

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR HEALTH



Welcome

Welcome to this Summer selection of news from Team ReaCH!

The applied health research outlined in this issue clearly illustrates how we address our mission to enhance the lives of people with long-term health conditions and improve public health, and shows how working with communities and partners is essential to turn our research into action. As always, we showcase achievements from PhD researchers, early career researchers and mid career researchers through to our senior research leaders, demonstrating how ReaCH is a centre of excellence with an engaging and supportive research community. Don't miss the report from the Glasgow Science Festival, with the theme 'Glasgow Celebrates'.

Our new 'PROPEL' leadership and development programme helps support our leading midcareer researchers. The inaugural Propel cohort (pictured below) already have impressive research track records and have engaged with the programme with insight and enthusiasm. Propel sessions have focused on leadership, developing University research strategies with Professor Andrea Nelson (PVC-R, GCU) and Professor Chris Pearce (VP Research and Knowledge Exchange, University of Glasgow), and discussions with our Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and Jan Hulme, GCU University Secretary and Vice-Principal Governance of GCU.

Finally, we have enjoyed meeting with two impressive new GCU leaders, introducing them to our world-leading ReaCH research and hearing about their plans for our University. Yvette Hopkins is GCU's Chair of Court, responsible for the leadership of Court (which is GCU's governing body) and setting the strategic direction of GCU together with the Principal. She is a former career US intelligence officer and more recently worked on establishing a Scottish vertical launch spaceport. Dr Alison McIntosh is the inaugural Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services, and was previously Director of the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance where she significantly increased international research partnerships, Scottish university engagement, and industry contacts. Both expressed great enthusiasm for ReaCH research and aims and we look forward to working with them in the future.

We hope you enjoy hearing all the news and sharing it with colleagues, and are planning some well earned time off over the summer!

**Professor Carol Emslie and Professor Frederike van Wijck,
Co-Directors of ReaCH**

(Photo shows PROPEL leadership and development programme)

CONTENTS

2 - LATEST NEWS

6 - EVENTS

11 - SELECTED PUBLICATIONS



Glasgow Caledonian psychology and computing experts team up with SAMH to boost mental health services across Scotland

Two Glasgow Caledonian University departments have secured £370,000 of Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) funding to work with Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) to develop new clinical AI tools to expand the vital services.

Project lead Dr Bryan McCann, School of Health and Life Sciences (SHLS) Department of Psychology Senior Lecturer, will work with Dr Dawn Carmichael, Software Engineering Lecturer, in the School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment (SCEBE) Department of Computing, who will lead the computing team. Other staff members involved are Dr Lindsey Burns, Dr Jane Guiller and Dr Fidan Fraser, from the Department of Psychology, and Professor Huaglory Tianfield and Dr Yan Zhang, from the Department of Computing.



The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Innovate UK funding will pay for two KTP Associates from psychology and computing, who will be based at the SAMH charity in Glasgow. They will spend two years delivering the project. The aim of the project is to develop a psychologically-informed, AI-driven service user digital gateway to support SAMH's in-person and online mental health services, which will improve access to mental health support across the country. The KTP marks the next step of Glasgow Caledonian's strategic partnership with SAMH, building on Dr McCann's work developing the 'Time for You' service and supporting SAMH's Psychological Wellbeing strategy for the past five years.

[Read more](#)



Psychology research tackles Scotland's growing opioid crisis

Glasgow Caledonian University psychology researcher Dr Martha Canfield has secured £125,000 to tackle Scotland's growing opioid crisis through innovative data science.

Her research will explore how patients prescribed pain medications like morphine and tramadol develop opioid use disorder (OUD), a serious condition affecting thousands of Scots. Despite being widely prescribed for pain relief, these medications offer limited benefits for chronic conditions while carrying significant risks.

The funding has been awarded to Dr Canfield through the Academy of Medical Science's Springboard programme. This year the Academy has invested its largest ever investment of £7.6 million in research tackling urgent health challenges. Dr Canfield's project will analyse Scotland's national electronic health records to identify patterns and risk factors that lead to dependency. By combining this data analysis with patient interviews, she aims to develop a ground-breaking digital risk prediction tool that could transform how healthcare providers identify vulnerable patients before problems develop. This research addresses a critical healthcare challenge in a country particularly affected by opioid-related harms and could provide doctors and pharmacists with practical solutions for safer prescribing practices during their limited consultation time.

[Read more](#)





Microbiologists secure almost £400,000 in funding for ground-breaking research

Glasgow Caledonian University's microbiology team have secured almost £400,000 in funding from the UK Research and Innovation National Biofilms Innovation Centre (NBIC) and industrial partners to support ground-breaking research on microbial biofilms.

This funding for the Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences and the Safeguarding Health through Infection Prevention (SHIP) Research Group will help tackle real-world challenges by bringing together academic experts and industry collaborators. The NBIC, established in 2017 and partnered with Glasgow Caledonian since 2020, is a UK-wide centre funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and Innovate UK. It supports research into microbial biofilms. Biofilms are communities of one or more types of microorganisms which cause a slimy build-up of bacteria and fungi that can grow on many different surfaces, such as medical devices (e.g. dentures, bladder catheters and prosthetic joints), and cause infection. Infection from biofilms are difficult to diagnose and treat. Left untreated, they can lead to life-threatening infections and sepsis.

The funding will support two PhD studentships and two postdoctoral researchers at Glasgow Caledonian, funded across three separate grants. This work is led by microbiologists in the School of Health and Life Sciences - Professor Gordon Ramage, Dr William Johnston, Dr Ryan Kean and Dr John Butcher. The projects cover a broad range of biofilm-related conditions, including denture stomatitis, chronic wound infections and bacterial vaginosis.

[Read more](#)

Glasgow Caledonian to develop next generation of international social innovation leaders

A new Data2Action network has been launched by Glasgow Caledonian University to develop the next generation of international social innovation leaders.



Experts from all three Schools are behind the network which will train 13 doctoral Fellows from across the EU to ethically and responsibly develop state-of-the-art data science and artificial intelligence (AI) for social good. Data2Action is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie European Doctoral Network programme, funded by Horizon Europe, uniting social innovation with data science and AI for the common good. Its aim is to make emerging technology work harder for humanity, enabling researchers to co-create a healthier, fairer and more sustainable world for all. Data2Action, led by Professor Sebastien Chastin and Dr Niamh Smith, from the School of Health and Life Sciences (SHLS) Research Centre for Health (ReaCH), will train the next generation of leaders in data science, AI and social innovation, through research training, mentoring, networking and collaboration with industry and the third sector. Glasgow Caledonian will host three of the 13 PhDs within Data Science for Common Good Research Group (led by Professor Chastin), and the research Fellows will work across the University's research centres. The programme will run until January 2029. Find out more about the project - www.data2action.eu.





Scientists discover new pathway to prevent diet-related liver cancer

Glasgow Caledonian University scientists have discovered a new scientific pathway to prevent fatty liver disease, caused by Western diet high in fat and sugar, from progressing to deadly liver cancer.

The team, working with the Cancer Research UK (CRUK) Scotland Institute in Glasgow and The Francis Crick Institute in London, has published their potentially life-saving research 'p53 and TIGAR promote redox control to protect against metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis' in *JHep Reports*, a leading journal in the field of Gastroenterology and Hepatology.

Liver cancer is a widespread and lethal condition, particularly prevalent in Scotland. Cases arising from underlying fatty liver disease, caused by the overconsumption of a fat and sugar rich diet, are on the rise. Currently no effective therapies exist to stop the progression of fatty liver disease to liver cancer as there is still a lack of understanding of the mechanisms involved.

Cancer experts in the School of Health and Life Sciences' Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, the CRUK Scotland Institute, and The Francis Crick Institute, previously identified the tumour suppressor gene p53 as crucial in protecting the liver against toxins. Now they have built on that work by discovering that p53 also protects the liver from the damaging effects of a high-fat, high-sugar diet. The team delved even deeper to find out how p53 actually carries out its protective effects. Scientists found this is through a target gene downstream of p53, known as TIGAR, which acts as an antioxidant and detoxifies lipids in a fatty liver.

[Read more](#)

Professor helps to shape Women's Health Plan for Scotland

Glasgow Caledonian Professor of Health Services Research Suzanne Hagen is helping to shape the Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan.

She was invited on to the Pelvic Health Expert Reference Group by the Women's Health Champion for Scotland, Professor Anna Glasier OBE, and will be working with policymakers on improving pelvic health for Scottish women.

Professor Hagen, from the School of Health and Life Sciences, said: "It means an opportunity to work with policymakers to shape the Women's Health Plan for Scotland, which sets priorities and actions for NHS Scotland, in the area of pelvic health.



Being invited to be on to the Pelvic Health Expert Reference Group by the Women's Health Champion for Scotland is a great privilege. I look forward to working with the leading pelvic health clinicians in Scotland, and to sharing our research, to improve women's lives."

[Read more](#)



Glasgow Caledonian develops new VR games to help improve the lives of people with MS

Virtual reality (VR) rehabilitation games have been developed by researchers at Glasgow Caledonian University to improve the lives of people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) across Scotland.



Dr Amy Webster, supported by Professor Lorna Paul, in the School of Health and Life Sciences, has been collaborating with Dr Matt Poyade, from the Glasgow School of Art, and Dr Niall McDougall, from NHS Lanarkshire, to create the new games.

MS is a condition that can affect the brain and spinal cord, causing a wide range of potential symptoms, including problems with vision, arm or leg movement, fatigue or balance. Scotland has the highest rates of MS in the world with more than 15,000 people living with the condition and the University has been at the forefront of ground-breaking research into the disease for years.

Dr Webster was funded by the MS Society through a PhD studentship to investigate how suitable these VR games are for rehabilitation and how helpful they are to people with MS who find it difficult to use their arms and hands. The team have been working with a number of participants to test the VR games and get feedback from people who live with the condition. People taking part use headsets to enter these virtual realities where scenes and objects appear to be real. For example, making it look like you're floating in space. The games Dr Webster and partners developed for the study include playing a virtual piano, whack-a-mole and catch-a-falling-star. They're designed to be fun and engaging. Amy hopes this will help with motivation and one participant, Lauren Forrester, described the project as a "game-changer".

[Read more](#)

Health Secretary Neil Gray visits Glasgow Caledonian University

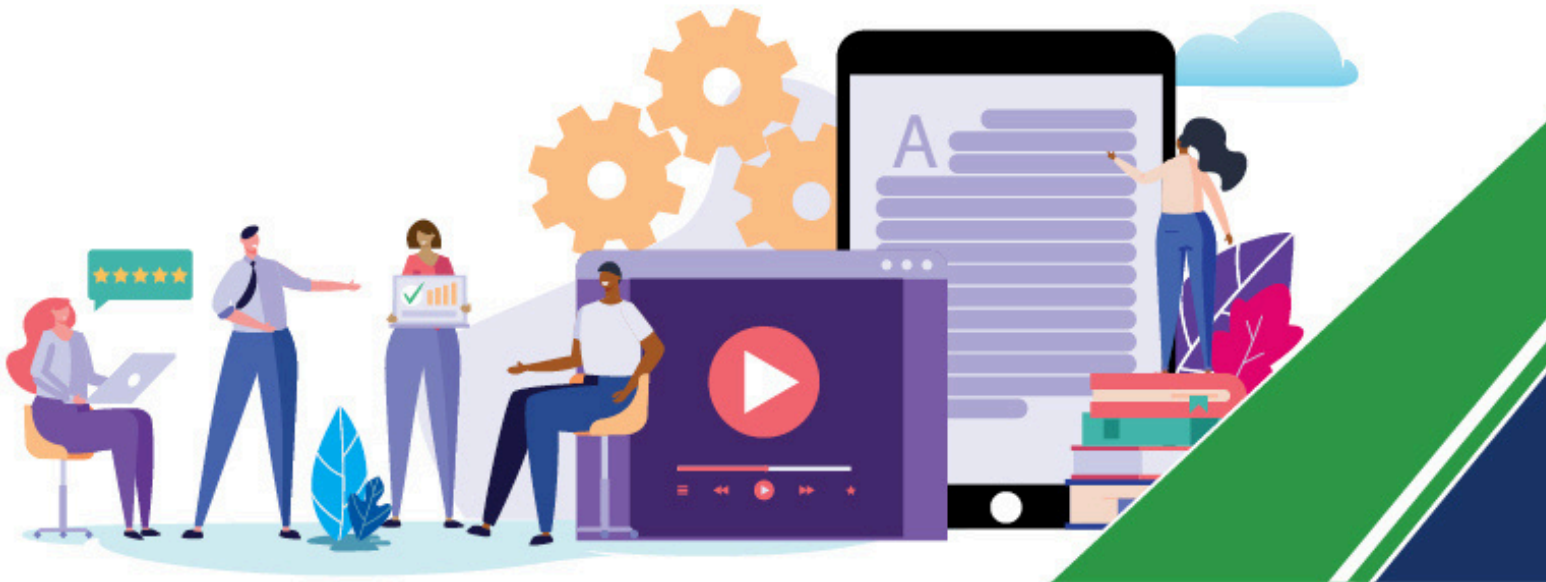


Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care Neil Gray paid a visit to GCU in May. He was welcomed by the University's Pro Vice-Chancellor Engagement Caroline Bysh and Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences (SHLS) Professor Anita Simmers. During the visit, Mr Gray was given a tour of the SHLS state-of-the-art nursing and allied health professions (AHP) simulation centre, which looks and feels like a real hospital with adult and paediatric wards, an emergency room, and X-ray, radiotherapy and home environment suites where he met staff and students.

Mr Gray, who is also MSP for Airdrie and Shotts, additionally learned more about widening access, skills and graduate employment, practice-based learning recovery, future workforce demands, the impact of health research, and the University's ambitions around primary and community health care.

[Read more](#)





Conferences and events

A round-up of all the latest and forthcoming event news from the Research Centre for Health.

Professor of Stroke Care and Rehabilitation leads first European aphasia-specific guidelines

Glasgow Caledonian's Professor of Stroke Care and Rehabilitation Marian Brady led the development of the world's first aphasia-specific guidelines launched at the ESOC 2025 - European Stroke Organisation Conference in Helsinki on May 22.



She headed up the European Stroke Organisation's guideline-development committee, a group of multi-disciplinary aphasia experts from 10 different countries. Glasgow Caledonian Senior Research Fellow Dr Pauline Campbell, a specialist in systematic reviewing and quality appraisal, was also involved in the working group.

As the first evidence-based European-wide recommendations, the guidelines outline the minimum standards of effective stroke-related aphasia rehabilitation delivery for health professionals.

Professor Brady is a speech and language therapist and stroke rehabilitation expert who specialises in aphasia research. Aphasia, a speech problem caused by damage in the language area of the brain, affects about 50,600 stroke survivors in the UK every year.

The guidelines, also published in the European Stroke Journal, recommend specific minimum intensity, frequency and dosage of therapy for aphasia after a stroke, in addition to recommendations relating to use of technology, group work and tailoring of interventions to the individual.

[Read more](#)



Neurological Rehabilitation Professor showcases stroke research on international stage

Professor of Neurological Rehabilitation Frederike van Wijck in the School for Health and Life Sciences took centre stage to showcase important stroke research at a European conference in the historic city of Maastricht.



She was invited to share her expertise with the 450-strong audience from 39 countries at the Congress on Neurorehabilitation and Neural Repair, which brings together healthcare professionals, researchers and educators from Dutch, German, Belgian and UK neurological rehabilitation organisations.

Professor van Wijck, also Co-Director of the Research Centre for Health (ReaCH), encouraged delegates to reflect on how rehabilitation could be designed better to enable stroke survivors, whose lives have been disrupted existentially, to learn skills that are meaningful and to reconfigure their identity in a positive way.

Her talk was based on research carried out by former PhD researchers Dr Julie Duncan Millar, Dr Joe Hall and Dr Stefanie Schnabel, and their supervisory teams including Dr Myzoon Ali, Professor Alex Todhunter-Brown, Dr Helena Bassil-Morozow and Professor Lisa Kidd, from the ReaCH Stroke and Neurological Rehabilitation Research Group (SYNERGY), and external collaborators.

Professor van Wijck said: "The joy of working with colleagues who contribute different perspectives is that they not only add novel pieces to the complex jigsaw that constitutes 'life after stroke', but also new lenses through which we can develop a deeper understanding of the bigger picture that emerges." Interdisciplinary working, across biomedical sciences, the humanities and media is vital to understand how we can best design person-centred, evidence-based rehabilitation, and I feel privileged to be able to collaborate with such an abundance of talented and dedicated PhD researchers and colleagues."

Best Oral Communication Prize for PhD researcher Davide Corbetta

An international survey has highlighted what matters most in walking recovery after stroke.

Davide Corbetta (pictured right), a PhD researcher supervised by Professor Alex Todhunter-Brown, Dr Pauline Campbell, and Professor Frederike van Wijck (all members of the Stroke and Neurological Rehabilitation research group (SYNERGY)), investigated stakeholder perspectives to identify priority outcomes in stroke rehabilitation focused on walking, using an online survey. More than 250 respondents from 18 countries took part.



"Walking independently" emerged as the top priority, followed by "keeping balance while walking" and "improving walking quality". Co-authored with researchers from the UK, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and Australia, the study will inform an upcoming Cochrane overview on rehabilitative interventions for walking after stroke. Davide presented the findings at the "X Italian Association of Physiotherapy (AIFI) International Conference - Therapeutic Exercise in Neurorehabilitation" in Genoa, Italy, where he received the Best Oral Communication Prize-PhD Students for his presentation.



Health Psychology Professor brings international paediatric pain conference to Glasgow

Chronic pain expert Professor of Health Psychology Jo McParland played a key role in bringing the International Symposium on Paediatric Pain (ISPP 2025) to Glasgow this year.

Professor McParland Co-Chaired the Local Organising Committee, which helped put together the hugely successful four-day in June alongside the Scientific Programme Committee. The main three-day conference was held at the SEC Centre and Glasgow Caledonian hosted a Pain Education Day.

The Pain Education Day was a standalone event on campus, focusing on real-world, interdisciplinary and community-based approaches to pain care. Professor McParland welcomed 200 delegates from around the world, including the USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Singapore and Hong Kong. The programme involved people from a range of disciplines and backgrounds, from early career researchers, seasoned clinicians and researchers to representatives from third sector organisations and people with lived experience of pain as well as those experienced in supporting young people with pain.

At the main conference, 570 delegates from 43 countries attended, bringing together paediatricians, anaesthetists, clinicians, researchers, nurses, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and professionals and scholars from other disciplines. The audience were given an insight into the latest research in the management of acute, procedural, and chronic pain. A conference civic reception, attended by more than 300 delegates, was held at the Glasgow City Chambers where Bailie Anthony Carroll welcomed delegates and Professor McParland gave a speech thanking the City of Glasgow for hosting ISPP 2025.



Other events

Highlights from conferences and events over the last few months.



Members of the Substance Use research group presented their work at the KBS International Alcohol Conference





Glasgow Science Festival 2025: Glasgow Celebrates, 5th to 15th June

This year, Glasgow turns 850 years old, the perfect excuse for a party! To mark the occasion, Glasgow Science Festival will run from the 5th to 15th June 2025 with the theme 'Glasgow Celebrates'. Taking inspiration from the city coat of arms and poem- Here's the tree that never grew, here's the bird that never flew, here's the bell that never rang, here's the fish that never swam. Check out some of the ways GCU ReaCH researchers got involved in this year's Glasgow Science festival celebrations,

Mock murder trial proves a real hit with true crime buffs

A sell-out mock murder trial at Glasgow Caledonian University where true crime buffs were given the chance to sit on a jury and give their verdicts to an expert panel has proved a real hit.

Conviction or Acquittal: The Science of Jury Decision Making, a Glasgow Science Festival event, was hosted by Dr Lee John Curley, Lecturer in Applied Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University, and Dr Hayley Ness, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at The Open University in Scotland.

Dr Curley said he was delighted with the turnout and feedback from the local community who attended the event on Monday night (June 9) to step into the shoes of jurors to decide whether to convict or acquit the accused.

The 70-strong audience was split into nine jury groups to watch a mock murder trial unfold and present their verdicts to an expert panel. The trial was based on a real 1909 Glasgow High Court case where a man was accused of killing his wife.

Throughout the trial, the jury groups were supported by Forensic Psychology MSc students Lucy Hoffman, Katy Rymill and Caitlin Anderson, and Counselling Psychology doctoral student Tom Sadler, a former clerk of court. The expert panel featured Dr Curley, solicitor and OU Lecturer Gillian Mawdsley, Glasgow Caledonian Senior Lecturer in Law Dr Andrew Tickell, and leading criminal counsel Tony Lenahan KC, who discussed the verdicts, and the key themes and challenges in jury trials, before taking audience questions.

[Read More](#)



Scientists bring cutting-edge research to Glasgow pub for the global Pint of Science Festival

Researchers from Glasgow Caledonian University' School of Health and Life Sciences teamed up with the University of Glasgow and the Cancer Research UK Scotland Institute for three evenings of science, stories and pints as part of the global Pint of Science Festival.



Glasgow Caledonian cancer experts Drs Jenny Crowe and Tim Humpton, alongside PhD students Celine Wittke, from Glasgow Caledonian, and Lucy Somerville, from the University of Glasgow and Cancer Research UK Scotland, organised a series of 'Our Body' themed events in May. The events brought together experts and curious minds in an informal setting to explore the wonders - and oddities - of human biology, health, and medicine.

Event highlights included:

Health and Wellbeing: From the Weight Loss Revolution to Bugs. Learning about the science behind breakthrough weight-loss and diabetes treatments like Ozempic, how your eyesight might be improved with novel approaches, and the surprising ways microbes can jump species, featuring Glasgow Caledonian researchers Drs Steven Patterson, Mhairi Day, Stephanie Kearney and Emma Dow, and the University of Glasgow's Dr Amit Meir. **Bench to Bedside: How Are New Drugs Discovered, Tested, and Produced?** Discovering how cutting-edge drugs move from research labs to real-world treatments in a fascinating night of biomedical innovation, featuring talks from Merck's Global Technical Service Team Leader Jamie Sroka, and Glasgow Caledonian Professor Gordon Ramage and PhD student Glen Watt.

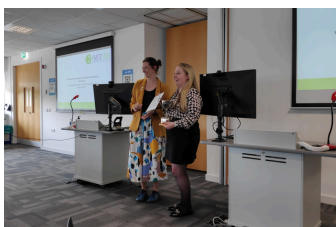
Dr Crowe said: "The Pint of Science Festival is always great fun and is all about making science fun, accessible and sparking conversation. Whether you're into medicine, microbes, or just a weird and wonderful science story, there's something for everyone!"

[Read more](#)

PhD viva success

Congratulations to the following students on successfully defending their PhD theses:

- Danielle Agnello, How to Co-create: A Compendium of Methods for Co-Creating Solutions to Complex and Wicked Problems in Public Health
- Atharva Bhagwat, Global Insights on Usual Care in Speech and Language Therapy for Aphasia After Stroke: A Systematic Review, International Survey, and Qualitative Study
- Jodie McGarry, A qualitative exploration of young women's experiences of gambling and drinking
- Matilde Pieri, HEADS:UP Aphasia: Helping Ease Anxiety and Depression following Stroke related Aphasia: co-creating an aphasia-friendly mindfulness course
- Anna Spiesová, Let Glasgow Flourish: Developing a capability-based approach for the implementation of Glasgow's Wellbeing Economy



Congratulations to Naomi Clark on winning the Three Minute Thesis competition at GCU with her presentation entitled: 'Mind the (practice) gap: supporting stroke survivors to sustain a mindfulness practice following a mindfulness-based intervention.' Naomi delivered her impassioned talk, based on her research as part of the HEADS: UP programme, with boldness, clarity and precision, with her signature enthusiasm and flair.





Selected Publications

Some of the latest selected publications from GCU staff are listed below. To view an article, please click on the title.

- Behaviour change interventions to promote physical activity in people with intermittent claudication: the OPTIMA systematic review
- Challenges and opportunities for falls prevention across Europe: an online survey across European healthcare professionals
- Effectiveness of the Safe Step Digital Exercise Program to Prevent Falls in Older Community-Dwelling Adults: Randomized Controlled Trial
- European Stroke Organisation (ESO) guideline on aphasia rehabilitation.
- Factors influencing fall prevention programmes across three regions of the UK: the challenge of implementing and spreading the Falls Management Exercise (FaME) programme in a complex landscape
- Falls prevention in community-dwelling older adults and implementation of world falls guidelines: a call for action across Europe by the European Geriatric Medicine Society Special Interest Group on Falls and Fractures
- Real-Life Physical Activity in Community-Dwelling Older Adults over a Year with Changes in COVID-19 Restrictions in Norway
- Being, Doing, Deciding: Cisheteronormativity, Bodily Autonomy, and Mental Health Support for LGBTQ+ Young People

SHIP Blog

[Catch-up on the latest blog](#) from the Safeguarding Health through Infection Prevention (SHIP) research group including:

- *My Personal Road to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)*

NESSIE Blog

[Read the latest blog](#) from the NIHR Synthesis Scotland Initiative (NESSIE) including:

- *NESSIE celebrates two years of evidence syntheses!*

SHAAP Blog

[Read the latest SHAAP blog](#) with Beth Meadows writing about her PhD research exploring alcohol free nightlife for LGBTQIA communities:

- *Are you being served? PhD research project exploring alcohol-free nightlife spaces for LGBTQIA+ communities*