

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release



TURNING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

Filling gaps in stroke rehabilitation: Launceston physiotherapist awarded prestigious national Fellowship

Ensuring best possible arm function in people rehabilitating from stroke is the aim of Mr John Cannell, a rehabilitation physiotherapist at Launceston General Hospital, who has just received a Fellowship with the National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS).

Stroke is one of the leading causes of disability and the second highest cause of death in adult Australians, affecting over 345,000 Australians. While an average of 70 per cent of stroke survivors are able to walk, only a third of those who suffer arm weakness as a result of stroke recover functional usage of their arm.

“While the evidence exists for a range of different strategies to improve outcomes for people who have arm weakness following a stroke, not all of these strategies are being routinely used,” said Mr Cannell.

“I will use this Fellowship to undertake a two-year project that aims to implement the different strategies known to improve outcomes for people who have arm weakness following a stroke. This will include the creation of training packages to help other hospitals implement the therapies,” he added.

“As Australia’s national agency for closing gaps in health care, NICS is delighted to award this Fellowship to Mr Cannell. With stroke affecting the lives of so many Australians, his work will help ensure the best evidence for treating upper limb weakness following stroke is used in practice. The training packages he’ll develop as a part of his Fellowship will also help ensure both patients and other rehabilitation providers benefit from his work,” said Dr Heather Buchan, NICS Chief Executive Officer.

Mr Cannell is also looking forward to promoting his workplace. “Through my project I hope to demonstrate that a medium-sized hospital like Launceston General can lead the way in implementing and sustaining the use of these ‘best practice’ therapies.”

Mr Cannell will join five other health professionals from Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia in the NICS Fellowship program for 2007.

Release ends.

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For more information about the NICS Fellowship Program : www.nicssl.com.au

Note to editors

The National Institute of Clinical Studies (NICS), www.nicssl.com.au, is Australia's national agency for improving health care by helping close important gaps between best available evidence and current clinical practice. NICS is funded by the Australian Government. NICS will become an institute of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) on 1 April 2007.

As part of NICS' transfer to the NHMRC, the Commonwealth, as the member of NICS, has appointed a liquidator under the members' voluntary winding up provisions of the Corporations Act. This is the mechanism used to wind up a company that is able to pay its debts and meet its commitments. During the transfer, NICS' business operations will continue as normal.

The NICS Fellowship program, which was launched in 2003, directly contributes to closing evidence-practice gaps by supporting health professionals to undertake practical projects that aim to improve health outcomes for people by getting high quality evidence into everyday clinical practice in particular health settings.

The two-year, part-time Fellowships are open to early- to mid-career health professionals across the health care spectrum, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, paramedics, health care managers, and policy makers.

The Fellowships provide an annual stipend as well as professional development opportunities, training programs in evidence implementation, mentorship, and opportunities to network with and learn from world-class experts who come to Australia as part of NICS' Visiting Experts program.

Applications for NICS Fellowships 2008 open at the end of April 2007.