



July 2023 Newsletter

Our mission is to provide a supportive and informative environment for people with lung conditions and their carers.

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NEXT MEETING: Thursday 10 April 2023
10:15 am – 12:00 noon
Weston Creek Labor Club
Teesdale Close, Stirling ACT 2611

The guest speaker will be from COTA (Council of the Ageing).

From the Editor

Winter is the time of the year when one of our members, George, heads out of Canberra to the more remote areas of Australia. He sent us all a message from the Northern Territory.

'Hi from Pine Creek. I'm nearly in Darwin. Weather is fine and enjoying it. The attached photo is from dawn at a rest area 70 km east of Tennant Creek. Trip going well. Regards to our members.'

You will find Pine Creek on the Stuart Hwy north of Katherine. With a population of around 300 people it is the fourth largest town between Darwin and Alice Springs.

Your editor has also been doing some travelling of late albeit not as far away as George. His trip was to South Australia via Broken Hill. As Broken Hill is over 1000 km from Canberra your editor took three days just to get that far. First stop was Dubbo, then Cobar and finally Broken Hill.



Dawn in the Northern Territory, photographed by George Watts

The drive to Dubbo was a familiar one for your editor and his wife, Dianne, as they lived and worked in the Central West for a number of years in the 1980s and 90s. The real adventure began after leaving Dubbo and heading west into the outback.

When you first leave Dubbo you pass through a number of rural communities with cotton being a major crop. Nyngan is the last of these towns and is situated where the Barrier Hwy that runs into South Australia begins. Nyngan has had its share of floods over the years and levee banks have been built to protect it when the Bogan River overflows its banks. The enterprising residents of the town have used the name of the river to their advantage, with the *Big Bogan* standing tall in the centre of town giving passers-by a reason to stop and have a coffee and something to eat.

Along the Barrier Highway, trucks, four wheel drives and caravans prevail - no city cars out there. Your editor only just 'fitted in' in his Volvo all wheel drive station wagon.

Cobar was the logical place to stop between Dubbo and Broken Hill. It is a remote but thriving mining town. Interestingly its water comes all the way from Burrendong Dam near Wellington (south of Dubbo), via the Macquarie river, a channel and a pipeline. It travels a very long way, so it is a precious resource out there.

Next stop Broken Hill... next month hopefully.



Your editor dwarfed by the Big Bogan in Nyngan NSW

July Meeting – Val Siemionow

Fourteen members attended the July meeting. We received apologies from four of our members who are currently travelling. Val Dempsey and George Watts are both on their annual pilgrimages north to get away from the Canberra winter. Caroline Scowcroft is currently in Los Angeles, and Alison Torr is away cycling in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. We also received apologies from Lyn Morley, Jenny Pannell and Chris Moyle.



New Members to our group, Helen Crombie and Nev Taylor

We were delighted to welcome two new members, Helen Crombie and Netherley (Nev) Taylor (both pictured on page 2).

After the new arrivals introduced themselves, the members present proceeded to introduce themselves around the table and identify their particular lung conditions and issues.

Marina then told the group about the guest speaker, Simon Kragh (pictured right), a Physiotherapist who is the Director of Southside Physio. His practice won the contract to trial the new ACT Breathlessness Intervention Service (ABIS). She introduced the topic for the speaker which is a home based breathlessness program. The program is being researched and developed together with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) for the Capital Health Network



A general discussion then ensued:

- Pam gave a brief update on the status of the ANU and UC student interaction program post COVID. Basically 'Not Yet On'.
- Marilyn advised that our '*Christmas in July*' lunch has been booked at the Raiders Club in Weston for 12:00 pm on Friday 28 July 2023.

Simon arrived about 11:00 am. He was introduced and welcomed, and then proceeded with his presentation. In his talk Simon outlined:

- The nature of the home intervention service.
- The target audience for the service.
- The criteria for acceptance into the home trial.

The service, which is currently FREE (while it is being trialled), offers a variety of solutions aimed at helping people with breathlessness better help themselves to live more easily with their breathing problems. It is designed specifically to support people who suffer from debilitating breathlessness. Based on other similar proven programs which have been running in Cambridge in the UK and in South Australia for some time now, it addresses the domains of Breathing - Thinking - Functioning by providing a multi-disciplinary approach including physiotherapy, psychosocial, medical and occupational therapy inputs.

Anyone who participates in this program (along with any family members or carers you choose), would receive a mix of two to six home visits and/or telephone follow ups depending on your individual needs. These home visits would be conducted by specially trained allied health professionals who would offer a range of solutions to enhance your ability to self-manage your ongoing breathlessness, especially during crisis episodes.

Additional points covered by Simon included:

- The underestimation of the prevalence of breathlessness in the population.
- The extent to which breathlessness causes people panic and anxiety and how this in turn increases the severity of breathlessness.
- The training component in the home based breathlessness program that targets panic and anxiety has been achieving excellent results.
- The program also provides a selection of targeted physical activities that help breathing.
- Huge improvements have already been seen in participants as a result of this home based intervention service.

Members can currently apply to take part in this free trial. That is any members:

- whose breathlessness from chronic disease, is currently preventing them from undertaking their normal daily activities, and who,
- on level ground, walk slower than people of the same age because of breathlessness, or have to stop to recover when walking at their own pace, and
- who have their underlying disease optimally managed by medical professionals.

Members MUST be referred by their GP, on the appropriate form which is available on this link [Good Health Form](#). It is also available on the Southside Physio website. Anyone interested should first discuss this service with their GP and then ask the GP to refer them by completing the appropriate form.

A general discussion of the issues followed and Simon answered many questions.

The meeting finished with a brief presentation from Marina which gave members a quick summary of Canberra's free Bus Services for the aged and disabled – specifically the 'ACT Community Bus Service' and the 'Flexible Bus Service'. These are critical services for those of us who can no longer drive or no longer have a vehicle. Marina will send the details out to members.

The meeting finished at 12:00 pm just in time for lunch in the bistro.

My Mouth is Dry - Chris Moyle

Three causes of a dry mouth are breathing through your mouth, taking inhaled medications or using oxygen.

Top tips

- Make sure you [drink enough fluids](#) – at least six to eight cups a day. If your appetite is low or you feel full quickly, take sips of fluid to keep your mouth moist whilst eating, and drink the rest of your fluids between meals. Have a glass of water at your bedside that you can drink if you wake in the night with a dry mouth. Take a water bottle out with you so you keep hydrated.
- Eat more soft foods, use more sauces such as gravy and cheese sauce, and eat moist dishes like stews or casseroles.
- After using inhalers, remember to rinse your mouth out and gargle with water.
- Look after your teeth and mouth by brushing your teeth regularly and using dental floss. Avoid using mouthwash that contains alcohol, as this can dry out your mouth.
- Try sugar-free gum or mints or sweets, frozen grapes, pineapple or orange segments to help you produce more saliva.
- Smoking and alcohol can irritate a dry mouth. Try to reduce or avoid these.
- If your dry mouth causes soreness or problems with eating, tell your doctor. They can prescribe products that help you produce saliva.

If you have problems swallowing your food, talk to your doctor. They may refer you to a speech and language therapist for a swallowing assessment.

My sense of taste has changed

A dry mouth can also affect your taste. Experiment with herbs, spices, chutneys and pickles. Sauces and oils can help enhance and carry the flavours of your food. If you go off a particular food, try it another time as your tastes may continue to change.

I feel bloated and have trapped wind

If you're breathless, you may gulp air when you eat. This causes bloating. Talk to your doctor, as bloating is a symptom of many conditions.

Top tips

- Eat in a relaxed environment and sit upright while eating and for up to half an hour after.
- Don't rush, and make sure you chew your food well.
- Try to limit fizzy drinks.
- Cut down on foods that produce more wind (e.g. cabbage, sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower and beans).
- Try using peppermint. It can be taken as a tea, a cordial or a capsule.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Try to be as physically active as you can.

Picture Reference: [Dry Mouth](#) Text Reference: www.blf.org.uk

Also from Chris Moyle: *'My Dentist has stressed that dry mouth with lack of saliva needs constant sips of water to make more saliva to more effectively clean bacteria from teeth.'*

Brace yourself – Information supplied by Helen Cotter

Most of us have techniques we use to help us catch our breath when we become too breathless. Many lean forward, either on a chair or against a bench; some purse their lips to get a stronger flow; some open their mouth to drag in more air. But have you tried **bracing yourself**?

Bracing yourself involves **contracting the muscles so they stiffen, feel hard and are still and not moving when you move**. There are two main ways of doing this:

- Fixing (stiffening) the shoulder girdle. This has the effect of making the chest and ribs do more work.
- Upper limb bracing (stiffening) – this means positions like bracing your arms above or behind your head or high against a wall – even putting hands on hips (or in pockets or waistband etc) and bracing. Again, it helps the breathing muscles do their work better, particularly by helping the ribs to work better.

Give it a go. Like most worthwhile things, it will need practice to find the best method for you.

From **Managing breathlessness in clinical practice** by S Booth et al p49ff



June Lunch at the Southern Cross Club, Jamison

We had a fabulous crowd of 18 members turn out for lunch on what was a blustery and cold day. Parking was hard to find with a large morning Bingo crowd taking all the spots. The variety of food on offer was excellent and quite delicious, although a few had to follow up a couple of times to ensure their meals arrived. Everyone enjoyed the company and conversations lingered into the afternoon.



Christine and Richard: clearly enjoying themselves despite differing opinions of the temperature

Thanks to **Val Siemionow** for recording the event in pictures and to **Marina** for her report.



Chris Gray and Pam are all ears



Maureen and Marina: deep in conversation



Joe and Margaret: both ready for the paparazzo



Shirley: enjoying the occasion

Editor: Have you ever wondered who the Jamison Centre is named after? Probably not, but just in case you are interested: it is Thomas Jamison, a First Fleet surgeon and prominent citizen of the colonial era.