



From the Principal Investigator

Amanda Landers



Welcome to the second edition of the ASPERT Bulletin. We have been busy over the last few months with grant applications and a success! The Canterbury Medical Research Foundation (CMRF NZ) have awarded us a small grant to employ a research assistant specifically for the ASPERT team.

The focus for our new research assistant will be ethical approval, locality authorisations and dissemination of the pancreatic cancer population survey. We look forward to introducing you to her in the next bulletin.

The aim of the survey is to provide detailed information about the use of PERT in New Zealand and Australia. We hope to identify who has been offered Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy (PERT) and how we might improve access to those who need it.

We also have a new ASPERT team member, Kylie Russell, a Specialist Clinical Dietitian working at Auckland City Hospital in pancreatic disease. Welcome, Kylie!



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Team news

Kylie Russell, Specialist Hepatopancreaticobiliary and Gastroenterology Dietitian has joined the ASPERT team.



I was delighted to be invited to join the ASPERT Research Group. As a Specialist Clinical Dietitian working at Auckland City Hospital in pancreatic disease, I have a strong interest in pancreatic exocrine insufficiency (PEI) and the role of the dietitian in treating this through pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT).

I work in both the inpatient and outpatient settings, including the first dedicated Pancreas Clinic in New Zealand. I am passionate about teaching dietitians about how to identify and treat PEI early, and am providing teaching courses across New Zealand in collaboration with Professor John Windsor and Dietitians New Zealand, with support from Viatrix Inc.

As a clinician, I have a strong research focus to my practice and believe that PERT and pancreatic cancer are important areas of future research. Pancreatic cancer has the lowest one-year survival rate among all cancers in New Zealand, and our survival rates are comparatively low on an international scale. Therefore, we need to do better.

High-quality research, specifically focusing on these areas is an essential step and I am pleased to be able to contribute and support the work ASPERT is doing. I am also interested in research in the areas of PEI and PERT post-pancreatic resection, as long-term nutrition-related side effects are increasingly being recognised, yet few studies have examined the onset, development, and treatment of such co-morbidities in this patient population.

Contact us



Subscribe to the ASPERT Bulletin or find out more about the ASPERT study by emailing

Amanda Landers:

E: cst@uts.edu.au

W: uts.edu.au/cst/

Systematic review of the impact of PERT in patients with advanced cancer

Last year, a group of ASPERT researchers embarked on a systematic literature review and narrative synthesis focused on the impact of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) on patients with advanced pancreatic cancer.

A four-step narrative synthesis process was used:

- theory development
- preliminary synthesis development
- exploration of relationships, and
- assessment of the robustness of the synthesis.

Only 12 papers were eligible for inclusion in the analysis. Four themes arose from analysing the study outcomes including:

- PERT education
- efficacy of PERT
- the patient experience, and
- lack of awareness regarding enzyme replacement.

In conclusion, PERT shows the potential to improve symptoms, nutrition, weight loss, and survival, but high-quality studies with standardised outcomes have not been completed.

Patient and health professional education is required as there appears to be a general lack of awareness about the use of PERT in pancreatic cancer. The review has been submitted to Pancreas.