

December 2018

Dear ACT AAG Members and Friends,

We are pleased to share with you the following updates:

1. Stay tuned for upcoming AAG ACT events in 2019:
 - We will host an event on Dignity of Risk with the Health Care Consumer Association of the ACT (Date & Time Coming Soon).
 - This will include a special screening of Prof Joe Ibrahim's (MBBS PhD FAFPHM FRACP) latest educational short film.
 - Joseph is Head, Health Law and Ageing Research Unit, Department of Forensic Medicine at Monash University and Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine and the editor-in-chief of the RAC Communiqué. Joseph has extensive clinical experience and continues an active role as a practicing Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine and is the Clinical Director of the Subacute Services at a regional health service. Joseph is producer, co-writer and narrator of three short films about ethical issues in persons with dementia and ageing including "Not for resuscitation and dementia" (2015), "Driving and Dementia" (2013), and now "Dignity of Risk" (2017). The first two films are available [here](#).
 - We are also planning an event in September to coincide with Dementia awareness month.
 - **What else would you like to see in 2019? Hit reply and let us know!**
 - Also, save the dates for the 52nd AAG Conference, to be held at the International Convention Centre in Sydney from the 5th to the 8th of November, 2019.
2. Other events in the ACT region:
 - One of the global experts in the Mediterranean diet, health and ageing, [Professor Demosthenes Panagiotakos](#) of Harokopio University in Greece will be speaking in late-January at the University of Canberra (Date & Time Coming Soon).
 - If you are aware of any other relevant events coming soon to the ACT region, let us know!
3. At the recent AAG conference a new videographic was launched titled "The nursing process - a video graphic to help digital health teams (and more)". [Click here to view](#)
 - The video presents a way of disseminating research findings and supporting patient care, by illustrating the nursing process in relation to health information systems. It is likely to be useful for lots of people who work in related areas – such as undergraduate health teaching and multidisciplinary health services research for example. Consumer groups have mentioned that it's a useful tool for their consumer representatives as it sheds light on the often invisible aspects of nursing work.
4. Congratulations to Kasia Bail (Lead CI) on the announcement of funding for the project "Ageo-Evaluation of SmartWard in Aged Care" in collaboration with [SmartWard Pty Ltd](#).
 - The project will evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of SmartWard in the aged care setting its impact on improving quality of care, and better resident health and quality of life.
5. New committee member:

- Distinguished Professor of Health and Ageing at the University of Canberra Diane Gibson has joined the AAG ACT committee. She has held senior appointments in both the university and public service sectors. Her strong interest in the policy/research interface has characterised her work across the sectors of health, ageing, gender and social policy. Professor Gibson is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and has previously served as a Member of the AAG National Council and as Editor-in-Chief of the AJA.

6. AAG 2018 Conference (Melbourne) Reports from Student Travel Award Winners

- *Neura PhD Student: Janet Maccora*

The AAG's annual conference in Melbourne, while still a large gathering, had the lovely warm feeling of a passionate community gathered to learn and share, with the ultimate goal of making ageing better for everyone (the focus on inclusivity was noticeable – and commendable - this year). It began with a moving plenary by Susan Alberti AC that sent a powerful message about just what a life lived really means and the wealth of experience older people bring to every table. A highlight for me was the focus on co-design, including an excellent interactive session chaired by Danny Hills that demonstrated the importance of really listening to people and understanding the challenges they face in their everyday lives rather than jumping straight in with solutions that we think will make those lives better.

One concept popped up in several sessions and has stayed in my thoughts since, and that was the idea of the “dignity of risk”. Joe Ibrahim was the first I heard mention it (see <http://www.dignityofrisk.com.au> to find out about his short film), but others referred to it when introducing novel models of care, including Bryan Lipmann from Wintringham and Colin McDonnell from Scalabrini, raising questions about the human rights aspect of being allowed to manage your own level of risk in your life, and how we too easily take that right away in contemporary care environments. Other noteworthy events included the privilege of hearing Michael Marmot speak on the social determinants of health, the excellent “You Can’t Ask That” Student and Early Career Group session, and of course the unforgettable Willa Wonka-style dessert table at the welcome drinks.

- *University of Canberra Masters Student: Vera Buss*

This year's AAG conference was under the theme “Advancing not retiring: Active players, a fair future”. Susan Alberti AC, the opening keynote speaker, is a great example of an active player who seems far from retiring – her speech was extremely inspiring and deeply touched the audience. Prof Sir Michael Marmot, on the other hand, has well illustrated that we are still far from creating a fair and equal future for everyone. His talk demonstrated how social determinants of health influence the life course of each of us, and thus the way we age. For the elderly population, he named social isolation as one of the most important negative determinants.

In one of the symposia, researchers presented their vision of ageing in a digital world – and how technology might help to overcome social isolation in older people. For example, scientists from the University of Melbourne are exploring the possibilities of using virtual reality to help older people to connect socially. The special part of this presentation was to hear from two of the study's participants about their experiences with virtual reality. This emphasises the importance of conducting research in collaboration with the ageing population rather than merely to investigate them. I want to take the opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the ACT AAG division for their financial support which allowed me to attend this conference in full.



7. Gerontological Society of America 2018 Conference (Boston) Reports

- *Neura PhD Student: Janet Maccora*

The Gerontological Society of America's annual conference was held in Boston just days before the AAG's. The size and scale of the event was massive with nearly 4400 attendees and around 500 content sessions. Everything was BIG – even the allotted poster size was 8-feet by 4-feet which is gigantic for a poster. As such, I confess I found the experience a little overwhelming. I attended several sessions on technology – such as the benefits for older workers, and whether it offers protection against cognitive decline, but somehow the sheer volume of presentations made it difficult to engage with the subject matter, for me at least. A standout session from my perspective was one chaired by Australian Jacqui Smith, who is currently at the University of Michigan, on advances in life course research in ageing. Speakers presented analyses of data from the Health and Retirement Study, a publicly-available longitudinal dataset that includes life-course interviews – an exciting resource for mixed methods researchers.

- *University of Canberra PhD Student: Nathan D'Cunha*

The theme of the conference was the purposes of longer lives - what are the benefits of having more time? Some of the answers to this question included making a contribution to society, being a resource for research, being able to evaluate age-related changes and the effects of therapeutics. The keynote speaker Thomas Cole drew upon his own work and that of others in his speech, which focussed on finding and making meaning in life. He spoke about the big questions that had arisen from his research with ageing men which included "what is the meaning?" and "do I matter?", to the work of those who are promoting meaning-making in the lives of people with dementia. Many of the sessions I attended were related to the arts, ageing, and dementia. It was interesting to learn about the research being done to promote the quality of life of people in residential aged care using reminiscence, music, and the visual arts. Some of this included use of life story interventions, personalised music playlists, intergenerational choirs, virtual reality tours, and community access programs for people living with dementia. It was encouraging to find so many researchers working to promote social interaction and engagement within aged care settings. There were also several sessions focussing on the latest research on biological ageing and age-related diseases, including the anti-ageing potential of metformin through protection against DNA damage and inflammation and its ability to improve mitochondrial function. While it sometimes felt like there was too much going on due to the number of concurrent sessions, overall it was a positive experience.

We want to take this opportunity to wish you a happy and safe Christmas and New Year!

Warm Regards,

ACT AAG Committee