

# Doctors in Training Grant

## PRELIMINARY REPORT



With my PhD supervisor Associate Professor Vasi Naganathan (on the left)

### Dr Janani Thillainadesan

**Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) – Optimising care of older surgical patients**

**University of Sydney and Concord Repatriation General Hospital**  
Sydney, NSW, Australia



In March 2018 I enrolled in a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the University of Sydney. Six months later, I can say I am learning a lot and having great fun. My passion for the care of older individuals began as a medical student, sparked by my clinical interactions with this resilient population who have borne life's hardships and share with us their remarkable experiences. I love the diversity and complexity of Geriatric Medicine, and believe there is a growing need for holistic evidence-based care for the older person.

I completed my Advanced Training in Geriatric Medicine at the end of 2017. My long term ambition is to build and grow myself as an academic geriatrician. Completion of this PhD is a fundamental step in the process of becoming an academic clinician and clinical researcher. My PhD studies will explore the care of older patients under the care of surgical teams and the role of geriatric medicine in optimising their care.

My research is based at the Centre for Education and Research on Ageing (CERA) at Concord Hospital, under the supervision of Associate Professor Vasi Naganathan and co-supervision by Professor Sarah Hilmer. Vasi and Sarah are leading academic geriatricians with over 150 publications each, and are lead investigators on current trials. And they are the friendliest, most supportive and inspiring supervisors! I have also had the opportunity to meet with other leaders in the field through conference meetings.

I am developing my research skills and experience through coursework. I completed the Johns Hopkins "Statistical Reasoning for Public Health 1: Estimation, Inference, & Interpretation", an online statistical methods course. I have attended workshops on research methods and implementation science, and completed Good Clinical Practice Training (GCP). This year I also converted my research projects undertaken as part of my Advanced Training into publications in peer-reviewed journals.

My PhD on optimising the care of older surgical patients comprises four main studies, though like most research the study methodologies are expected to evolve. One of the starting points in developing a surgical-geriatric medicine model of care is to gain a better understanding of any models of care currently in place. Thus, for my first study I designed an electronic survey that I distributed to all heads of Geriatric Medicine departments across Australia and New Zealand to ascertain what services are currently in place. The survey is coming to a close, with an encouraging 78% response rate already.

I am now conducting telephone interviews with a subgroup of these geriatricians to gain more insight on the topic. I am also undertaking a systematic review of the existing evidence for geriatric-medicine based interventions in non-orthopaedic surgical patients. The screening stage is almost complete and data extraction will be the next step. For my third study I am undertaking a descriptive study of older patients with peripheral vascular disease. This study involves analysing the data from the Concord Health and Ageing in Men Project (CHAMP) cohort, one of the world's largest studies of older men now in its 11th year.

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Finally, I am writing up the research proposal for my main study which will be a pre- and post-intervention study of an integrated multidisciplinary vascular-geriatric liaison service for older vascular surgery inpatients at Concord Hospital. The Geriatric Medicine department at Concord Hospital will be introducing this new service and my study will involve prospective data collection during this period to determine the characteristics and evaluate the outcomes of these patients before and after introduction of the service.

*With the support of MIGA's Doctors in Training Grant I have the great opportunity to undertake this PhD, through which I am developing the skills and expertise required for my future career as a clinical and translational researcher in Geriatric Medicine.*



With the Concord Health and Ageing in Men Project (CHAMP) research team

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