



Report on the 40th Annual ASSBI Conference held in Melbourne, Australia 1st – 3rd June, 2017

The 40th anniversary of ASSBI was celebrated at the Grand Hyatt in Melbourne. The conference theme “Looking back to look ahead: 40 years of science, practice and education in brain impairment” provided many opportunities to reflect on the progress of the brain impairment field over the past 40 years, and to consider where it might head in the next 40 years.

This successful event was the largest ever stand-alone ASSBI conference, with 445 delegates; 45% of these were attending their first ASSBI conference, and 86% were female. Delegates attended from Japan, Singapore, Iran, US, UK, New Zealand, and Australia.

Four workshops were offered on Thursday 1st June. In the morning, Prof Roshan das Nair presented an interactive workshop “Developing and evaluating complex interventions: Putting the Medical Research Council Framework into practice”, while A/Prof William Levack engaged his attendees with “Goal setting, motivation, and patient engagement in rehabilitation”. After a delicious lunch, the afternoon workshops included Dr Tessa Hart discussing “What are we doing when we treat our patients? A scheme-in-progress for analysing the active ingredients of rehabilitation” and Prof Olivier Piguet outlining “Clinical presentations and neurobiology of younger onset dementia syndromes”. Day 1 concluded with a Welcome Reception supported by our corporate partner, Shine Lawyers. The reception was an excellent opportunity to enjoy a drink and some tasty local food while being entertained by Jamie Shine’s tales of her inspiring clients with brain impairment.



Olivier Piguet and Roshan das Nair



Tessa Hart, Skye McDonald, William Levack and Jacinta Douglas

The main conference kicked off on Day 2 with a special panel event about the history and future of the brain impairment field, moderated by second-ever ASSBI Fellow Jennie Ponsford with 5 further ASSBI Fellows on the panel: Jacinta Douglas, Jan Ewing, Glynda Kinsella, Skye McDonald and Leanne Togher. The consumer voice was incorporated in the discussion through video interviews with three people with brain impairment and one family member. The panel reflected on issues such as how to demonstrate the value of what we do, how technological advances might enhance rehabilitation, whether or not we are truly multidisciplinary, and what advice could be given to young professionals in the field. One highlight was Jan Ewing’s brilliant poem which beautifully described how the field has changed over the past 40 years. Due to popular demand, Jan’s poem will be published in ASSBI’s journal Brain Impairment.

Following the panel event, Prof Roshan das Nair presented his entertaining and informative keynote, “Memory rehabilitation in acquired brain injuries: On the bumpy road to establishing evidence”. There were 8 concurrent sessions throughout the day, including 2 symposia and 3 “how-to” sessions. The

“how-to” session format (mini-masterclasses presented by expert clinicians) was introduced for the first time this year, and was very well received. The final plenary for Day 2 included Prof Olivier Piguet’s keynote titled with another road metaphor, “The long and winding road: Social cognition and sense of identity in dementia” followed by Jacinta Douglas’ engaging Presidential address, “So that’s the way it is for me – always being left out: Acquired pragmatic language impairment and social functioning”. An ASSBI Fellowship was awarded to Prof Jenny Fleming, the first occupational therapist to be awarded this honour. Day 2 concluded with the launch of BRAINSPaN, a new multidisciplinary network of clinicians and researchers in the field of brain impairment.



Dinner at The Trust saw most people on the dance floor including Dana Wong

After a fantastic conference dinner that even saw outgoing ASSBI President Prof Tamara Ownsworth unable to resist the dance floor, Day 3 began with an excellent and practical keynote from Dr Tessa Hart, “Anger self-management in traumatic brain injury: Outcomes and lessons learned from a

randomised clinical trial”. This was followed by another energetic keynote from A/Prof William Levack, “From research to practice – knowledge translation in brain injury rehabilitation”. Day 3 was filled with 12 high quality concurrent sessions, including 2 symposia and 6 how-to sessions. A lunch time student workshop chaired by ASSBI’s student coordinator Anna Carmichael focused on engaging with the rural and remote ABI community, with guest speakers Matt Thomas, Nadine Holgate & Rene Stolwyk. Posters and datablitz sessions also featured in both Day 2 and 3, adding interest and variety to the program.



At the end of Day 3 the new President of ASSBI, Prof Jacinta Douglas, chaired the closing ceremony, during which she thanked all our sponsors and presented the following awards:

The inaugural Douglas and Tate Award for best research paper published in 2016 in ASSBI’s journal *Brain Impairment* was awarded to *Dr Anna Emmanouel* for her paper entitled *Script generation and executive dysfunction in patients with anterior and posterior brain lesions*

The ASSBI Early Career Clinical Innovation Award which is designed to recognise innovation in the field of brain impairment was awarded to *Catherine YanHong Dong* by Stuart Le Grand who represented Shine Lawyers



The Kevin Walsh Encouragement Award for outstanding Masters student presentation was awarded to *Katherine Truss* for her presentation entitled: *Trajectories and risk factors post-concussive symptoms following paediatric concussion*



Jessica Trevena-Peters and Clare Kempnich

The Luria Award for outstanding doctoral candidate was awarded to *Jessica Trevena-Peters* for her presentation entitled: *Efficacy of activities of daily living retraining during posttraumatic amnesia: A randomised controlled trial*

The Travel Award for an outstanding student abstract was awarded to *Lucette Lanyon* for her submission entitled: *‘I know where I belong now’: Understanding the potential of community aphasia groups*

The Mindlink Brightwater Award for interdisciplinary research was awarded to *Clare Kempnich* for her presentation entitled *Feasibility and efficacy of brief computerised training to improve emotion recognition in premanifest and early-symptomatic Huntington’s disease.*

Prizes were also awarded to Clare Ramsden, William Levack, and Lee Cubis for being the top 3 point scorers on the Smartphone App.

A number of organisations and people need to be thanked for their immense contributions. Firstly, thank you to the organising and scientific committees for their help in putting together the conference programme and in organising, promoting and running the conference:

Conference Committee (CC): Jacinta Douglas, Adam McKay, Kate Frencham, Rene Stolwyk, Kate dCruz, and Lucy Knox.

Scientific Committee: CC plus Peter Anderson, Vicki Anderson, Nicholas Behn, Libby Callaway, Cathy Catroppa, Petrea Cornwell, Emmah Doig, Jenny Fleming, Michelle Kelly, Glynda Kinsella, Natasha Lannin, Skye McDonald, Margaret Mealings, John Olver, Tamara Ownsworth, Jennie Ponsford, David Shum, Grahame Simpson, Leanne Togher, Jenni White, Gavin Williams, and Cathy Willmott.

Secondly, I would like to thank our hardworking student volunteers Anna Carmichael, Hannah Coyle, Kristina Haebich, Vincci Lee and Nicole Stefanac. Thirdly, thank you to all the staff at the Grand Hyatt who ensured the event was enjoyed in very comfortable surrounds and with an excellent array of food. Fourth, a big thank you to our sponsors for their generous support, without which the conference would not be possible: our Corporate Sponsors Shine Lawyers (who also sponsored the coffee cart), conference partners and exhibitors Drake Medox, Menzies Health Institute of Queensland, School of Psychology at the University of New South Wales, Epworth Rehabilitation, Transport Accident Commission, Pearson Clinical Assessment, Australian Catholic University, Printing sponsors Snap Printing Botany and our satchel insert sponsors Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Taylor and Francis, Psychological Assessments Australia, The Neuro Hub, Stroke Foundation, Private Practice Success and Brainlink Services.

Finally, enormous thanks to our one-of-a-kind conference organiser, Margaret Eagers from MERS Events, for her incredible skill, efficiency and heart.

I look forward to seeing you at the 41st Brain Impairment conference in Adelaide on 3-5 May, 2018!

Dr Dana Wong
Convenor and Conference Chair

