



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Let's CHAT Dementia Study

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WARNING: For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this newsletter contains images of people who have passed.

Welcome from the Project Lead – Dina LoGiudice

Greetings everyone. Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the passing of Michele Moloney and Uncle Jack Charles. Both Uncle Jack and Michele contributed greatly to the Let's CHAT program, particularly resource development and we were very fortunate to work with them, even for a short period of time. They will be greatly missed.

The second half of 2022 has gone by in a blur for the Let's CHAT project team, with a dynamism to match that of the first half of the year! The research staff have been working hard to ensure all the workshops and data collection activities are completed within the set timeline, which means that most sites have now finished or will be finishing up very soon.

I would like to thank all the members of our large team around Australia for their continued hard work and dedication, in particular the research team on the ground completing the data collection and implementation activities, and also our ACCHS research partners without whose commitment and support we would not be able to conduct our research.

I wish everyone a happy and restful holiday season. We look forward to next year which will focus on the data analysis and write-up of the project findings - and of course sharing the findings with our project partners, other stakeholders and decision makers, so that we make the biggest impact possible on improving brain health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Vale Uncle Jack Charles and Michele Moloney

In the second half of 2022, the Let's CHAT project lost two respected Elders, Indigenous Reference Group member, Michele Moloney, and brain health ambassador, Uncle Jack Charles.

Michele was a Wiradjuri woman whose many valuable education and research contributions were instrumental to achieving more equitable health and social outcomes for mob across Australia. She was a valued member of the Let's CHAT Indigenous Reference Group,



playing a key role in the development of our resources and cultural decisions on research design and implementation.



Let's Talk about Brain Health

The Let's CHAT team was privileged to have the pleasure of working with Uncle Jack, who became our ambassador for brain health, spreading awareness around dementia for mob in Australia in advertisements screened nationally on SBS and NITV. A Boon Wurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Woiwurrung and Yorta Yorta man, Uncle Jack was a highly respected Elder and celebrated actor, musician and activist. He was both a pillar and a

voice for his community. We are grateful to Uncle Jack's family who has given us permission to continue to use his image and the brain health ads that he created for us.

We are enormously appreciative of the contributions Michele and Uncle Jack made to the Let's CHAT Dementia project and they are both greatly missed.

Melbourne Medical School Indigenous Development Grant Success

Congratulations to Victorian Let's CHAT Research Officer, Harry Douglas, who has been successful in being awarded an Indigenous Development Grant from the University of Melbourne's Medical School.

The grant will support Harry to conduct his own research project in 2023 focusing on the care needs of Aboriginal LGBTQI+ Elders, an under-examined area of inquiry to date.

Harry said he's looking forward to having the opportunity to strengthen and further develop his research skills, particularly in the area of Indigenous methodologies, as well as project management and leadership skills. Most of all, Harry's very excited to be able to continue his work advocating for and supporting Elders.



Australian Association of Gerontology Conference 2022

In issue 3 of the Let's CHAT Dementia Study newsletter back in 2020, we did a feature titled 'A deep-dive into polypharmacy' which described a nested masters project being undertaken by Marycarol Holdaway focussing on medications use in three of our co-researching Let's CHAT ACCHSs.

Marycarol has since graduated from her masters and her medical degree and moved back to her home country, New Zealand, to take up an internship at Invercargill Hospital. We were pleased to be able to present the results of her study at the recent Australian Association of Gerontology

Conference in Adelaide. In the presentation, Dina described how the study found that polypharmacy (defined as the use of five or more prescription medications) - itself a risk factor for dementia - was associated with having dementia risk factors such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke and depression. Polypharmacy was found to be present in almost half of the patient sample. Rates of potentially inappropriate medications (those posing high risk or problems in combination or exhibiting disease interactions) and anticholinergic medications (which can affect cognition) were also studied. They were found to be present in 17.3% and 11.8% of patients respectively.

Associations were found between potentially suboptimal prescribing and depression or cognitive concerns. These findings highlight the importance of regular medication review and a focus on deprescribing for this group of patients. Reducing the overall number of medications may improve quality of life and increase adherence to essential medications.

The findings of Marycarol's study have been submitted for publication and a manuscript is currently under review.

On TRACK Centre for Research Excellence

Although the Let's CHAT Dementia project will finish up in the next year, work in this space will continue forging ahead with the On TRACK (Teaching, Research And Community Knowledges) Centre for Research Excellence (CRE) led by A/Prof Dina LoGiudice, a stellar host of researchers undertaking important work in the area of dementia research in First Nations Communities, and new CRE Coordinator, Dr Penny O'Brien.

The team met in Melbourne in November to workshop and plan the various work areas of the CRE and elaborate the program's vision for improve the lives of older people at risk of or living with dementia and their carers and families over the next five years.



The ON Track logo, designed by Gunditjmara artist, Sherry Johnstone.

Let's CHAT Dementia Partners

