



Headway Community Newsletter, August 2024

As we welcome the first hints of Spring, we also welcome new Headway team members alongside new members of our rapidly growing Headway community.

The new team members have come on board in response to the community's clear message around gaps in community support for whānau, younger adults, and our South Auckland communities. PJ, Margot, and Tash bring expertise and focus to these vital areas.

We are grateful to all our community members who support us in various ways. We value the input and advice from so many experts, both those with lived experience and professionals. Your guidance helps us in our mission to create an inclusive and understanding society where everyone impacted by brain injury is empowered to live their best lives. Your support is especially important in these times of challenge for communities and community organisations. Together we are better.

Growing Connections Symposium: A Resounding Success



Our inaugural, sold-out Growing Connections Symposium took place at AUT in April, in collaboration with the Neurological Foundation of NZ and the AUT TBI Network. This event successfully established a platform to connect researchers and the community in addressing traumatic brain injury (TBI).

We received excellent feedback, with 90% of participants expressing their interest in attending a similar event next year. A huge thanks to all the researchers and community members who participated. For many attendees, the stories of lived experience were the highlight, along with the interactive workshops that provided an invaluable opportunity to share ideas and insights.

“I was blown away by the community, level of research and desire for impact”

“I really valued the variety of research topics presented and I especially valued hearing the voices of people qualified by experience.”



Brain Injury Workshops and Workplace Training

Headway delivers training to community organisations and businesses to develop the skills and knowledge needed to effectively support those impacted by brain injury and concussion.

We are delighted to partner with Connect the Dots, an organization that uses creativity to enhance the health and well-being of communities. Initially focused on supporting older adults and individuals living with dementia, Connect the Dots has now expanded its mission. Following Headway's training, they are delivering art programmes that are fully inclusive of our brain injury community. We are thrilled to see this collaboration fostering inclusivity and creative expression for all.

If you know of any organisations wanting to develop brain injury supportive practices for clients or staff, encourage them to reach out to our team to discuss training and education opportunities.



Peer Support

Headway Peer Support Groups have expanded to five locations, delivering 30 sessions each month. These groups create spaces for the sharing of practical support, information exchange, and the development of strong, quality relationships that can extend beyond the organised group sessions.



Raising Awareness

GP Voice is the RNCGP publication sent to GPs across the country. Earlier this year, Headway helped inform GPs and raise awareness around brain injury through the publication. [Check out page 28 for our article.](#)



Sunflower - Hidden Disability

"The lanyard worked really well"

"I had amazing help and support from Air NZ staff"

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a simple tool for you to voluntarily share that you have a disability or condition that may not be immediately apparent – and that you may need a helping hand, understanding, or more time in shops, at work, on transport, or in public spaces.

You can purchase a sunflower lanyard here: <https://hdsunflower.com/au/shop.html>

If you are travelling through Auckland Airport you can contact hiddendisability@aucklandairport.co.nz provide your name, address, and date of travel. A lanyard will be couriered to you free of charge.

Meet the New Headway Team Members



(Left to right) - Tash Crosby, PJ Borrell, Margot Nicholson

Margot

In August 2021, my father suffered a severe TBI. Alongside my incredible family members, I became part of a team advocating for him and my mum. When the opportunity arose to work at Headway with whānau and on strategic projects, I eagerly embraced it. I am excited to learn more and share these insights.

With over 20 years of experience advising and working with community organisations, and a background in law, I bring a wealth of knowledge to my role.

Tash

It's an honour to join the amazing team at Headway. My background is deeply rooted in the education sector, with a focus on special education. In addition to this, I manage Talk Peach Gynaecological Cancer Foundation, a charity I founded in 2019 following my battle with ovarian cancer. I am deeply committed to providing essential support to individuals affected by life-changing health events, helping them navigate their 'new normal'.

I am community-minded and believe that we all have a responsibility to advocate for those in need, ensuring everyone has the resources they need to thrive.

PJ

Kia Ora, I'm PJ. As a dedicated Community Navigator at Headway, I'm here to support individuals and whānau affected by brain injury. I have over 20 years of experience empowering people in their health and well-being journey. My goal is to help our community, and their whānau navigate the challenges of brain injury

with confidence and resilience. Let's connect to discuss how I can support you in this journey. "He waka eke noa" – we're in this together.

Research Corner

Concussion Experience - Current Research

Here is a chance to ensure that your experience is heard and to influence the future of concussion care in NZ!

Anja Zoellner's new survey is out now to inform what is - and isn't - working in concussion care in NZ. Please have a look if you are in NZ, over 16, and have had a concussion in the past 5 years

What are your experiences of concussion?



We'd like to invite you to complete an anonymous 10-minute online survey which aims to understand...

- Concussion symptoms
- Treatment received
- Barriers and facilitators to treatment

If you:

- Are 16 years or over
- Have had a concussion in the past 5 years (regardless of whether you sought treatment or not)

Please [click the link](#) or scan the QR code to complete our survey

Contact Dr Anja Zoellner (anja.zoellner@aut.ac.nz) with any questions



Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 May 2024, AUTECE Reference number 24/222

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Objective Biomarkers for Concussion/mTBI

Associate Professor Mangor Pedersen presented research at our TBI symposium and we are excited to see that the research he is involved in has been published. The study explores the use of advanced MRI techniques (MRI T2 relaxometry) as a potential objective biomarker for mTBI/concussion.

- This study shows how T2 relaxometry MRI can quantify structural brain changes of acute mTBI.
- T2 relaxometry may reflect subtle neuroinflammation and help develop personalized treatment for mTBI.

Supported Primary Health Pathways

“ This study provides initial evidence that a supported health care pathway following mTBI is feasible to implement in primary care and can facilitate early access to concussion services for those who need it.”

The pathway included a decision support tool, funded follow-up appointments, clinician training and a patient education resource. Results showed increase follow-up rates, increased percentage of patients accessing a concussion service and reduced time to a concussion service.

Theodom A et al. Journal of Primary Health Care 2024 doi:10.1071/HC23131

Thank you

As we strive to expand our reach throughout the Auckland region, we invite you to consider making a small donation to help us sustain and enhance our efforts. Your contribution, no matter the size, will make a meaningful difference and is greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping us build a stronger, more connected community.

