



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Let's CHAT Dementia Study

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An update from the Project Lead – Dina LoGiudice

The first half of 2022 has been very dynamic for the Let's CHAT Dementia project. Coming out of COVID lockdowns and restrictions, the research staff have been making up for lost time, catching up on data collection and implementation activities, which are due to finish up in the coming months (a little later in Qld). It has been wonderful to re-engage face to face with most of our services. We've also had the great pleasure of visiting several Elders' groups to discuss brain health. The Elders have been extremely welcoming and interested in our presentations.

We were also very fortunate to have the opportunity to host a launch for a number of key project resources (see report on p.3), co-designed by the research staff, Let's CHAT chief investigators (CIs), the project's Indigenous Reference Group (IRG), and our Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Service (ACCCHS) partners. I would like to acknowledge the great work of our research officers, Yurriyngem Taam Kija Woman, Roslyn Malay, and Gunnai Man, Harry Douglas, who co-led the video resources development, and Dr Mary Belfrage, who led the Best-practice guide development. I'm pleased to say that the guide is now an RACGP Accepted clinical resource, and has also been endorsed by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

So, in spite of the pandemic, the project has achieved much. I take this opportunity to thank our whole national team for their tireless work in improving brain health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

New Let's CHAT Dementia Project Resources

Continuing the theme from our last newsletter, this issue features some Let's CHAT resources developed with and for our ACCCHSs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and wider community, specifically two video projects we worked on in 2021: a 5-part series 'Yarning about Memory and Thinking Problems and Conducting a Cognitive Assessment' and two brain health ads.

Both projects followed an intensely collaborative methodology in accordance with co-design principles, involving preliminary yarning sessions with the project's Aboriginal staff to brainstorm exactly what was needed and how it should be presented to be culturally appropriate and relevant to all potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers. The scriptwriting process was equally as collaborative, with a core group of main writers, and several rounds of revisions following input and feedback from the wider project group including



Shirley Blackwood and Nicola Ingram on the set

the IRG, who provided very in-depth and helpful feedback, in fact going through one of the scripts together line by line in one of our meetings.

Yarning about Memory and Thinking Problems and Conducting a Cognitive Assessment

This video series focuses on strategies for yarning about memory and thinking problems, as well as how to conduct a Kimberley Indigenous Cognitive Assessment or KICA. In discussions with staff at our partnering ACCHSs, the project team identified a need for a resource to help staff broach the topic of memory and thinking problems and dementia with clients. Staff reported that it can be a tricky topic to talk about! Based on community feedback, it was determined that videos would be an appealing and accessible way to provide this information.



Behind the scenes In the filming studio!



Aunty Molly, aka Shirley, doing the KICA

At the same time, the KICA instructional video was due to be redone. The video and media production crew at the University of Melbourne came up with the idea of combining the two ideas as a multi-part series, in chapters. We followed their guidance and are very happy with the result.

The videos are narrated by our Victorian Let's CHAT Research Officer, Harry Douglas. Local Elder, Shirley Blackwood and acting student, Nicola Ingram, play the roles of the patient and the Aboriginal health worker, respectively, in the simulation that runs throughout. The full five-part series is available

on the Let's CHAT website and YouTube page. [Click here](#) to watch them.

Uncle Jack Charles Promoting Brain Health

The Let's CHAT team has been very fortunate to engage the services of Uncle Jack Charles as our 'Brain Health Ambassador', so to speak, for our Community-targeted brain health ads. Uncle Jack stars in the video '[Let's Talk about Brain Health](#)' which focuses on prevention, and '[Dementia – it's not a shame job](#)', where he advises us on what steps to take if we're worried that we or a loved one may have dementia.

The ads were developed to be televised on Aboriginal Health Television, a service that plays health-related video content in the waiting rooms of many ACCHSs around Australia, including several of our co-researching partner ACCHSs. Let's CHAT ran a two-month video campaign of the ads throughout April and May in our Victorian, NSW and WA health services. The campaign will run throughout July and August in our Qld Let's CHAT services.



Uncle Jack Charles in the brain health ads

SBS is also broadcasting the ads across their entire network, including NITV, for the next 6 months as part of their Community Service Announcements (CSA) programming. We are also in the process of creating 30 second cutdown versions of the ads at SBS's request, which will be easier to slot into programming and create more opportunities to get the message out about brain health! The ads are available on the Let's CHAT website and YouTube page. Click on the video titles above to access them directly.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to the video development process, and in particular: Rob Salvatore and Handy Kartika from the Melbourne University Video Production Team, Aboriginal Health Television/Tonic Health Media, Roslyn Malay, Harry Douglas, Dr Jo Hughson, A/Prof Dina LoGiudice, Prof Dawn Bessarab, Kate Fulford, Dr Kate Smith, Christine Howard, Kylie Sullivan, Belinda Ducker, Diane Cadet-James, Dr Kylie Radford, Michele Moloney, Terrence Donovan and Prof Yvonne Cadet-James.

Brain Health and Best Practice Cognitive Impairment and Dementia Care Resources Launch



A/Prof Dina LoGiudice presenting at the launch. Also pictured L-R: Uncle Jack Charles, VC Prof Duncan Maskell, Prof Dawn Bessarab, Roslyn Malay and Dr Jo Hughson

On 27th May, the Let's CHAT team held a special event to launch several key resources created as part of the project, including:

- The Best-practice guide to cognitive impairment and dementia care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending primary care
- The brain health promotion ads
- The 5-part video suite
- The Let's CHAT Dementia Webinar series, a collaboration with Dementia Training Australia

Following a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country by Wurundjeri Man, Alex Kerr, special guest Uncle Jack Charles discussed the brain health videos and his role as Elder and health advocate for Community.



Alex Kerr performing a smoking ceremony



Let's CHAT Staff Rachel, Di, Harry and Ros and star of the video series, Shirley Blackwood

This was a fabulous opportunity for research staff, project contributors, Elders, and community to come together and celebrate. The launch was also streamed live so that collaborators and partners across the country could attend virtually.

We heard from project lead, A/Prof Dina LoGiudice, and other project members CI Prof Dawn Bessarab and Research Officer Roslyn Malay on the development of the resources and their importance for the project.



Uncle Jack Charles and Prof Dawn Bessarab



Uncle Jack and Vice Chancellor Maskell launching the resources

The University of Melbourne's Vice Chancellor, Prof Duncan Maskell, also presented and to close invited Uncle Jack back on stage to officially launch the resources with him!

Let's CHAT Research Staff visit Elders Groups at VIC Services



Members of the Elders' group at Mallee District Aboriginal Services with Let's CHAT staff, February 2022

In February and May of 2022, we had the good fortune of being invited to the Elders' group at Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS).

On each visit, the Let's CHAT team gave a short presentation on dementia care and the project, shared a meal, and set aside plenty of time to yarn. Elders were very interested in the topic and had lots of questions and stories to share. People were particularly interested in finding out what they could do individually to minimise their risk of getting dementia so we talked a lot about protective factors such as a good diet and getting regular exercise, making sure you check your hearing and blood pressure regularly and manage any conditions well with the guidance of the health service. We also talked about the importance of looking after our mental health, making sure we stay socially connected, and reaching out to the health service for help in times of need.



Elders' Group at Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) with Let's CHAT Staff

Research Officers Harry Douglas and Kate Bradley held a workshop with the Elder Craft Group at the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) in late May. Eleven Elders were present and an informal discussion was had around the risk factors for dementia, the importance of keeping a healthy brain and how early detection is important in the management of dementia and cognitive impairment. The Elders found the workshop very informative and requested that Harry and Kate come back to present again at the next Elders meeting!

Face to face again at last! Running workshops with our ACCHS partners



Dementia Prevention and Health Promotion Workshop with BADAC staff, May 2022

It has been fantastic getting (relatively) back to normal in recent months. We have even been able to run face-to-face workshops with our ACCHS partners!



Russell Taylor, Aged Care Support Worker at MDAS, trying to complete a task while "impaired"

A big highlight has been the 'Lived Experience of Dementia' workshops, which have been extremely well received and impactful for the health service staff who have attended them. In these workshops, Let's CHAT Team facilitators guide workshop participants through a series of activities and discussion of cultural factors, aimed at giving insight into some of the physical, emotional, psychological and communicative challenges that people living with dementia may be dealing with on a daily basis. For example, one activity involves the use of props to "impair" the participant's ability to function as they normally would, and then the participant is asked to complete some "everyday" tasks, invariably with considerable difficulty!



Let's CHAT Staff Kylie and Wendy at Galambila AHS with Ageing Well Champion and Senior Aboriginal Health Worker, Tyson Ferguson



The Lived Experience of Dementia Workshop with MDAS Staff, Feb 2022

Let's CHAT Dementia Partners

