSoft fabric-covered cushion and moisture-wicking fabric is intended to deliver comfort without compromising on seal. Other features include the use of thousands of digital biomarkers designed to provide a tailored fit.

The mask is compatible with Resmed's AirCurve11, AirSense11, AirCurve10, AirSense10, S9 AutoSet and select VPAP devices. It is available in three cushion sizes — small-wide, medium and large — and three frame sizes — small, standard and large.

Resmed LTD
www.resmed.com.au

Smoke alarm

The Watch Genius 520Hz Smoke Alarm uses a 520 Hz square wave tone designed to wake older adults, the hearing-impaired, children, and alcohol-affected sleepers more effectively than standard alarms. Its features include wireless RF interconnectivity, photoelectric sensing and full Australian compliance.



Unlike the standard high-pitched beeping alarm, the 520 Hz square wave creates a 'dissonant' sound, meaning it has a mix of different tones instead of just one. This mix of tones is designed to spread across a range of frequencies that human ears are most sensitive to, making it harder to ignore or miss.

It has been used in commercial premises for more than 15 years, but is now available for homes.

Watch Smoke Alarms
watchsmokealarms.com.au



NEW INITIATIVE SETS SIGHTS ON DEMENTIA, PALLIATIVE AND COMPLEX CARE SOLUTIONS

CASE STUDY

PROBLEM:

The aged and health sectors are facing growing pressures.

SOLUTION:

An initiative focused on real-world solutions is launched.



HammondCare CEO Andrew Thorburn with Hammond Innovations Executive GM Anna Barker.

HammondCare, a provider specialising in dementia, palliative and complex care for older Australians, has launched Hammond Innovations — an initiative focused on real-world solutions. To respond to the care challenges of Australia's growing aging population, the initiative intends to harness research, creative design, cross-sector partnerships and the latest technologies — with fast implementation. It will be led by Dr Anna Barker, in the role of Executive General Manager, and bring together resources of The Dementia Centre, The Palliative Centre and the Centre for Positive Ageing.

"The aged and health sectors face growing pressures including workforce shortages, preventable harms, rising costs, administrative burden and slow translation of evidence into practice," Barker said. "We want to respond to this with solutions through a provider-led innovation model — not just research that is too slow or pilots that are too narrow — that is technology-inspired and makes use of innovation pathways to move from problem to product with speed, agility and scale."

The 'IDEA' Hub — short for Insight, Design, Evidence and Action — will be at the heart of Hammond Innovations and is described as an 'engine room' to identify the most urgent problems, test solutions, and scale what works. Underpinning the initiative's approach will be partnerships with technology, university and philanthropic partners, and other sector providers. Improving the environments of older people, including developing safer, personalised, digitally enabled homes, nursing home settings and hospitals, will be a high priority.

Supporting care practitioners with practical digital tools, AI assistants and streamlined workflows to free them up for more time being present with older people in their care is described as a second priority. A third priority will be developing new ways to help older people and their caregivers and supporting networks, including families. Among the first areas to be explored for their potential to improve care will be digital solutions now market-ready; these include AI companions, ambient listening, digital pill boxes, radar sensors, smart lamps and VR therapy.

"We want to deliver what matters most — happier, healthier days for older Australians with more nights on their own pillows," Barker said. "For care practitioners, we want more hands held and fewer pens pushed." With a PhD (Geriatrics) and a Masters of Physiotherapy (Geriatrics), as well as qualifications through the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Barker brings research experience to the initiative, having established global collaborations with Harvard Medical School and Mayo Clinic in her role as Head of Health Services Research at Monash University. ■

IN Conversation

WITH
CAMERON
McPHERSON

PUTTING ESG INTO PRACTICE



Regulators are undoubtedly raising the benchmark on quality standards and accountability. It's no longer good enough to just talk about doing the right thing — providers must show it and demonstrate real progress. In short, ESG (environmental, social and governance) is now the sector's licence to operate.

Yet too often, I've seen many aged care providers fall into the trap of treating ESG like a compliance checkbox with a framework that is 'set and forget', rather than integrating it into their long-term strategy and brand values. In turn, they miss the full benefits of a comprehensive ESG approach.

Rising expectations, tight budgets, regulatory pressures, outdated infrastructure and board fatigue are making it incredibly

difficult for aged care providers to see past day-to-day survival, leaving very little room for long-term investment or strategic planning. However, by embedding a practical ESG framework, providers can ensure they meet regulatory standards, as well as meeting the expectations of residents, staff and the broader community.

THE OPPORTUNITY

A meaningful ESG framework means making ESG principles part of the day-to-day decisions to enable valuable connections, trust and safety with residents and their families, while also driving long-term financial value through improved reputation and operational efficiency.

It's more than a framework. It is about creating opportunities for residents to feel purposeful and connected to the wider community. One example is our involvement with Backpacks 4 Vic Kids, a program that provides essential items to children entering out-of-home care, often with little time to prepare. Each month, residents at Casey Manor and Casey Aged Care collect and make items, and our care teams help to pack and deliver the backpacks, filled with everything from toothbrushes and clothes to colouring books and toys.

What might appear to be a small initiative has an outsized impact. Children feel supported at a vulnerable moment, while our residents experience the pride and joy of contributing meaningfully to the lives of others. This is the essence of ESG in practice: It's about building human connection, fostering belonging and making a tangible difference in people's lives.

A PRACTICAL ROADMAP

At MACG, at the heart of our ESG approach is the resident experience and fostering a sense of belonging while focusing on genuine outcomes.

Technology supports all areas of our framework, helping to make a tangible difference to the daily lives of our residents by driving engagement, and greater inclusion across our homes. Innovations include TeaTime, an app that helps families, aged care residents and carers to stay connected; Abi, a humanoid robot that engages and entertains residents; Project Ciao, a video conferencing initiative that links residents with homes around the world; and immersive technologies like Sensory Wizard and SILVR Adventures. We continue to track adoption and the reach of these tools across our homes.

Our framework is guided by measurable targets and regular monitoring, enabling continuous improvement and tangible outcomes. We align with Australia's Aged Care Quality Standards, track our progress to keep pace with reform and we benchmark our work against university and industry partners to stay ahead of best practice for the aged care sector.

WHERE TO START

Embedding an effective ESG framework within our business and day-to-day operations hasn't been without its challenges, especially in an industry marked by uncertainty amid the aged care reform. So how can providers begin to embed ESG in a meaningful and practical way?

Here are a few things to consider:

1. Treat connection like a core clinical asset, not a 'nice to have'. Connection has a direct impact on so many things in aged care, including mental health and overall wellbeing. It needs to be treated with the same importance as other areas of care and be funded accordingly.



2. Co-design your ESG framework with residents, families and your workforce. Your best ideas might not be on the balance sheet but can still drive long-term value.
3. Pilot, measure, scale — avoid framework paralysis. Start small, learn quickly and expand what works. Try a small, manageable ESG initiative, track outcomes to understand what's working and what's not. Don't risk doing nothing while trying to get the perfect framework.
4. Leverage technology to strengthen ESG outcomes. Again, start small — test what works and scale to maximise impact. Technology innovation is most impactful when it is deeply human-centric and thoughtfully integrated into the care ecosystem.
5. Build flexibility into the framework. Make sure the framework can evolve as regulations and priorities change so you can stay the course amid lots of uncertainty with repeated changes to the aged care reform. By doing this, you can respond quickly and remain constant.

HAVING REAL IMPACT

Embedding an ESG framework doesn't need to be complex, but it needs to have real impact. At its core, ESG is about building a more sustainable and people-centred future for aged care to improve the quality of care for older Australians; however, no provider can achieve this on their own. This is why collaboration across the aged care sector is so important, and sharing what works so we can learn from each other. To build tomorrow's aged care, we need to work together as an industry to make it happen. ■

Cameron McPherson has almost two decades of experience in healthcare leadership, specialising in enhancing staff experience and evolving innovative care environments. Believing in the importance of having a strategic vision and with a deep commitment to enhancing the quality of life for seniors, Cameron joined Medical & Aged Care Group (MACG) more than 17 years ago and has been the CEO since 2020.



RECOMMENDATIONS AIM TO ENSURE DEMENTIA CARE MEETS NEEDS

Recommendations designed to ensure care provided to people living with dementia meets their needs have been launched as part of the Core Outcome Measures for Improved Care (COM-IC) project. The aim was to identify a set of key outcome measures collected during routine care and used to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions such as dignity, hygiene, pain and meaningful activities — according to the project's Chief Investigator, Professor Tracy Comans from the University of Queensland's (UQ) Centre for Health Services Research (CHSR).

"These will help ensure that the care provided meets the needs of people living with dementia, either at home with support services or in aged care," Comans said. "To improve care, we need consistent, high-quality data on the support people with dementia receive, and one way to achieve this is through standardised measures." Comans added: "Using the recommended measures ensures that care quality is evaluated in a clear and consistent way and with information that can be compared across different aged care services".

Developed in consultation with a large group of stakeholders including care providers, people living with dementia and their families, researchers, policy makers and health care professionals, PhD candidate Danelle Kenny said the importance of carer education was one common and overlooked thread that gained clarity and traction over the life of the project. "While formal qualifications don't necessarily translate to improved care, the lack of dementia-specific training can lead to breakdowns in communication and erodes the positive care relationships between those giving and receiving care," Kenny said.

"For too long, health care has reduced patients to a collection of symptoms, labels and problems to be fixed and we need to move beyond this to see these issues in the context of the whole person," Kenny added. "These recommendations have been primarily developed for the Australian Government to aid future policy review and development in aged care quality improvement, as well as for use by aged care providers who may review and modify current practices." The COM-IC project's recommendations are available on the CHSR website: www.chsr.centre.uq.edu.au/com-ic.

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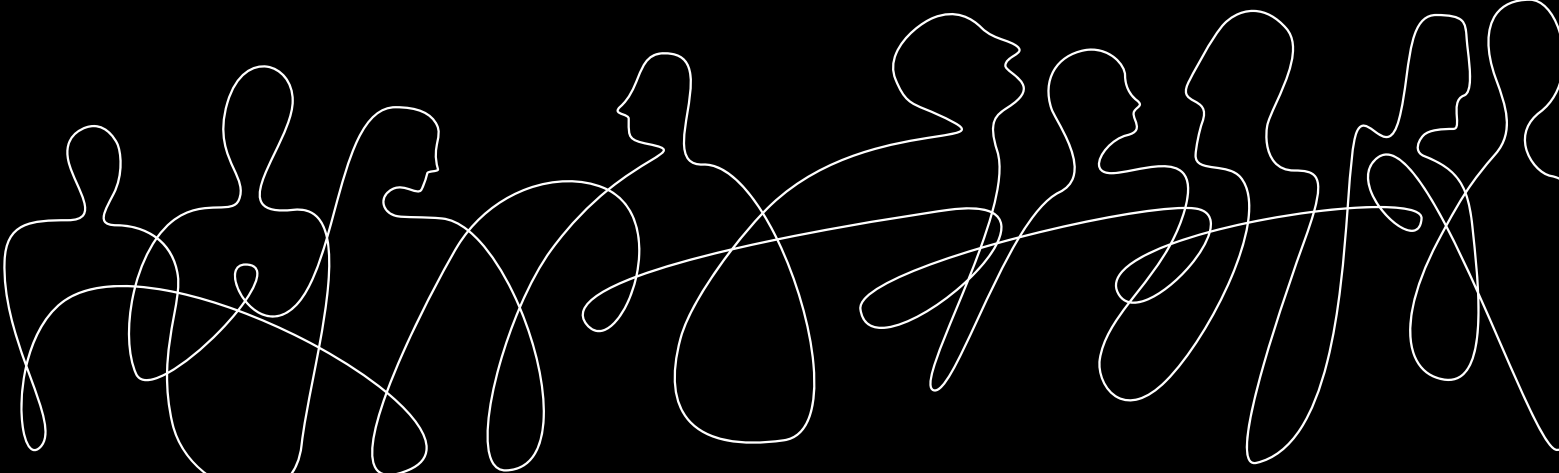
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