

Emerging Researchers in Ageing: *Make Research Matter* From emergencies to medications and hospitalisations

Older people are often considered amongst the most vulnerable during emergencies caused by bushfires, environmental hazards and extreme weather events.

But research presented at the 2014 ERA (Emerging Researchers in Ageing) Conference 24 - 25 November, Flinders University, challenges this notion, drawing on the lived experiences of older people who consider themselves resilient rather than vulnerable, says Victoria Cornell, Research Associate, University of Adelaide.

Her research, undertaken with people aged 70+ living in their own homes in Adelaide/Adelaide Hills, identifies the strength of will and decision making ability that many older people have acquired incrementally from living through a range of emergencies throughout their lives.

“Many older people demonstrate a mental ability to cope with emergency situations, drawing on their own life experiences, which can help prepare for future events. It is critical to understand what being prepared can mean for older people, and what gives them a sense of comfort, safety and security. It is not simply completing a checklist, or developing a plan. They need to be engaged in the process, recognising that they have confidence earned by experience and, while acknowledging their own diminishing physical ability, can face situations with awareness and good judgement,” said Dr Cornell.

Dr Cornell’s paper *Emergency preparedness and resilience: an older person’s perspective* featured in *Decision Making and Community Participation*, one of nine Conference sessions on aspects of ageing.

Making Research Matter is the theme of the 2014 ERA Conference, highlighting the need for work which is significant (theoretically), sound (methodologically), and relevant (applicable to society and older people in particular). Work such as Dr Cornell’s has a direct application to policy development and professional practice, and addresses key issues that matter as Australia’s population ages rapidly.

Daniel Hoyle, University of Tasmania, is looking at the clinical outcomes of sedative reduction in residential aged care setting; his paper coincides with the national roll out of the “Reducing the Use of Sedatives” (RedUSE) program aiming to reduce the use by care facilities of psycholeptic medication.

Falls are a primary cause of hospitalisation of older people, and Mark Bigland and colleagues at the University of Newcastle are examining how age-related changes in the inner ear affect balance.

These are just three of over 50 presentations on a wide range of ageing issues at the 13th National ERA Conference, which brings together researchers from many disciplines to share their work with policy makers and stakeholders. The 2014 conference is being jointly hosted by Flinders Centre for Ageing Studies and the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre at the University of Adelaide.

The [ERA conference](http://www.era.edu.au/ERA+2014) is the only national conference in Australia focusing exclusively on the work of higher degree research students and early career researchers undertaking research in ageing. (<http://www.era.edu.au/ERA+2014>). Based at Monash University and supported by the ARC Centre for Population Ageing Research (CEPAR) the ERA initiative provides a number of opportunities for emerging researchers.

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