National Centre for Neuroimmunology and Emerging Diseases

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In this issue:-

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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 Professor Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik, the team has a focus on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), long COVID and Gullf War Illness (GWI).

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 and long COVID, but also other immune disorders.

PUBLICATIONS

Since December 2025, the NCNED team have had a very successful few months with four accepted publications.

Scientific Reports— Dr Leighton Barnden (pictured left) in conjunction with NCNED researchers and collaboration with Professor James Baraniuk (Georgetown University, Washington, DC) have published ***"Impaired brain intrinsic connectivity in long COVID during cognitive exertion revealed by independent component analysis".*** You can access the article via this link:

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-026-36986-1

Journal of Translational Medicine — Maira Inderyas and NCNED Researchers have published "***Distinct functional connectivity patterns in myalgic encephalomyelitis and long COVID patients during cognitive fatigue: a 7 Tesla task-fMRI study".*** The article can be viewed at the following link**:**

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12967-026-07708-y

Frontiers in Medicine — Dr Etianne Martini Sasso (pictured left) and NCNED Researchers have published "***Large-scale investigation confirms TRPM3 ion channel dysfunction in Myagic Encephalmyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome".*** To read more about these findings evidencing the real and physically disabling nature of these illnesses, please read the full article: **Frontiers | Large-scale investigation confirms TRPM3 ion channel dysfunction in Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**

PLoS One— Breanna Weigel and NCNED Researchers (pictured right) have published "***Sustained illness burden over time among Australians with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome".***

The article can also be viewed at the following link:

Sustained illness burden over time among Australians with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome | PLOS One

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

WELCOME TO OUR NEW STUDENTS

NCNED welcomes Ms Breanne Archer (pictured right) who will be undertaking her Honours research project in 2026 focusing on Deep Immune Phenotyping and Natural Killer Cell activity in people living with ME/CFS and long COVID.

We would also like to welcome Ms Samara Melray (pictured left) who has commenced her Masters in Medical Research. Her research will investigate the role of neuropeptides on TRPM3 and Natural Killer Cell activity in ME/CFS and long COVID.

The team at NCNED are very excited by these projects and welcome them on board!

AWARDS

NCNED's Principal Research Leader, Professor Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik, was awarded the annual Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Award for her outstanding contribution to research supervision. Professor Marshall-Gradisnik would like to thank the many students she has supervised throughout the years as well as the Co-Supervisors who have made significant contributions to the students' success.

We are very pleased to announce Dr Etianne Martini Sasso was one of only two candidates to be awarded the "2025 PhD Candidate of the Year" from the School of Pharmacy and Medical Sciences (PAM), Griffith University, which was presented to her at Research Celebration Day celebrations in February. Dr Sasso was very appreciative of this award and acknowledged the contribution and support from her supervisors and the whole NCNED Team.

MEDIA

NCNED Director and Principal Research Leader, Professor Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik, featured on the National ABC radio on the 25th January whereby she discussed along with her colleague, Professor Peter Smith, specialist clinician in Allergy and Immunology, the large multisite study that was conducted in Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland which reported the same ion channel fault and reduced calcium mobilisation into immune cells using the gold standard test from people living with ME/CFS. This large multisite investigation validated the findings of NCNED's previous ion channel and calcium findings.

You can listen to this interview here: **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome new research - ABC listen**

Dr Natalie Eaton-Fitch was featured in "The West Australian" media on the 17th of February, which highlighted the research revealing a potential breakthrough for Australians living with ME/CFS. This article detailed a multi-institute interstate study validating previous NCNED research documenting TRPM3 disturbances in ME/CFS.

The article can be viewed at this link **https://thewest.com.au/news/health/new-research-reveals-potential-breakthrough-for-west-australians-living-with-chronic-fatigue--c-21375408**

MEDIA CONTINUED

Dr Kiran Thapaliya's (pictured right) latest publication 'Altered Brain Tissue Microstructure and Neuochemical Profiles in long COVID and Recovered COVID-19 Individuals" A multimodal MRI Study' published in Brain, Behavior, and Immunity generated wide coverage. Links to the media reports can be access via the links below.

COVID-19 leaves a lasting mark on the human brain - Griffith News

MRI Study media reports

Kiran also featured on "ABC radio" on the 17th of December, which highlighted that COVID-19 has significantly altered the brain of some people who have fully recovered from the COVID-19 virus. The article can be viewed at this link: **Long COVID patients show brain swelling linked to memory and concentration problems, study finds - ABC News**

Other team members have been sharing their knowledge and expertise and invite you to access their media reports:

Maira Inderyas and NCNED team members' recent paper "Distinct functional connectivity patterns in myalgic encephalomyelitis and long COVID patients during cognitive fatigue: a 7 Tesla task-fMRI study"featured in the European Medical Journal was referenced in the following reports:

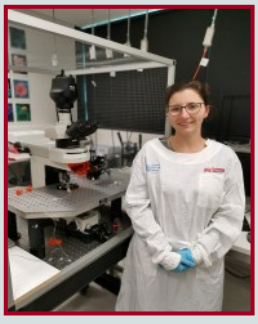
https://www.emjreviews.com/neurology/news/brain-connectivity-changes-in-chronic-fatigue-syndrome/

https://www.psypost.org/brain-scans-reveal-neural-connectivity-deficits-in-long-covid-and-me-cfs/

https://www.pressetext.com/news/20260129010

Maira's paper was also reported on by Professor Sonya Marshall-Gradisnik in News Medical Life Sciences, "People with ME/CFS and Long COVID experience disruption to brain connectivity: 29 January 2026":

https://www.news-medical.net/news/20260129/People-with-MECFS-and-Long-COVID-experience-disruption-to-brain-connectivity.aspx



Dr Etianne Martini Sasso—News coverage on paper 'Large Scale investigation confirms TRPM3 ion channel dysfunction in ME/CFS" :

https://www.news-medical.net/news/20260113/New-research-identifies-faulty-TRPM3-ion-channel-in-MECFS-immune-cells.aspx

https://www.nationaltribune.com.au/new-research-confirms-people-with-me-cfs-have-a-consistent-faulty-cellular-structure/

AUSTRALIAN GULF WAR 35TH REUNION

The Australian Gulf War Veteran Association (AGWVA), with the support of HomeFront Australia, held a special National Commemoration Event to commemorate and honour all who served in the Gulf War 1990-1991. This event took place at the National Maritime Museum, Sydney on 28th of February 2026, coinciding with the 35th Anniversary of the cessation of hostilities.

Our GWI research to date has already resulted in two peer-reviewed publications and three research awards. NCNED was represented at this event by Dr Natalie Eaton-Fitch, Dr Etianne Martini Sasso and Mrs Vivienne Baraniuk to encourage participants for two upcoming important studies. The first of which involves collecting detailed symptom data to enable us to comprehensively publish on the long-term health impacts of GWI. The second is recruiting new volunteers from northern New South Wales and Southeast Queensland to continue our calcium channel research. (For details on how to participate, contact ncned@grifith.edu.au.)

Congratulations to all involved for the organisation of this truly memorable event.

NCNED EMBARKS ON INTERSTATE RESEARCH

NCNED researchers were recently in Victoria collecting participant samples to expand our ion channel and immunological investigations in the fields of ME/CFS and long COVID. These samples contribute to research currently being undertaken by PhD candidate Urooj Ishrat.

Urooj's research using scRNA and in silico methods will help in identifying biomarkers which can be used for the diagnosis of ME/CFS and long COVID.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of sample processing and extend our gratitude to our hosts and collaborators at the Australian Rickettsial Reference Laboratory.

Our work is not possible without the participants who dedicate their time, energy and samples to this research.

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