

1.30 – 3.00 pm

New investigator 2

Mapping the Australian stroke research landscape: A scoping study for the new Australian Stroke Research Network

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Background and Aim: National Stroke Foundation and the Stroke Society of Australasia co-founded the Australian Stroke Research Network (ASRN) to build on existing networks and provide a platform for an expanded, more efficient and higher-impact national stroke research program. The aim of this study was to identify all individuals, collaborations and networks involved in stroke research across Australia, and individuals' perceived benefits of establishing the ASRN.

Method: An online survey was developed through consultation with the expert steering committee and pilot testing with 45 individuals. Survey data included researchers' demographics and education, current and previous affiliations, research expertise, location and field of collaborators, inclusion of consumer advisors, sources of research funds, and mentorship. The survey was disseminated through known professional networks, social media and key individuals. Full survey responses will be analysed by Social Network Mapping.

Results: 63 survey responses have been received: 40 females (63%), median age 36–45 years, median length of time involved in stroke research 5–10 years. 42% of respondents (26/62) have held >3 research roles in the past 5 years. 57% of respondents (27/47) reported that they collaborate with inter-state researchers. Perceived benefits of the ASRN included opportunities to identify collaborators and trial sites, sharing of knowledge and techniques, access to consumer consultants and mentorship. Updated survey results will be presented.

Conclusion: This survey has provided rich data to better understand collaborations and perceived gaps within Australian stroke research fields. The ASRN was overwhelming perceived as potentially beneficial to individual researchers and our national research output.

Sex differences in clinical characteristics and outcome after stroke: the HeadPoST trial

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Background: Women are more likely to present with severe deficits and have worse outcomes after stroke than men. We investigated potential sex differences in clinical characteristics and outcome among participants of the Head Position in Stroke Trial (HeadPoST).

Methods: The HeadPoST study compared the effectiveness of lying flat (0°) compared to sitting up (≥30°) head positioning, initiated within 24 h of hospital admission for patients with acute stroke. It was an international, pragmatic, cluster-randomised, crossover, open, blinded outcome assessed clinical trial. Each hospital with an established acute stroke unit site was required to recruit up to 140 consecutive cases of acute stroke (one phase of head positioning before immediately crossing over to the other phase of head positioning), including both acute ischaemic stroke and intracerebral haemorrhage, in each randomised head position as a 'business as usual' policy. The sex differences in baseline clinical characteristics and outcomes at 90 days after stroke were evaluated using the Chi-square test for categorical variables and the Student t-test or Wilcoxon test for continuous variables. The sex differences in outcomes were ascertained by logistic regression models.

Results: Among 11,093 randomised participants, 4,429 (40%) were female.

Conclusion: Due to journal embargo of the main results paper, details of this analysis cannot be released as of abstract submission but will be ready for presentation during the conference.