

National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases

May 2020

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Our Mission

The National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases (NCNED) is a research team located at Griffith University on the Gold Coast. Led by Professors Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik and Donald Staines, the team has a focus on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS).

Our mission is to translate research findings into preventative medicine, social and clinical care, and public health outcomes. By collaborating with local, national and international research institutes, we aim to create sustained improvements in health and health care for not only those affected by ME/CFS but also other immune disorders.

COVID-19 UPDATE

The pandemic COVID-19 in Australia appears to be resolving as less cases get reported. The 'flattening of the curve' results are encouraging as the reproductive number or R_0 , becomes less than 1. Several features have been identified with the pandemic including cardiovascular risk factors and obesity contributing to mortality, and the risk of renal failure. People over 70 years of age remain at risk of worse clinical illness although transmission in younger age groups is noticeable. Importantly success in lowering transmission is reflected 2-3 weeks after interventions such as social distancing and isolation. These remain the most effective strategies and will remain in place for some time. Relaxing restrictions too soon may result in significant resurgence of transmission of the virus. As people with ME/CFS likely have some reduction in innate immunity, maintaining isolation and social distancing is even more important.



For specific State and Territory information, including testing information, refer to:

- [ACT](https://health.act.gov.au/health-professionals/chief-health-officer-alerts) - (https://health.act.gov.au/health-professionals/chief-health-officer-alerts)
- [NSW](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-latest.aspx#local) - (https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/covid-19-latest.aspx#local)
- [NT](https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/stay-safe/if-you-are-unwell) - (https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/stay-safe/if-you-are-unwell)
- [QLD](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/novel-coronavirus-qld-clinicians/public-health-alerts) - (https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/novel-coronavirus-qld-clinicians/public-health-alerts)
- [SA](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthalerts) - (www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthalerts)
- [TAS](https://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/keeping-yourself-safe/testing-for-covid19) - (https://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/keeping-yourself-safe/testing-for-covid19)
- [VIC](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19) - (https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19)
- [WA](https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/COVID-clinics) - (https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/COVID-clinics)

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to Dr Kiran Thapaliya on the awarding of his PhD at UQ. In neuroimaging, Dr Kiran Thapaliya has brought new skills and energy to our brain MRI analysis. A new approach has confirmed widespread differences in the brains of ME/CFS subjects (submitted for publication), and ongoing analysis is providing new insights into our previous findings of brainstem dysfunction. Dr Thapaliya together with Dr Leighton Barnden is also measuring optic nerve diameter which responds to increased pressure within the brain. Our next study, to commence when COVID19 restrictions are lifted, will use the advanced research MRI scanner at the University of Queensland.

Congratulations to Ms Cassandra Balinas who recently submitted her PhD thesis which identified impaired Transient receptor potential melastatin ion channels 2 and 3 surface expression significantly reduces natural killer cell cytotoxic activity in ME/CFS patients. Ms Balinas is now working as a Postdoctoral fellow for NCNED whereby her first project is to investigate the Socioeconomic Impact, Quality of Life and Burden of Illness of ME/CFS patients caused by national or individual large-scale life stressors. NCNED would like to sincerely thank the McCusker Charitable Foundation who provided PhD scholarship for Ms Balinas and the Stafford Fox Medical Research Foundation for providing financial support for consumables.



CURRENT STUDIES

NCNED is currently seeking formally diagnosed ME/CFS patients to participate in a new Health Update Survey. This project aims to investigate the Socioeconomic Impact, Quality of Life and Burden of Illness caused by national or individual large-scale life stressors. The Health Update Survey will ask 10 questions every two weeks on physician satisfaction, diagnosis difficulties, quality of life and burden of illness until August 2020. Participants will receive a \$5 Coles e-voucher and enter the draw to win \$50, \$75 and \$100 Coles e-vouchers drawn half-yearly.

Thank you to all of the participants who have completed our Diet and Gastrointestinal Surveys. We are still looking for more participants for this study - both ME/CFS participants and healthy volunteers. The study is open to Australian residents aged 18-60 years old, and will involve the completion of two online surveys.

If you are interested in participating, please contact NCNED on (07) 56789283 or email ncned@griffith.edu.au and we can send you a questionnaire to fill in to determine your eligibility.

POSTPONEMENT OF ME/CFS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020

It is with deep regret that due to safety concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic, NCNED will postpone the Research, Innovation and Discovery Conference (RID 2020) until 16-17 November next year. Our primary concern is always for the wellbeing of patients and their carers. As the situation globally is also likely to be restrictive for travel and large meetings for the foreseeable future, it is the right decision. We will continue to be working tirelessly in the laboratory and all our research in the meantime.

Thank you for all your support and we look forward to seeing everyone next year.

ME/CFS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
16-17 Nov 2021

National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases
RID RESEARCH, INNOVATION & DISCOVERY
See World Resort Conference Centre Gold Coast, Qld, Australia

Griffith University
MENZIES

Breakout resting room with live video link to plenaries
Welcome Cocktail Reception 16 November 2021

Earlybird Registration Deadline 16 October 2021

Abstract Submission Open 2 April - 30 Sept 2021

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