

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Reducing Pain and Distress

**Dr Kathryn Nicholson Perry of the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Associate Professor Federico Girosi of the School of Medicine, along with Dr Blake Dear of Macquarie University and Professor Michael Nicholas of the University of Sydney and Associate Professor Fiona Blyth are developing an automated psychological screening tool and practical information packages to help prevent chronic pain and trauma following a motor vehicle accident. This research has been funded by the NSW Government through the Motor Accidents Authority.**

'Motor vehicle accidents are unfortunately all too common in Australia,' says Dr Nicholson Perry. 'And a proportion of accidents result in people suffering chronic pain from injuries. To complicate matters, some people not only experience pain but also post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This can in turn exacerbate pain and effective treatment can become very complex. This is costly for both the people affected and the community and PTSD may not emerge until quite some time after the initial trauma. There is some indication, however, that early screening and detection, combined with targeted early intervention can improve the outcomes of those affected. If pain and stress can be well-managed early enough, this may be enough to prevent the development of PTSD and/or chronic, disabling pain. This project will assess an automated online screening tool for people at risk of developing chronic pain and/or PTSD following a motor vehicle accident. An early intervention package will also be developed for those identified as at risk in order to enhance their recovery from a traumatic motor vehicle accident.'

Phase 1 will test and refine a pilot online screening tool and intervention through participant feedback. Phase 2 will conduct a randomised, controlled trial that will involve 200 participants who have recently been involved



in a motor vehicle accident. Some will receive an early intervention package and some will receive one later. Analysis of how effective the trial is will occur with follow up surveys three and six months later.

Pain following a motor vehicle accident is challenging enough for the victims and their loved ones, but worse when combined with post-traumatic stress. Without enough help, these conditions can become chronic and disabling and costly to the health care system. This project will design online psychological screening tools and intervention packages to help prevent or minimise these disorders, potentially saving a lot of suffering and cost for Australians and their community.

**Project Title:** Risk Assessment and Delivery of a Low Intensity Intervention for Pain and Anxiety Following Motor Vehicle Accidents.

**Funding has been set at:** \$281,983

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