

# ASSBI Newsletter

Australasian Society for the Study of Brain Impairment  
September 2019

Issue 68

Working together to improve the lives of people with brain impairment



## ASSBI COMMITTEES

[EXECUTIVE](#)

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## WORDS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



I am writing my President's report for this issue of ASSBI's Newsletter just as Brain Injury Awareness Week (19-26 August 2019) is drawing to a close. Acquired brain injury is often thought

of as synonymous with traumatic brain injury arising from an external cause, but it includes a wider range of neurological conditions, such as stroke, brain tumour, hypoxia, degenerative disorders, cerebral infections. Raising awareness about brain injury is important. As we know, acquired brain injury is often described as the "invisible disability" or the "hidden epidemic". If signs and symptoms of acquired brain injury are not recognised by the general public, then interactions with the public can be misinterpreted as antisocial (cf. impaired self-regulation), drunken (cf. ataxic gait and slurred speech), rude and crude (cf. poor social skills, tactless communication).

ASSBI uses a number of strategies to raise awareness. Our Social Media team, headed by Dr Elizabeth (Lizzie) Beadle and Travis Wearne, has the most specific brief. As Lizzie explains, "we recognize social media platforms as opportunities to engage not just the ASSBI community but also the public in general. One of the social media platforms we use is Twitter. Twitter is a 'micro-blogging' system where individuals can send and receive short posts. Twitter has become increasingly popular with academics, students, policymakers, politicians, and the general public. In healthcare, Twitter is used to connect researchers, health care providers, and

consumers." Indeed, Twitter *is* popular, and it *does* connect.

As part of Brain Injury Awareness Week, Lizzie and Travis seized the opportunity to use ASSBI's established Twitter platform as a way to connect with others on this year's topic of Brain Tumour Awareness. They asked one of ASSBI's advanced student members, psychologist Lee Cubis, to "takeover" the Twitter platform for the week and discuss his research in brain tumour and engage the community more broadly. Lee reported that the strategy generated conversations about acquired brain injury, and specifically brain tumour. Importantly it facilitated direct connections between people with brain injury and researchers. Lee commented that it "led to some good, meaningful conversations that I think both sides appreciated". Lizzie and Travis are compiling a list of people who wish to assist with future "ASSBI Twitter takeovers", so do contact them if you are interested.

Speaking of Twitter, readers should know about a mixed-methods study hot off the press (published in the June issue of ASSBI's journal, *Brain Impairment*) by ASSBI member, Melissa Brunner, and her colleagues (Bronwyn Hemsley, Stuart Palmer, Leanne Togher and Stephen Dann), entitled: "If I knew what I was doing on Twitter then I would use it more": Twitter experiences and networks of people with traumatic brain injury (TBI) (see DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/BrImp.2019.12>).

Of course, the issue of cyberbullying is a down-side of social media and has had currency in the recent press. People with brain injury may be particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying - see also Melissa's associated paper (Int J Lang Comm Dis, 2019, 54(2), 221-223) which, *inter alia*, discusses risks of social media. Our ASSBI colleague in Melbourne, Dr Kate Gould, has been working with clients on the issue of cyberbullying and she runs advocacy training on the topic (see this Newsletter for further details).

Social media stands in contrast to scientific journals which generally provide very limited and not readily accessible

opportunities for consumers to join the conversation. It provides powerful ways for researchers and clinicians to engage with and hear from consumers in an informal environment, as well as for consumers to have a voice and share experiences with each other. And as this report shows, ASSBI and its "rising stars" are at the very forefront of important work in this area.

My very best wishes to you all,  
Robyn Tate  
President

## SOCIAL MEDIA



Like us on [Facebook](#),  
[Follow ASSBI](#) on Twitter  
Become a contact on LinkedIn

If you have anything interesting you would like tweeted or mentioned on facebook, contact Lizzie or Travis via [admin@assbi.com.au](mailto:admin@assbi.com.au).

## PROJECT NOTES

### CYBERABILITY:

Understanding, preventing and treating cybercrime after acquired brain injury



Pictured (L-R): Alf Archer, Dr Kate Gould, Anna Holliday, Colin Brokenshire

More people than ever are using the internet and social media for connecting with people, finding out information and entertainment. In community brain injury rehabilitation, online tools, apps and smartphone features can be extremely helpful. But like with other tools, its important to understand how to use them safely, and what to do if you need help. Unfortunately, there are individuals and organisations around the world that try to scam people out of money and private information. In Australia, \$107 million was

stolen through scams last year (*Source: Scamwatch*), and the number keeps growing. Scams can happen to anyone, even those who think they are switched on to this. Romance Scams are one of the most common types, and can cause not just financial loss, but significant heartbreak and distress. People with brain injury may be additionally vulnerable as they are often looking for social connection or a relationship. Once they have been scammed, it can also be much harder to realise it was a scam and take steps to get out of it.

Dr Kate Gould is a Clinical Neuropsychologist and Monash University Research Fellow. Together with her client, Colin Brokenshire, Kate has been co-designing and delivering advocacy training about improving Cyberability after brain injury for the last four years. This work has been recognised by the ASSBI Clinical Innovation Award (2018). Funded by the Allen Martin Research Scholarship Award (2018) through the Summer Foundation, Kate is currently leading the Cyberability team in conducting a world first study into understanding and improving online safety after brain injury. Kate and Colin have joined with Anna Holliday from Li-Ve Tasmania and another consumer with lived experience, Alf Archer, to conduct an awareness building campaign on understanding, preventing and treating cyberscams after brain injury. Their series of workshops in Melbourne and Tasmania and webinar in July 2019 have been well received by the clinical community, with particular value placed on Colin and Alf's stories of their own experiences with scams. Findings from their clinician survey and workshop evaluation will form the foundation of both clinical knowledge and practice in this new area, supporting people's "cyberability" so that they can benefit from the safe use of technology in neurorehabilitation and their everyday life.

## WEBSITE

We have a new helper, Matthew has been recruited to help Margaret keep the website updated and is doing a great job. He has also got us very close to having the Online Store ready to go.

Signing in whether you are a member or not will give you the opportunity to update your own information **including your email address**. It will also give you access to *Brain Impairment* if you are a member. If you want to change your email address login with your old email address or [email](#)

[Matthew](#) to change it prior to you logging in. <https://www.assbi.com.au>

We would like to collect stats such as your discipline and where you come from to get a better idea of our community.

When your membership is due you will receive a couple of reminder emails and you can renew and pay online by Visa, MasterCard and PayPal if you have an account. You can also transfer your fees via the bank – if you do this email [Margaret](#) so she can put your payment through. NO CHEQUES PLEASE.

If you have anything you wish to go onto the site or have any feedback please email me at [admin@assbi.com.au](mailto:admin@assbi.com.au). *Matthew, Webmaster's sidekick*

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



**FREE THINGS!** Now we've got your attention: we are offering a free month of ASSBI membership for September and October only. BONUS: if you're referred by a current member, both you AND the current member will get ANOTHER free month of membership! How good is that? Register here for membership: <https://assbi.com.au/Join-us>

I'd like to thank Matthew for taking a pile of work off these shoulders, you are doing a great job Matt.

We have a new ABSTRACT SUBMISSION PORTAL, we will now be using CVENT to submit abstracts. This means that we will be using the same system across abstract submission, registration and the APP. Look out for your email invitation to submit an abstract.

Apart from ASSBI, The NR-SIG-WFNR and the CCD Bi-Annual Symposium are both opening their Call for Abstracts within the month ([go to World Events](#)). Their conferences will be held in Austria and Melbourne in July 2020.

*Cheers, Margaret Eagers, CEO*

## NEWS ARTICLE

**We are featuring the winner of the Douglas/Tate Prize for 2018 in this issue**

**ARTICLE** 2018 Volume 19, Special Issue 2 (Mild Traumatic Brain Injury) – Brain Impairment

Theadom, A; Barker-Collo, S; Greenwood, A; Parmar, P; Jones, K; Starkey, N; McPherson, K and Feigin VL on behalf of the BIONIC Research Group

## ASSBI MEMBERSHIPS

**Memberships ARE ANNIVERSARY which means that your membership lasts for a full 12 or 24 months from date of renewal**

### FREE MEMBERSHIP

We are offering a free month of ASSBI membership if you JOIN or RENEW your membership in September and October only. BONUS: if you JOIN because you're referred by a current member, both you AND the current member will get ANOTHER free month of membership! How good is that? Register here for membership: <https://assbi.com.au/Join-us>

**Don't forget as a member you will get a significant discount to the ASSBI/NZRA Conference**

[CLICK HERE](#) to join or renew

**Do Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Severity Sub-Classification Systems Help to Identify People Who Go on to Experience Long-Term Symptoms?**

***What the study is about***

Up to 95% of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are classified as being of mild severity. Whilst many individuals who have sustained a mild TBI recover naturally within a few days to weeks, up to half of those affected can experience persistent symptoms and difficulties participating in everyday activities. Consequently, there is a need to unravel the wide heterogeneity in mild TBI and identify people who are more likely to need clinical treatment to facilitate their recovery. The challenges are that classification systems need to be easy to implement within a busy clinical environment, capture the full breadth of possible presentations and have high predictive validity. This study aimed to identify sub-classification systems for mild TBI and to determine their utility in predicting outcome.

***What we did***

We conducted a systematic review to identify mild-TBI sub-classification systems

published until March 2016. Systems were included in the review if they graded mild-TBI into two or more categories, were an independent system (the most up to date version of a system was used) and did not require specialist physical assessment or MRI or CT scans (which would not be feasible to implement in a community setting). We classified a sample of 290 adults who had experienced a mild-TBI according to each of the identified sub-classification systems based on their medical records at the time of injury. Assessment data on reported post-concussion symptoms experienced at 1-year post injury collected as part of a previous research study was then extracted for these participants. A series of ANOVAs and regression models were used to determine whether each sub-classification system could distinguish between outcomes.

#### **What we found**

Nineteen different subclassification systems were identified as part of the review. The proportions of mild-TBI participants classified into the different sub-classification grades varied considerably between different systems. The systems were based on a range of factors including period of loss of consciousness, worst Glasgow Coma Score and acute symptoms such as headache, amnesia, vomiting and confusion. Only one classification system by Saal et al (1991) was able to significantly differentiate the experience of post-concussion symptoms 1-year post injury. However, the findings did not remain significant following correction for multiple comparisons and inclusion of socio-demographic and contextual factors in the regression model. Results from this study reveal that current sub-classification systems based on initial level of consciousness and acute symptoms fail to identify those most at risk of experiencing longer-term post-concussion symptoms. Other factors such as psychological and pre-injury variables may have more influence on longer-term outcomes from mild TBI and need to be explored.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the Health Research Council of New Zealand who funded the initial recruitment and collection of data of the mild TBI sample.

## **HELP WANTED**

***Understanding the management of patients in the early stage of***

**recovery after TBI.** Prof Jennie Ponsford and her team is asking for your help to complete a survey which will take approx. 15 minutes to complete. The survey has been developed regarding assessment and management of acute stages of TBI (i.e.PTA). The team are focusing on clinicians in neurosurgery units and rehabilitation services who have experience working in acute TBI care both in Australia and overseas. [Click here](#) to read the Explanatory Statement before completing the survey. This survey has ethics approval. [https://monash.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_265YEF1O5NyOweN](https://monash.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_265YEF1O5NyOweN)

My name is Abbey Orchard and I am a Psychology Honours student at Southern Cross University under the supervision of Dr Emily Hindman, Dr Kylie Radford and Professor Peter Hassmen. We are inviting health professionals working within Australia to participate in an online research study.

The research aims to:

- Document the current practices of clinicians conducting assessments with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients or patients, to understand 'best practice' in this area.
- Identify current gaps and barriers to effective and ethical cognitive assessment and care in this population to stimulate and guide future research.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about your experience conducting cognitive assessment with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients or patients. You do not need to have extensive experience working with this population to participate in this study. You will also be asked to complete questions about your background and experiences. Participation is voluntary.

Please follow the link below to read more about this study and to access the survey. For any further inquiries, you may contact myself or my supervisors:

Abbey Orchard:

[a.orchard.12@student.scu.edu.au](mailto:a.orchard.12@student.scu.edu.au)

Dr Emily Hindman:

[emily.hindman@scu.edu.au](mailto:emily.hindman@scu.edu.au)

Dr Kylie Radford: [k.radford@neura.edu.au](mailto:k.radford@neura.edu.au)

This project has ethics approval from the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) Ethics Committee and Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (1171/16; 19-144). If you would like to participate in this study please use the link below. [https://scuau.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9Zg4iNgAqqRzODj](https://scuau.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9Zg4iNgAqqRzODj)

## **Seeking families for a study on attention and childhood brain injury**

Researchers at Monash University and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) are interested in understanding whether a game-based attention training program can strengthen attention in children who have experienced an acquired brain injury (ABI).

The term ABI describes any type of brain injury that happens after birth, and includes damage due to infection, tumours, stroke, lack of oxygen or trauma. Attention difficulties are a common feature of ABI and can have far-reaching consequences for learning, social relationships, and behaviour in childhood.

They are looking for children aged 4 - 9 years who have experienced an ABI to take part. Children will complete a training program at home over 5 weeks, as well as attending sessions at MCRI to measure changes in attention, memory, social and academic skills.

Want to find out more? Please contact the research team on 03 9905 3255 or [tali.train2@monash.edu](mailto:tali.train2@monash.edu), or visit the [MCRI website](#).

Approved by Royal Children's Hospital Human Research Ethics Committee: #38132.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

If you would like to see someone give a workshop in your State or know of anyone coming to Australia in 2019 who would like to give a workshop or webinar for ASSBI members, please email [Margaret](mailto:Margaret) and we will endeavour to organise a full/half day workshop or a webinar.

**2017 and 2018 Workshops and 2019 webinars are available for download as video files**

## #assbiworkshops

<https://assbi.com.au/News/7859420>

Jessica Trevena-Peters, Jennie Ponsford, Adam McKay, Dana Wong and Neera Kapoor have all presented full day training workshops and 90 min webinars late in 2017 through to July 2019. If you missed this Continuing Education the first time around and would like to access it now please go to the website and order one or all of them. Alinka Fisher's workshop will also be available shortly.

## ASSBI CONFERENCES

### ASSBI/NZRA 2019



ASSBI/NZRA Inaugural Trans-Tasman Conference  
2-4 May 2019  
Wellington, New Zealand  
ASSBI's 42nd Brain Impairment Conference  
NZ Rehabilitation Association BI-Annual Conference  
A Call for Action  
#assbinzra19

See all the Story-Boards from the ASSBI/NZRA 2019 Conference by clicking here



Click on banner for Conference Report and On the Story board for ALL the Storyboards

## ASSBI's 43<sup>rd</sup> Conference

#assbi2020



AUSTRALASIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF BRAIN IMPAIRMENT (ASSBI)  
Pan Pacific Hotel, Perth WA  
7-9 May 2020  
43rd ASSBI Brain Impairment Conference  
Getting on with the business of living

[Go to the ASSBI website to keep up to date](#)

Call for Abstracts is OPENING this week. We will be using CVENT and not Easy Chair this year. An email will be sent out this week.

## BRAIN IMPAIRMENT

## ASSBI's multidisciplinary Journal

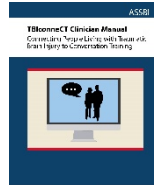
David Andrewes and Pamela Snow, both long-time founding members of ASSBI, tendered their resignation from the Editorial Board of *Brain Impairment* at the last EB meeting in NZ in May. The Editors, members of the Editorial Board, Executive Committee and members of ASSBI thank them both for their service.

The September issue is due out shortly and will be a special issue on Brain Impairment in Indigenous Populations. To see this issue make sure your membership is up to date.

To login to the BI site of CUP, just **login** to the ASSBI website and [click on this link](#) to get directed to the Brain Impairment page of the CUP website, if you require any help with this please email [Margaret](#), *Jennifer Fleming and Grahame Simpson* Co-Editors

## ASSBI RESOURCES

ASSBI Resources is going from strength to strength. Our website has been improved to provide more information about all our products (check it out!) and to make it more accessible to people searching for evidence based resources on-line. We have now introduced PDF versions of most of our products for local buyers as well as overseas. These cost less than the printed versions making them even more affordable. With 10% off for ASSBI and INS members, there is simply no reason not to stock up!



We are also excited to announce the publication of TBI Connect. This program is based on the very successful TBI Express program but is suitable for use with individuals. We have another manual in the works: PEPA – for assisting people with ABI increase their

activity levels and meaningful goals. Watch this space as it will be available soon. In another initiative, we have partnered with eValorix, a Canadian on-line company, to sell our MEC manual. Hopefully, this will provide a greater reach for this ASSBI Resource and is a toe in the water for us in terms of trying out international distribution networks.

Non-members have access to some free downloads too – [click here](#) to see the full list of manuals and free to downloads on offer

*Skye McDonald*  
Resources Manager

## WORLD EVENTS

Events being held in Australia and around the world by INS, BIA, NR-SIG-WFNR and other organisations can be found by clicking on the undernoted link

Goldberg Brain-Mind Symposia which is a 5-day course is being offered in Bali, Indonesia in February 2020, click below for more information.

<https://www.assbi.com.au/World-Events>

