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Faculty of Health Sciences

# Healthy Ageing

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# Healthy Ageing

A program of research focussed on advancing knowledge around the promotion and maintenance of health in our ageing population to keep them actively engaged in their community/workplace

The World Health Organisation defines healthy (active) ageing as “the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age”. At the School of Nursing, University of Adelaide, this program of research is focussed on advancing knowledge around the promotion and maintenance of health in our ageing population to keep them actively engaged in their community/workplace.

## Current Projects

### Trans-Disciplinary Frailty Research to Achieve Healthy Ageing Centre for Research Excellence

This is an NHMRC funded Centre for Research Excellence (CRE) investigating frailty, which can be characterised by many symptoms and signs such as a loss of muscle mass and strength (sarcopenia), decreased mobility and less endurance, slower movements and less activity. Frailty may lead to a loss of independence which is more common with ageing but not inevitable. The CRE brings together a national team of clinician and academic researchers and forges strong links to three international centres of excellence in frailty research. The CRE will provide new opportunities for the next generation of frailty clinicians and researchers and new research evidence to support the prevention and treatment of this hidden health issue will be developed. Professor Alison Kitson is a Chief Investigator, and Dr Tim Schultz is an Associate Investigator. Their roles will encompass knowledge translation and consumer

engagement across the CRE and investigation into the use of frailty screening tools in primary care.

### Ageing and Living Well Think Tank and Innovation Collaborative

In November 2015, the School of Nursing and the Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Innovation Centre hosted the inaugural Ageing and Living Well Think Tank and launched the South Australian Active Ageing Innovation Collaborative. The aim of the Think Tank, which was attended by over 150 participants, was to collaboratively develop innovative solutions to complex problems impacting healthy ageing policy and practice on topics such as finance; technology; lifestyle; healthcare informatics; medicine, gender and ageing; careers and work; the built environment; resource planning; person-centred care. Ideas, networks and collaborations developed from the Think Tank are being used to develop entrepreneurial solutions to the most important ‘wicked problems’ of active ageing through the SA Active Ageing Innovation Collaborative (AAIC). This exciting development for an inter-professional initiative to develop, advance, and support understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship in the delivery of Active Ageing concepts for ‘Boomers’ and transitions to Aged Care is proposed for South Australia in 2016 and beyond.

### Nutritional interventions for optimising healthy body composition in older adults in the community: an umbrella review of studies of effectiveness and qualitative perceptions and experiences

Optimising body composition for healthy ageing in the community is a significant challenge. There are a number of potential interventions available for older people to support both weight gain (for those who are underweight) and weight loss (for overweight or obese people). While the benefits of weight gain for underweight people are generally clearly defined, the value of weight loss in overweight or obese people is less clear,

particularly for older people. This umbrella review aimed to measure the effectiveness of nutritional interventions for optimising healthy body composition in older adults living in the community and to understand qualitative perceptions. Future work will focus on knowledge translation of the review findings into clinical practice and for consumers.

## Future Projects

There are a number of projected areas for growth from 2016-2020 for the Healthy Ageing Research Program. An example is the consolidation of existing partnerships between researchers, clinicians, local governments, health care funders and administrators to optimise the integrated care of older people between acute, primary and community care. This competitive research grant will examine two systems (in Adelaide and Brisbane). Other competitive grants will be sought to determine what is the quality of care received by people in residential aged care, and how can active ageing in the community be achieved through four integrating current knowledge and best practice in four main domains: medical assistive devices, nutrition, the built environment, and the active and engaged consumer.



## For further enquiries

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