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Research at the School of Nursing,
The University of Auckland
Dr Tony O’Brien’s advice to new mental health nurses is “be ready for change and be ready to change with it.” His wise words reflect the many changes he’s witnessed during his 45 years in the profession.

In 1974, a motorcycle accident landed him in Dunedin hospital. While incapacitated, he not only met his future wife, Joan – a student nurse who tended to him – but launched himself on a career path. After his three-month stay, he worked as an orderly and then began nurse training. A placement in the hospital’s psychiatry ward engendered his love of mental health nursing. He gained more work experience there, but keen to qualify as a psychiatric nurse, he and Joan and their two children moved to Auckland. Their third child was born soon afterward.

Initially Tony worked in the psychiatric ward at Auckland City Hospital and then moved on

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**Professor Andrew Jull** has wrapped up a world-first, three-year randomised controlled trial to determine if low dose aspirin increase the healing rate for venous leg ulcers when used in addition to effective compression. In contradiction to two earlier small studies, the results of the Health Research Council funded study indicate they do not.
Preliminary findings from the Tapinga ‘a Maama: Pacific life and death in advanced age study reveal that Pacific people are committed to caring for their older relatives in the home. However, they face several obstacles says Principal Investigator Dr Ofa Dewes. Her interviews with carers indicate that the physical and emotional demands on carers, financial burden, and the need for material supports affects their ability to care. “But faced with these challenges, families are developing resourceful coping strategies,” Ofa said, as well as “relying on support from extended family and the church community.” The results also indicate that carers have mixed views on their ability to easily access formal support. Ofa interviewed 33 carers (Samoan, Continued on p. 14

Healthy Ageing

Major HRC Grant to Help Prevent Falls

Associate Professor John Parsons will be exploring how to prevent falls in care homes as part of a new Health Research Council grant. Led by Professor Ngaire Kerse of Population Health, the $1.4 million study will test an exercise programme designed specifically for people with dementia and compare it to a programme of seated exercises. The University of Auckland team will be working in collaboration with AUT, University of Newcastle, UK and Bupa NZ. They plan to recruit more than 500 residents living in Bupa facilities in Auckland and the Waikato. The need for the research arises from the frequency of falls in care homes. Difficult to prevent, they often result in injury serious enough for hospitalisation. The specific aims of the study are to: 1) To establish the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of a progressive moderate intensity exercise programme (Staying UpRight) in reducing falls in residential aged care; Continued on p. 14
A major new study supervised by A/P Melody Smith looks at factors linked with active travel to school (ATS) by Kiwi kids. Although it’s well known that children need regular physical activity to thrive, NZ has a low and declining rate of ATS. Only 28-29% of NZ children aged 5-17 years old walk to school and just 2-3% cycle. This meta-analysis examined data generated in five projects representing four major NZ cities and 2844 children. The findings indicate that factors influencing distance to school such as school location and school zoning/catchment policies have significant influence on school travel mode. The authors suggest that creating walking and cycle paths, trails and greenways in school neighbourhoods could boost ATS.

Where do urban children spend their time?
More than half of the world’s children are now growing up in urban environments. Yet little is known about children’s experiences of place in urban areas. To find out more, a group of researchers from NZ, (including A/P Melody Smith), Japan and Finland mapped Finnish and Japanese childrens’ use and perceptions of meaningful places in their neighbourhood, including their mode of travel and who they went with. While there were differences between the Helsinki-based and Tokyo-based children, common patterns emerged. Outdoor settings and places that could be used by both adults and children were most frequently marked by children. Children had predominantly negative perceptions about traffic settings (parking lots, streets, train stations), and mostly positive perceptions about both indoor and outdoor settings, and commercial places.
Rachel Murray and Rebecca Amann have penned a literature review published in Psychiatry, Psychology & Law. Their article, which they completed as part of their second-year coursework last year, reviews research-based literature on the use of mindfulness-based interventions for young people who are involved in the justice system. Dr Katey Thom co-authored the paper and supported them through the publication process. The article reviews research-based literature on the use of mindfulness-based interventions for young people who are involved in the justice system. From their analysis of the 10 articles that fit their inclusion criteria, they found that mindfulness-based interventions result in beneficial outcomes for youth in the criminal justice system. The four themes they identified were decreased stress, increased self-regulation, improved anger management and acceptability of the intervention.

**Ground breaking diabetes study**

Dr Barbara Daly’s research indicates women who develop gestational diabetes are at a higher risk of getting type 2 diabetes, hypertension and ischaemic heart disease. Barbara was a co-investigator on the project and lead author of a paper reporting the results in *PLOS Medicine*.

Dr Krishnaraha Nirantharakumar from the University of Birmingham was the lead investigator.

The project used a large UK primary care database to compare women diagnosed with gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) over a 26-year period with similar women who did not. “This was the first large population-based study in the UK that reports on the increased risk of cardiovascular disease in women diagnosed with GDM,” Barbara said.

She also noted that the increased risk persisted throughout the 25-year follow-up period. Furthermore, follow-up screening for type 2 diabetes was poor, with less than 60 percent of women with GDM undergoing screening in the early post-partum period. This figure had decreased to less than 40 percent by the second year.

**New assessment tool**

Research led by A/P John Parsons could change the way funding is delivered to our residential care facilities, creating more individualised care and increasing innovation in the sector. John and his team received funding from Bupa Health Foundation and reviewed the clinical needs and resources used to provide care to older people across 61 Bupa residential care facilities.

The findings validated the use of the interRAI classification (RUG-III) for use in NZ, thereby paving the way for better targeting of funding and care for older people in residential care facilities. The research is critical because New Zealanders entering residential aged

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Combining an interest in health and her work as a medical advisor on Shortland Street, Sarah Nevitt is taking her master’s research into local schools. She’s investigating the effect of viewing dramatised CPR on the ability of high school students to learn and retain basic trained rescuer skills. “I decided to undertake this research as I wanted to better understand the effect that soap operas have on health education. I chose CPR as it has measureable outcomes and is often portrayed incorrectly.”

Students interacted with a ‘Resusci Anne’ mannequin as Sarah collected observational and quantitative data via a wireless hook up between the mannequin and life support training software. Students also completed a questionnaire that measured their willingness and confidence around performing bystander CPR.

For participating, one lucky student and a friend won a walk-on role on Shortland Street.

Lesley Doughty and A/P John Parsons are Sarah’s master’s supervisors.

Students in Nursing 301, coordinated by Dr Michelle Honey, worked with community organisations to create much-needed resources. They researched such topics as HIV, transgender youth and medicinal cannabis.

Two groups worked with A/P Michal Boyd to translate results from the End of Life Dementia Experience Research (ELDER) project into a video, website and brochure. The video: Top 10 tips to help select an Aged Residential Care Facility and brochure can be viewed online: tearairesearchgroup.org

Translating research into practical tools for the community
Professor Matthew Parsons and A/P John Parsons attended the first of three collaborative meetings in Stockholm funded by the Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The collaboration brings together experts from Scandinavia, Australia, The Netherlands and New Zealand. The group intends to provide clarity around models of reablement and restorative community based services for older people and those with complex needs living in the community. Outputs from the project will include a book written by the attendees of the workshops and a number of articles relating to this established international model.

Dr Michelle Honey (far left) led an international panel at the 14th International Congress on Nursing in Guadalajara, Mexico in June. The panel discussed how health information tools help nursing. Representatives from five countries participated: Australia, Brazil, Taiwan, the USA and New Zealand. See: Honey et al. How health information tools help nursing: international perspectives from five countries. *IOS Press*, 2018. 10.3233/978-1-61499-872-3-224.

Michelle also participated in a second panel presented on findings from her recently published paper on how student nurses use information and communication technology. See: Honey, M. Undergraduate student nurses’ use of information and communication technology in their education. *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 2018, doi:10.3233/978-1-61499-872-3-37.
Dr Jackie Robinson, Professor Sandie McCarthy and Dr Tess Moeke-Maxwell represented the School at this symposium in June. Attendees included Thai, Malay, Singaporean, Indian and Korean nurses, allied health professionals and researchers as well as a handful of New Zealanders and Australians.

Sandie gave a keynote speech on post-cancer care; she emphasised supporting patients to eat right, exercise, hydrate and get plenty of sleep. She said the “nudging” approach encourages well-being in women during post-cancer treatment more than “telling them what to do”.

Jackie presented a summary of her PhD research “Benefit or burden? Exploring experience of the acute hospital as a place of care amongst people with palliative care needs” while Tess introduced the Pae Herenga study “A model of indigenous end of life care: New Zealand Māori cancer care customs” supported by a video digital story.

While in Hong Kong, Jackie Robinson also visited the Nethersole School of Nursing to explore research collaborations that address the needs of Chinese people with palliative care needs living in NZ. Palliative care is provided from within a Western model which does not always align well with Chinese people’s beliefs about death and dying.

“Like New Zealand, Hong Kong is experiencing an ageing population and this is putting significant pressure on how palliative care is provided, particularly in acute hospitals and aged residential care settings. However, in Hong Kong over 90% of people die in an acute hospital setting.”

Jackie was hosted by Professor Carmen Chan and the Head of School, Professor Sek-Ying Chair. Grants from the International Central Networks and Partnerships and the Mobility Scheme made her trip possible.
Visiting scholars

Early in the year, two overseas scholars were guests of the Institute of Healthy Ageing. In January, Dr Adrian Hopper, Consultant Geriatrician, Lead Clinician for NHS England Quality, presented at two grand rounds, one at Waikato DHB and one for Canterbury DHB. He also participated in a national presentation about acute geriatric care organised by the Ministry of Health, and he facilitated an away day for Geriatrics at Waikato DHB.

In February, Dr Michelle Nelson gave a presentation on behalf of the Institute for Waikato DHB. She also conducted a workshop about carers in support of an Institute HRC funding application. Michelle is a health services researcher at the Bridgepoint Collaboratory in Research and Innovation at the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute, Toronto.

Two scholars were guest speakers for the Te Arai Research Group’s monthly seminar series. In February, Alex Broom, Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of the Practical Justice Initiative at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, spoke about suffering at the end of life as a collective process and how we might think differently about human suffering. In April, Dr Sarah Russell presented on dying, advance care planning and making decisions while living with dementia. She is Head of Research at Hospice UK. More on Alex and Sarah’s presentations, including podcasts, may be found on the Te Arai Research Group’s blog: tearairesearchgroup.org/

Also in April, Professor Debra Anderson visited the School of Nursing as a Hood fellow. Debra is the leader of the Women’s Wellness Research Group at the Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University. She is also a collaborator on the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health and a Chief Investigator on a global study of a life course approach to Women’s Health. Her visit presented an opportunity to build collaboration in order to extend the Women’s Wellness Research Group programme to NZ via Catalyst.

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Teaching Award
The Faculty of Medical and Health Science Teaching Awards Committee awarded Natalie Anderson the 2018 Dennis Pickup Clinical Educator Award. This award is for clinical teachers judged by staff and students to have made an outstanding contribution to medicine, nursing, pharmacy or optometry by virtue of their qualities as role models and contribution to the relationship between the health professions and the Faculty.
Natalie is a professional teaching fellow and PhD student in the School of Nursing. She is also a staff nurse at the Auckland Emergency Department as this award is for clinical teachers who are employed in dual clinical/academic roles.

Top reviewer
The International Journal of Nursing Studies (IJNS) has awarded A/P Michal Boyd top reviewer honours. IJNS gives out a Reviewer Excellence Award to the reviewer who provides the most helpful feedback to an author who has submitted a manuscript.
Nominations are generated by the authors who do not know the identity of the reviewer they are nominating.
The author cited Michal’s depth of knowledge about the research topic, her thoughtful comment on every section of the paper, her respectful criticism of its weaknesses and praise for its strengths and the useful suggestions she offered on how to make the paper better.

Best presentation
Master of Nursing student Sheila Bacus won the Nursing Affiliates Investigators Award at the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand meeting in Christchurch in June. The Society presents the award for the best individual presentation, citing ‘scientific excellence’ as the primary criterion for selection.
The award comes with a $3000 stipend to attend a CSZANZ Annual Scientific Meeting in Australia. Sheila’s presentation was titled Fasting before an elective coronary angiogram and angioplasty. A/P John Parsons and A/P Rachael Parke are Sheila’s supervisors.
Helen Butler is a new Professional Teaching Fellow, teaching in mental health and addiction papers. She will be starting her PhD next semester on the topic of end of life care utilisation and preferences for people diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Professor Merryn Gott and Dr Kate Prebble will be her supervisors. Helen brings more than 20 years of nursing experience to the School, with a specialisation in mental health, and more recently palliative care.

Dr Willem Fourie has also joined the School of Nursing as a Professional Teaching Fellow. In addition to teaching and supervising students on the undergraduate programme, Willem has strong ties in South Auckland and will be the University’s link at Counties Manukau Health for the BNurs (Hons) programme. Willem is a registered nurse and was formerly the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing and Health Studies at Manukau Institute of Technology. He has a keen interest in ethics, mental health and nursing education, particularly Māori and Pasifika success.

Dr Cynthia Wensley has been appointed as a lecturer in the postgraduate programme. Her clinical background is in Cardiac Nursing, and she has worked for many years at Greenlane Hospital, Auckland. Cynthia recently completed her PhD at Deakin University, Melbourne. Her PhD research provided new insights into the many factors that influence patient comfort in healthcare settings.

Dr Rachael Parke, who has previously been involved in teaching postgraduate research methods in the School, is now joining the staff as an associate professor, part-time. Her clinical and research background is in cardio-thoracic and vascular intensive care. At Auckland City Hospital she maintains a leadership role in developing and leading research investigating oxygen therapy, cardiac surgery associated acute kidney injury, fluid management after cardiac surgery, and care of patients undergoing surgery for lung cancer.

Dr Marea Topp has joined the School of Nursing as a Professional Teaching Fellow teaching across the degree. Her PhD explored New Zealand Nurses’ use of Alcohol and Other Drugs and identified implications for patient safety and nurses’ practice. She has worked in nursing education for nine years at the Manukau Institute of Technology, in the Waikato and more recently in the Bay of Plenty. Marea’s research interests include issues that impact on the nursing workforce and palliative care.
Visiting scholars cont’d from p. 6

As part of the Fellowship Debra presented two public lectures that examined the ramifications of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the burden they place on women, their families, and the global community. She also provided mentoring sessions for School of Nursing staff regarding their professional development.

Dr Suzanne Mavoa visited the School in late June to collaborate with A/P Melody Smith to work on a study exploring relationships between the neighbourhood natural environment and mental health among young urban New Zealanders. Findings will feed into a growing evidence base for links between natural environments and mental health. Suzanne is a Senior Research Fellow in the University of Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.

Dr Joanne Brooke, Reader from Oxford Brookes University, UK, presented in June on results from her international collaborative work. This work, which the School of Nursing participated in, looked at student nurses’ cultural heritage and attitudes to caring for patients with dementia. Joanne spoke to a group of researchers in the School who explore issues related to dementia.

Grant to study genetics of metabolic disease

A new $5 million NZ Health Research Council grant will study the genetic risk factors of metabolic disease in Māori and Pacific people. Dr Ofa Dewes, a co-investigator on the project, said the reasons why Māori and Pacific people are at greater risk for type-2 diabetes and obesity compared to New Zealanders of European descent are not fully understood. Genetic differences play a role, and the team will look at the influence of specific gene variants on body mass and risk of type-2 diabetes. They will also explore how these gene variants might influence the response of people to drugs used to treat type-2 diabetes. Peter Shepherd, Professor in Molecular Medicine and Pathology, is the lead investigator.
Tongan, Cook Island Māori, Niuean, Tuvaluan, Tokelauan, iKiribati and Māori). Seventy-nine percent were female and their average age was 48. She also interacted with 35 stakeholders. She discussed preliminary findings with policy makers, funders and health service providers. One outcome of the study is a resource in the form of five digital stories crafted in a weekend workshop by people who had provided care for a relative. The stories can be found on the ‘We Are the Pacific’ website Ofa created to connect the Pacific community with her Pacific health research. 


She will be presenting findings on the project at The Gerontological Society of America’s Annual Scientific Meeting in Boston this November.

Tapinga ‘a Maama is funded by the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment’s National Science Challenge for Ageing Well.

Healthy ageing

2) Establish the impact of Staying UpRight on gait variability between intervention and control groups; and examine gait parameters in real-world conditions as a motor phenotype of cognitive ability.

An innovative aspect of the project will be the use of sensors placed on participants’ bodies to ascertain their gait parameters and activity patterns. Both people with dementia and without cognitive impairment will be part of the trial so that similarities and difference between activity levels, falls and gait patterns can be measured.

Those participating will attend twice-weekly, hour-long exercise sessions supervised by a physiotherapist who will use an exercise programme developed by the researchers. The programme aims to increase limb strength, improve balance, reaction time, multisensory integration and dual tasking ability. Participants will be 65 and over.

New assessment tool

care today are much older and have more complex needs than in the past, which means the pressures on funding services is increasing.

Annette Schmiede, Executive Leader of the Bupa Health Foundation, said “The Bupa Health Foundation is very pleased to have funded this important and timely study. The Foundation recognises the importance of having an assessment system and funding model that is more sensitive to the needs of older people living in aged residential care. Such a system has potential to inform the affordability of services provided as well as drive quality care and innovation in the sector.”

Jan Adams, Managing Director of Bupa NZ echoed Annette’s assessment. She said that the research “will help policy makers and providers better understand the care needs of older people and the resources required to meet their needs.”
Tony O’Brien cont’d from p. 2

to Carrington Hospital where he obtained his registration as a psychiatric nurse.

“I was fortunate to get involved then,” Tony said. “There was quite a psychologically-oriented psychiatry occurring – an interest in family systems and individual therapy.”

He started university education in 1978. Like many nurses then, he completed his BA over many years. In retrospect, Tony was pleased it took him several years to earn his degree, beginning in sociology and finishing in education. “I felt I was well-prepared academically.”

In 1983, he joined the staff at Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) but by 1995 was also back working part-time in the clinical setting. “This wasn’t easy, because there were no joint positions then.” He started his Master of Nursing degree at Massey University while at MIT.

Tony was the first to teach a nursing course at the University, joining the Department of Psychiatry in the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences in 1997. He set up new papers in advanced mental health nursing, a result of the 1996 Mason Report that recommended much more investment in mental health clinicians. At the same time he was developing post-graduate papers, he was finishing his master’s degree. “It took a lot of running to keep up,” he said.

In 2001 he joined the new School of Nursing. In 2003 he again returned to a clinical role part-time as a clinical nurse specialist in Auckland City Hospital’s Psychiatric Liaison Services, a position he still holds.

Tony earned a PhD in 2014. A prolific writer, he has published extensively in mental health law and the therapeutic role of mental health nursing. At Tony’s retirement celebration, his colleague Dr Kate Prebble commented on his many contributions to the School, mental health nursing and mental health more broadly. She noted that he was a “hard working teacher who provided academic advice to many, many students.” She added that he assisted in developing nurse practitioner pathways for mental health nurses and supervised many students. In addition, he made significant contributions through his writing around mental health law and through the active role he played in Te Ao Maramatanga (the New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses).

Although ‘retired’, Tony will continue his research and clinical work part-time.
Improving early lung cancer diagnosis in Māori based in Waikato
Type: PhD, MS
Main Supervisor: Dr Jacquie Kidd
Lung cancer is an unnecessarily fatal illness for many Māori. Our hypothesis is that a community designed intervention will increase early presentation and timely diagnosis for Māori with symptoms of lung cancer.

Co-design for child friendly neighbourhoods and child health
Type: PhD, MS
Main Supervisor: A/P Melody Smith-nee Oliver
A child-friendly city recognises children as active agents in planning processes, providing opportunities for children to have their voices heard, and aspirations and potential realised. Links between neighbourhood design (access to public open spaces, “walkability”, traffic exposure, streetscape factors) and children’s health behaviours (physical activity, active transport, independent mobility) have been identified. In addition, child-centred approaches have revealed unique insights on children’s neighbourhood design preferences for promoting health behaviours. Building on this earlier research, the aim of this project is to explore the opportunities for, barriers to, and outcomes of, co-design (involving children and specialists such as architects and planners) of neighbourhood environments for children’s health behaviours.

Palliative and end of life care for people experiencing homelessness
Type: PhD, MS
Main Supervisor: Professor Merryn Gott
Palliative care is provided across a range of different settings, including hospital, home and residential aged care. A major goal of palliative care is to achieve what has been described as the “good death”, characterised by care and death at home surrounded by friends and family. However, for people experiencing homelessness, achieving this form of ‘good death’ may be neither possible, nor desirable. Research in this area is very limited, both nationally and internationally, and more is needed to underpin service developments.

What is the impact of New Zealand nurses working in informatics roles?
Type: PhD, MS
Main Supervisor: Dr Michelle Honey
Many nurses in New Zealand are working in nursing informatics roles, though may have a variety of job titles. However, little is known about their roles and what they contribute to the health informatics landscape.

Older Chinese migrants experiences of services at the end of life
Type: PhD, MS
Main Supervisor: Dr Jacqueline Anne Robinson
Palliative care has been developed and provided within a Western model of health care. Yet, Auckland’s population is ethnically diverse with a significant increase predicted in the Chinese population over the next decade. Older Chinese people who have immigrated to New Zealand may have different expectations of the health care system compared to younger Chinese people who have been born in New Zealand. An under studied area is the inter-generational perspectives of Chinese people on the role of health care services in palliative and end of life care.