



Planetary Health Projects

1. Protective and risk factors for mental health concerns in older adults affected by climate change

Global climate change (GCC) is widely recognised as a serious public health issue for human health and wellbeing across the lifespan, from a national perspective in Australia and internationally in Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The effects of GCC on physical health are well documented as increases in infectious diseases, respiratory disorders, heat-related morbidity and mortality, undernutrition due to food insecurity, and other adverse health outcomes. The impact of GCC is detrimental to physical and mental health in all populations given its astounding effects on the social, environmental, and ecological determinants of health, resulting in increased risk to air quality, available clean drinking water and food sources, housing and shelter; further widening health disparities in rural, remote and developing regions. The consequences and threat to older adults includes worsening of existing health conditions, acquiring new health challenges and overall, increased likelihood of comorbidity and mortality. Given these consequences of GCC can have the most detrimental effects to the overall health and wellbeing of older adults, less evidence has been documented regarding the ongoing long-term psychological effects. The aim of this PhD project is to contribute to the development of methods and approaches for protecting older adults against the effects of climate change on their psychological health and wellbeing. This PhD will form part of a wider research programme called Psychological Health across the Lifespan (PHALS) – Clim Change

This project's key objectives include:

- Identifying older adults (vulnerable and resilient) to the psychological consequences of climate change specifically extreme weather events, i.e., rising temperatures and heat waves; increased rainfall and flooding.
- Developing a reablement model of care, facilitating older adults living in regions affected by extreme weather events in taking precautions and regular monitoring of mental health status.
- Providing opportunity for older adults to have a voice in climate change and identify internalised ageism
- Contribute towards developing an education program for health professions on screening older adults' psychological health status living in regions at risk for severe weather events.
- Be part of a campaign on the promotion to urgent action on the mental health risks for older adults affected by extreme weather events in Australia and neighbouring regions.

2. *The value of socioecological determinants on the lives of older adults from a healthy ageing and well-being perspective*

Project aims

- To develop a framework for understanding the social determinants of health from the perspective of mental health and then to build this concept through the understanding of what are socio-ecological determinants of health and why their understanding/underpinnings may be useful in the context of mental health with a specific focus on older adults.

- For example, building smart cities for older adults is an ecological factor example and may be a focus to consider when a broader understanding of socio-ecological determinants and their relationship to mental health (in older adults) has been established.

Research priority area: Health assessment and technology including clinical guidelines, healthy ageing

Project level: MBR

Supervisor(s): Professor Claire Donnellan

Project start date: Ongoing