

# ASPERT

Bulletin | MARCH 2024



AOTEAROA AUSTRALIA PANCREATIC ENZYME REPLACEMENT THERAPY RESEARCH GROUP

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

AMANDA LANDERS



Tēna koutou katoa,

With summer coming to an end, ASPERT is gearing up for another busy year. Over the last few months, ASPERT has teamed up with some new collaborators to develop a Rapid Review of PERT through the University of Technology Sydney. These rapid reviews are run by the Project Manager Yinyin Phyo, and are 'real-world' clinical pharmacovigilance studies of a particular drug or intervention. We were fortunate to be given the opportunity to be Rapid Review are currently in the pilot stage. We hope to launch in April 2024. I reached out to the Aotearoa New Zealand palliative care medical community to see if anyone would be willing to join our study. We had interest from 11 different sites! Clinicians and hospices want the opportunity to undertake research, and this programme is geared towards supporting non-government organisations and early-career researchers.

We have more exciting news! Dr Niamh Fanning (see spotlight!) is leading a systematic literature review into possible implementation strategies of nutritional interventions in the cancer population. The ultimate goal of this review is to inform our own future implementation randomised-controlled trial of PERT in pancreatic cancer. Associate Professor Natalie Taylor is an implementation scientist based at the University of NSW, and has invited two of her team members (April Morrow and Shuang Liang) to join this review. The ASPERT team will learn so much from these experts and we look forward to reporting on our findings.

I hope everyone has a relaxing time at Easter. We will keep you all updated with the ASPERT work that is underway.

Ngā mihi nui

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## ICCH 2024 CONFERENCE

FONG FU

ASPERT has gone international! The team has recently submitted an abstract to the International Conference on Communication in Healthcare (ICCH 2024), which will be held in Spain in early September. The conference unites healthcare researchers, educators, practitioner's and policy makers so they can exchange ideas on health care communication research. ASPERT is aiming to raise awareness of PERT and its importance around the world.



## TEAM NEWS

NIAMH FANNING



The team welcomes Niamh Fanning, an Assistant Research Fellow at the University of Otago Christchurch (UOC). She joined the ASPERT team in August 2023 and is leading a systematic review focused on implementation strategies and outcomes of nutritional interventions in cancer. She will also be involved in coordination of other ASPERT studies, including the PERT Rapid Review study and the PERT Patient Reported Registry. She has previous experience leading a systematic review and coordinating several clinical research studies in the Rheumatology Research group led by Prof Lisa Stamp at UOC Department of Medicine, where she has worked since 2015.

Niamh completed her PhD in Biological Sciences at the University of Edinburgh in 2014. Her rheumatology research interests include identifying biological markers that predict drug response in rheumatoid arthritis and gout and the effect of smoking on risk of gout. Her goals are to expand her own knowledge of PERT research and implementation science research. She is excited to contribute to the ASPERT goal to improve PERT access for people with pancreatic cancer.

## METHODOLOGY PAPER

FONG FU

Rejoice! ASPERT has recently successfully published a paper titled: “Helping the voices of people with pancreatic cancer to be heard: a mixed media methodology to optimise recruitment for an international survey of pancreatic enzyme replacement”. This paper details the method used to recruit participants to two of our studies surveying pancreatic cancer patients and relevant clinicians on how PERT is administered. Our paper is unique as it utilised a large scale social media approach to recruit participants across New Zealand and Australia.

The link to the abstract is here:

<https://tinyurl.com/btetxzpm>

## ASPERT AT GISIG

FONG FU

Helen Brown, our residential palliative care dietitian from Nurse Maude made big strides promoting ASPERT’s research to date, at a recent meeting for the Aotearoa New Zealand Oncologists GI Cancer Special Interest Group. The day consisted of gastrointestinal specialists presenting on different perspectives on how to manage pancreatic cancer. First was Dr Saxon Connor who spoke from a surgical perspective, then our own Helen Brown with a palliative viewpoint. Dr Lee concluded the talk with a radiation therapy angle. Helen stated that the session was thought provoking in how the different specialities tackle the same problem. She found that having these multi-disciplinary viewpoints would improve how PERT is applied in the palliative setting.

Helen thanks the committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of ASPERT and invites any interested oncologists and dieticians to join our research group.

## SYSTEMATIC REVIEW UPDATE

NIAMH FANNING

The ASPERT team is currently running a systematic review of implementation strategies and outcomes of nutritional interventions in cancer.

Implementation science is the study of strategies that improve the uptake of evidence-based medicine by clinicians and policy makers. It is crucial to bridge the gap between clinical research and medical practice. For example, without implementation science only 14% of research reaches clinical practice and the transition takes 17 years. However, when an implementation team is involved 80% of research reaches the clinic with an expedited timeline of 3 years!

The purpose of systematic reviews is to consolidate all published evidence in a research discipline using standardised and meticulous methods. The aim of our systematic review is to identify the most effective strategies for implementing evidence-based nutritional interventions for people with cancer. The findings of our review will inform a subsequent randomised-controlled clinical trial. This trial will aim to identify the most effective implementation strategy for the use of PERT in pancreatic cancer.

The systematic review involves a team of New Zealand researchers: Dr Amanda Landers (Palliative Care/PhD), Niamh Fanning (PhD), Helen Brown (Dietitian), Catriona Rother (Trainee Oncologist), Fong Fu (Medical Student), Louise Daly (Medical student) and Jason Hart (Medical student). The systematic review has been registered on Prospero (ID: CRD42023454210). A scientific literature search was carried out, which yielded over three thousand potentially relevant articles. These articles have been through a two-stage screening which narrowed them down to 31 articles meeting inclusion criteria.

We are very excited to announce that we have joined forces with an implementation science expert, Associate Professor Natalie Taylor, and two of her research team, Drs April Morrow and Shuang Liang, who provided independent review of article screening. They are also providing guidance and assistance with the next steps of the review process, quality assessment and data extraction of the 31 articles. Once these steps are completed we will move onto data synthesis, following a narrative synthesis approach developed by Popay et al., 2006. "Guidance on the conduct of narrative synthesis in systematic reviews. A product from the ESRC methods programme Version. 2006 Apr 1;1:b92."

## PILOT RAPID REVIEW

FONG FU

The ASPERT team is partnering up with the University of Technology Sydney and participating in the UTS IMPACCT Rapid review program. This is a collaborative international program which aims to study the use of medications and non-pharmacological interventions used in palliative care and cancer symptom management. Ultimately, the aim is to improve existing treatments in this space.

It is called a rapid review as we are rapidly:

1. Collecting data
2. Collating and analysing data
3. Reporting of results
4. Translating results into real life clinical changes

We are currently identifying potential sites for this program to run through. If you are a practitioner who prescribes CREON, please consider whether your site is suitable and reach out to us via our contacts at the end of this bulletin.



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