

Greetings from the Health and Ageing Research Team (HART)



PROF FIONA ALPASS AND
DR BRENDAN STEVENSON

A message from Principal Investigators Professor Fiona Alpass and Dr Brendan Stevenson:

As we reflect on 2024, we would like to express our gratitude for your valuable contributions to our New Zealand Health, Work, and Retirement (NZHWR) study. As you may be aware, our motto on the envelope of the 2024 NZHWR survey, which has been sent to nearly 15,000 people, was "Working Towards Healthy Ageing for All." This has certainly been our guiding principle as our study enters the second year of our five-years of funding from the MBIE Endeavour Fund focusing on modifiable pathways to sustainable ageing. We have begun piloting our exciting new Body, Mind, and Ageing Study. This project will involve over 2,500 face-to-face assessments with current participants, and additional assessments with Chinese and Pasifika community members. We are expanding the data linkage component of our study into the Integrated Data Infrastructure (Statistics New Zealand), in collaboration with researchers from the University of Auckland. Information about this component was sent with the survey pack. Our research team has grown, and on the back page of this newsletter, you will find profiles of the new team members we have welcomed. Additionally, Dr Mary Breheny has returned to lead the Life History Online Survey (see the following page for more information about this study). The NZHWR study is central to all our work, and your ongoing participation is crucial for advancing our research.

Processing the 2024 NZHWR survey

Vicki Beagley, our Communications Manager, is pictured here with some of the surveys we have received to date. Vicki and



VICKI BEAGLEY
(RESEARCH OFFICER)

a team of research assistants are currently processing the expected 8,000 surveys. This processing ensures any identifying information is stored separately from the survey data and cannot be connected. There is still plenty of time to return your survey.

HART 2024 Newsletter



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Visit Our Website:

hart.massey.ac.nz/

To view our latest reports and publications visit our website or scan this QR code with your phone:



Each wave we hold a four-monthly \$40 supermarket voucher draw for all those who have returned their survey to us. Our October 2024 voucher winner is Basil Hammerton from Green Bay Auckland. It is great to see a new refresh participant win this voucher. Basil's record was drawn from the 2,933 participant records who had returned their survey before the end of October.

Co-exploring Dementia Risk Reduction from a Planetary Health Perspective

Over 70,000 people in Aotearoa New Zealand live with dementia, and this figure is set to soar to 200,000 as our population ages, placing enormous strain on our healthcare system, social services and families.

As we grapple with the rise in dementia, another urgent challenge has emerged: climate change. Climate change affects our health, including the health of our brains. Environmental factors exacerbated by climate change have been linked to cognitive decline and increased dementia risk. The mental health impacts of climate change compound the problem.

The convergence of these challenges is the subject of this research project co-exploring dementia risk reduction, which is led by A/Prof Susanne Röhr and funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand.



THE OPENING AT HAYES STUDIO, LAKE HOUSE ARTS CENTRE

A pop-up exhibition was held from 20-22 September at Hayes Studio, Lake House Arts Centre at 37 Fred Thomas Drive in Takapuna, Auckland.

This exhibition, *Protecting the Planet and Our Brains: A Photographic Exploration*, featured the works of 14 Auckland residents aged between 40 and 65, whose images reflect their

understanding of the relationship between brain health and environmental sustainability.

This project unites science and art to highlight the shared benefits of sustainable living and dementia prevention.

To read more about the project and view the photographs, scan this QR code with your phone.



Older Informal Caregiver Experiences Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

This project explored experiences of older kaumātua and informal family caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic through 81 interviews. This study found that informal caregivers demonstrated resilience, remarkable adaptability, and mana during the pandemic, while also facing considerable challenges. Kaumātua Māori caregivers drew on Māori concepts to support their care. Māori taking care of Māori was crucial and involved a whānau-based approach that placed whānau members at the centre of a supportive network. This project was undertaken by Dr Shinya Uekusa, Prof Christine Stephens, Prof Fiona Alpass, Tyrone Barnard and Marcus Tamaira and funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand.



DR SHINYA UEKUSA

To find out more about our research visit: hart.massey.ac.nz/

Current Projects

2024

LIFE HISTORY SURVEY

Pathways to Healthy Ageing



If you're over 65 and haven't been invited to complete the Life History Survey, email hartstudy@massey.ac.nz or call 0800 516 306, and we'll make sure you're included.

The Life History Survey is being offered to HWR participants aged 65 and over and can be completed online or via telephone interview.

Led by Dr Mary Breheny, this survey aims to model the pathways linking childhood health and living conditions, adult health, caring and work experiences to health in older age. By examining earlier life events, the survey can provide valuable insights into how childhood circumstances can lead to health outcomes in adulthood. We can also consider the impact of lifelong employment and housing pathways, and the long-term effects of events like economic recessions on health and wellbeing. The findings will help inform policies and practices to enhance the health and wellbeing of future generations of older New Zealanders.



DR MARY BREHENY

The Data Integration Study

In 2025, we will expand the data linkage component of our study into Statistics New Zealand's Integrated Data Infrastructure for NZHWR study respondents who have consented to participate. This expansion is in collaboration with Professors Matthew Parsons, Michael O'Sullivan, Cameron Walker, and Paul Rouse from the University of Auckland. It will provide greater insights, allowing us to model pathways to wellness in real time. Stay tuned for more updates in the 2025 newsletter!

THE HART MĀORI ADVISORY GROUP

The Māori Advisory Group (MAG) was established in 2016 to provide feedback and oversight on projects conducted by HART, with a focus on te ao Māori. This group offers a forum for kōrerō about our research, project materials and methods, and guidance on tikanga Māori and cultural appropriateness. The MAG also conducts voluntary peer reviews of our academic work and outputs. In 2023, Roly Fitzgerald (Ngāti Porou, Rangitāne) relinquished his position due to work commitments, allowing Kaydee Zabelin (Ngāi Tahu) to join (you can read Kaydee's profile on the back page of this newsletter).



Above: current members Convenor Dr Brendan Stevenson (Ngā Puhī, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Pōrou), Ruma Karaitiana (Rangitāne, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāi Tara, Kāi Tahu), Penny Poutu (Ngāti Maniapoto), A/Prof Natasha Tassell-Matamua (Te ātiawa, Ngāti Makea ki Rarotonga), Dr John Waldon (Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Pōrou), and Kaydee Zabelin (Ngāi Tahu).

Selected Awards and Presentations

Selected Awards

- Prof Fiona Alpass — 2024 Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM)
- Prof Christine Stephens — 2024 Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM)



PROF ALPASS AND PROF STEPHENS
WITH DAME CINDY KIRO

Recently, Prof Fiona Alpass and Prof Christine Stephens attended investiture ceremonies at Government House in Wellington to receive their King's Birthday Honours from the Governor General Dame Cindy Kiro. Both were made Officers of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to health psychology and seniors. These awards also recognise the many achievements of the Health and Ageing Research team over the 20 years of the NZHWR study and the ongoing contributions of our participants.

- Dr Brendan Stevenson, Dr Mary Breheny, and Prof Fiona Alpass - 2024 Office for Seniors Project Funding
- A/Prof Rosie Gibson - 2023-2024 Fellowship from the University of Surrey's Institute of Advanced Studies
- A/Prof Rosie Gibson - 2023 Network of Early career Sleep researchers in Training (NEST) Mentor award
- A/Prof Susanne Röhr Susanne — 2024 Royal Society Te Apārangi Catalyst Seeding Funding
- Dr Ágnes Szabó, A/Prof Professor Polly Yeung, and Dr Mary Breheny - 2023 National Science Ageing Well Challenge Grant
- HART — 2023 CNSST Foundation Community Support Award



A/PROF ROSIE GIBSON

The New Zealand Association of Gerontology (NZAG) conference

In September, we attended the NZAG 2024 conference at Victoria University, Wellington. We sponsored an exhibition booth, providing a vibrant space where delegates could learn about the HWR survey and future research directions. Team members were involved in sessions across the three conference days, including short oral and poster presentations, as well as a bespoke symposium called

"Predicting Health and Wellbeing in Later Life" when Prof Alpass, Prof Stephens, A/Prof Röhr, and Dr Breheny covered some of the most recent findings from the NZHWR survey.



HART MEMBERS AT THE NZAG BOOTH

2024 International Conferences

We collaborate with local communities, policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars from around the globe and present at national and international conferences, including:

- Prof Stephens, Prof Alpass, and Dr Szabó presented at the British Society of Gerontology Conference in Newcastle (UK).
- Prof Alpass presented at the 4th European Conference on Aging & Gerontology, London
- A/Prof Röhr presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in the US.

The New Zealand Body, Mind and Ageing Study

Assessments Starting in 2025!



Frailty is a multifactorial condition characterised by reduced strength and resilience, which increases vulnerability to chronic health conditions, such as dementia (mate wareware) in older adults. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the prevalence of frailty is about 7-10% in individuals aged 65 and over. Identifying (pre-)frailty states and their modifiable precursors is crucial, as this can lower the risk for or prevent chronic health conditions, improve quality of life, reduce healthcare costs, and ease pressures on caregivers. This goal aligns with national health strategies aimed at promoting healthy ageing and the well-being of older adults. Frailty arises from a complex interplay of cognitive, physical, and psychosocial factors. Comprehensively assessing these factors and their interrelationships helps to understand pathways to preventing frailty.

The New Zealand Body, Mind and Ageing Study aims to characterise profiles of cognitive functioning and physical frailty as part of a broader project focused on preventing frailty and enhancing independence among older people. More than 2,500 face-to-face assessments will be conducted to gain insights into aspects such as memory and executive function, physical fitness, lifestyle factors, the social determinants of health, and overall life satisfaction. We will also conduct additional culturally adapted assessments in the Pasifika Mātua Community Study, and in the Chinese Elders Community Study.



Prof Siautu Alefaio

PASIFIKA MĀTUA COMMUNITY STUDY



A/Prof Tracie Mafile'o

PASIFIKA MĀTUA COMMUNITY STUDY



Mr Paul Chankay

PASIFIKA MĀTUA COMMUNITY STUDY



A/Prof Polly Yeung

CHINESE ELDERS COMMUNITY STUDY



A/Prof Susanne Röhr

NEW ZEALAND BODY, MIND AND AGEING STUDY



A/Prof Joanne Taylor

NEW ZEALAND BODY, MIND AND AGEING STUDY

The Pasifika Mātua Community Study

Prof Siautu Alefaio, A/Prof Tracie Mafile'o, and our Junior Research Officer Mr Paul Chankay have been co-developing and piloting translated and culturally adapted assessments tailored for Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand. To date, no other research has translated the particular cognitive assessment being utilised into any Pasifika languages or adapted for Pasifika contexts. This project will involve Talanoa [Pacific-cultural dialogue] with Pasifika Mātua [elders] and community members with the guidance of a Pasifika Advisory Group.



The Chinese Elders Community Study

The Chinese Elders Community Study has also involved translating, adapting, and piloting assessments, led by A/Prof Polly Yeung in partnership with the CNSST Foundation (formerly known as Chinese New Settlers Services Trust). In 2025, 249 assessments will be undertaken with Chinese elders.



HART AND CNSST FOUNDATION MEMBERS

This Year, We Welcomed the Following Members to Our Team:



Taumaoe Andrea Meni | Data Manager / Statistician

Taumaoe Andrea Meni joined earlier this year, where she oversees data management processes and provides statistical assistance whilst working towards her Masters of Public Health. Andrea has collaborated with interdisciplinary teams in her previous roles with the School of Health Science and external organisations. In addition to her role at HART, Andrea was part of a Mental Health Teaching Team that received various awards, including the Massey University Vice Chancellor Group Teaching Award 2024 and The Ako Aotearoa Te Whatu Kairangi Group Award 2024.



Paul Chankay | Junior Research Officer

Paul Chankay joined the Pasifika Mātua Community Study in July, where he is involved in recruiting and engaging Pasifika stakeholders and participants, conducting data collection and analyses, and writing reports. Paul recently completed a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Auckland. He is passionate about community health responses for Pasifika mātua [elders] and is proficient in Samoan language. He has also worked as a DJ for 30 years.



Dr Phoebe Elers | Project Manager

Dr Phoebe Elers joined as a Project Manager in January, where she assists in coordinating the projects within the MBIE Endeavour Fund. Phoebe has experience in project management in various settings including in the Centre for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) at Massey University and the Department of Public Health at the University of Otago.



A/Prof Joanne Taylor | Project Manager

A/Prof Joanne Taylor recently re-joined the team to support the New Zealand Body, Mind and Ageing Study with interviewer training and data collection. Jo was previously involved in HART, where she explored driving anxiety in older adults. Born and raised in Whanganui, she is also actively involved in training clinical psychologists at Massey University.



Sharmila Dulanjalee Raaymakers | Research Assistant

Sharmila Dulanjalee joined in October as a Research Assistant in the Life History Survey. Coming from Sri Lanka, she brings experience in finance and logistics, along with two masters degrees in Sustainable Business Management and Business Economics. Sharmila is passionate about research focused on community mental health care and environmental protection.



Kaydee Zabelin | Māori Advisory Group (MAG) Member

Kaydee Zabelin joined the MAG in February. Kaydee is an analyst and historian who is deeply rooted in Māori culture and history, and has studied Mātauranga Māori and New Zealand History. As a facilitator of historical district inquiries at the Waitangi Tribunal Unit, and later supporting a Resource Management litigation team, she engaged with critical issues concerning Māori rights and Treaty grievances. Kaydee was elected onto the Palmerston North City Council in 2022.

Thank you, A/Prof Susanne Röhr

A/Prof Susanne Röhr will be leaving the Health and Ageing Research Team at the end of this year to embark on an exciting new journey as A/Prof at the University of New South Wales. Since joining us in 2022, Susanne has become an invaluable member of our team, and we are grateful for her dedication and expertise. As she takes this next step in her career, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for everything she has contributed to our team.