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MEDIA RELEASE

“Have you ever had Polio?” The key question to ask patients

400,000+ Australians have had Polio, however, the public and medical professionals often think of it as a disease of the past which could be leading to misdiagnosis.

Decades after the poliomyelitis epidemics in Australia, the aftermath of the disease is now becoming evident in our ageing ‘polio population’.

An estimated 400,000 people may be experiencing the Late Effects of Polio (LEoP) or Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS). A younger population who have migrated to Australia also require management and support.

For older patients presenting in clinics with increasing muscle weakness, increasing or new pain or multifactorial fatigue and decline, Polio SA president Brett Howard advises health professionals to ask, ‘Have you ever had polio?’.

“It is common that those who had Polio when they were younger, like myself, have fought hard to overcome Polio and simply aren’t aware of the late effects of the disease. So, when weakness and pain return, it can be hard to face”, says Howard.

PPS tends to be more noticeable as people begin to age, says Dr Nigel Quadros, Senior Consultant, Rehabilitation Medicine at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital and a specialist in PPS.

“Having polio in the past may contribute significantly to multifactorial decline and fatigue that often presents among ageing patient populations. People who contracted Polio in Australia are now in their 60s at the youngest – and will hopefully enjoy a long life thanks to modern medicine. So they are going to have more problems related to the effects of Polio.”

Where PPS is suspected, a proper medical evaluation to identify and treat reversible causes of fatigue and weakness, such as diabetes, or thyroid disease is advised.

There are minimal studies showing any benefit of medications to treat fatigue and weakness in post-polio patients. The main advice is lifestyle modification – healthy diet, losing weight, and energy conservation. Adapting clinical practices to the suit post-polio body is essential to prolong daily functional ability.

“Doing tasks you are able to do, knowing your limits and having frequent breaks is really important for polio survivors because they were real go-getters – they had to prove as youngsters that they could keep up and to find that suddenly they can’t anymore can be difficult”, says Dr Quadros.

Allied and other Health Professionals supporting patients who have ever had polio can visit PolioSA.org.au/health-professionals to access clinical practice guidelines, and register for Polio Australia’s upcoming Clinical Practice Workshops.

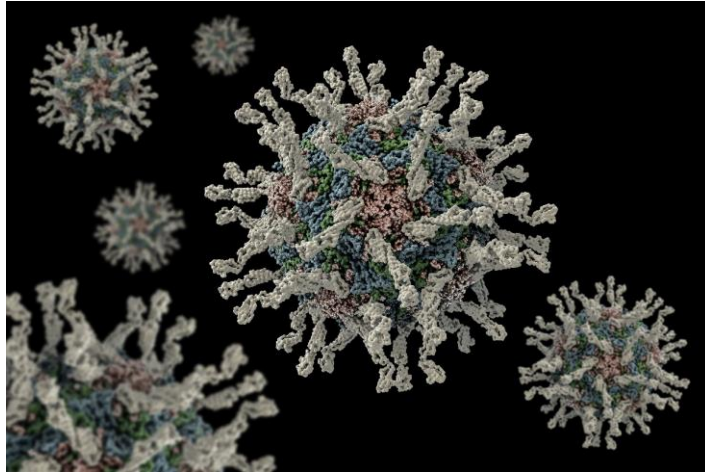


Image of human Polio virus



Brett Howard (president) and Peter Wieringa (treasurer) of Polio SA

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For further information, hi-res photos & interviews please contact:

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Interviews and photo opportunities on request, with:

- Dr Nigel Quadros
- Brett Howard, Polio SA president and polio survivor

ABOUT POLIO SA:

Polio SA is a not for profit organisation operated by volunteers. All staff and members have had polio or have a family relative diagnosed with post-polio syndrome (PPS). PPS is the late effect of polio, usually occurring 20 to 40 years after the initial infection. Not all people who previously had polio will experience new symptoms.

Our aim is to:

- provide information about the late effects of polio and PPS to members and the greater community
- provide a supportive network through consultations, referrals and social gatherings, and
- ensure that Polio SA members are aware of their rights regarding their disability.

We provide the following services:

- mutual support through group meetings

- access to discounted health services including massage and hydrotherapy (see our website for details of current services)
- newsletters keeping members up to date with local and international developments
- access to a wide range of relevant information, and
- connecting people with similar interests.

Country groups Previously there were polio support groups in rural South Australia, however to our knowledge these are no longer active. All Polio SA resources are available to our rural members, including books, fact sheets, past newsletters, and personal stories.

Further information about the GTRAC study *Prevalence of sarcopenia (muscle loss) and frailty in post-polio patients*

Project Title	Prevalence of sarcopenia (muscle loss) and frailty in post-polio patients
HREC Approval Number	Q20170810
Principal Investigator	Dr Kandiah Umapathysivam
Associate Investigators	Dr Nigel Quadros, Dr Anupam Datta Gupta, Assoc. Professor Solomon Yu and Professor Renuka Visvanathan
Location	The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (TQEH) and Basil Hetzel Research Institute (BHI)

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