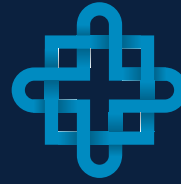




The Stimulus

Official Newsletter of the
New Zealand Brain Research
Institute



New Zealand
Brain Research
Institute

Winter 2016 Edition

Jonathan Salm - a story about love and the healing power of music

I sat at Jo's on a sunny afternoon with the winter sun bathing his lovely large garden in light and his chickens watching us through the window on his deck. Jo's story is a fascinating one. From his early life in Mozambique, living in Durban and then coming to NZ, his journey with his Parkinson's has had some truly incredible moments.

Jo is married to Ingrid and between them they have six children from previous marriages, with Jo having three daughters and a son. A keen runner, Jo started noticing some cramping in his foot in 1994, which turned out to be early dystonia – a first sign of the Parkinson's. Coming to NZ in that same year, Jo was referred to a neurologist who sent him for several tests but the process of diagnosis did not go smoothly for him and coincidentally one day, whilst at a Special Olympics practice session with his son (who has Downs Syndrome), Jo met a lady who appeared to have the same 'pill rolling' tick in her hand, as Jo had begun to develop. When he asked her about it, she told him she had Parkinson's and so Jo sought a second opinion with another neurologist.



Within half an hour of meeting him, the diagnosis was made and Jo's journey with Parkinson's began. Jo enjoyed meeting with the neurologist and their many conversations together, but in 2004, when the then Van der Veer Institute was formed, and the neurologist suggested that Jo might like to become a research subject for our very own Prof Tim Anderson. The idea of being at the 'cutting edge' of Parkinson's research really appealed to Jo and so he changed specialists to become what he calls 'a willing research guinea pig'.

Jo says that he was given advice by a health professional to stop running and in his words 'forget about any kind of sport or exercise except swimming'.

Advice Jo now regrets taking as he feels his fitness was compromised earlier than it needed to be and that perhaps he should have stayed more active within the bounds of his condition.

Sadly, Jo's first marriage came to an end in 2000. Whilst on one of his regular trips to Durban to visit his parents, Jo met up with a few friends, one of whom was a woman whom he had known some years prior. To cut a long story short, romance bloomed and Jo and Ingrid were married and have been very happy ever since.

Jo's work career has been pretty varied, with time spent in the shipping industry, with his own timber mill and computer training business, as well as writing software and providing sales and support of accounting packages. He retired formally in 2004, when his condition made working difficult.

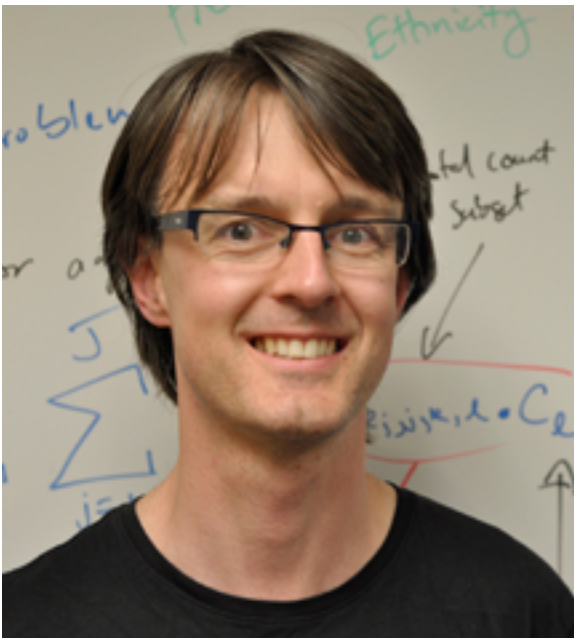
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Ten years ago he went to see a faith healer at the behest of a friend and Jo feels that this helped him, especially with his depression and anxiety but admits that it is not for everyone.

Today, Jo is immersed in the Cantabrainers Choir, of which he is a founding member. In fact, the name of the choir came from Jo himself, which he is understandably proud of. Jo has sung in many choirs in the past and the chance to once again, be part of a musical group has been a real joy for him. He tells me he truly looks forward to Wednesdays when choir practice is on and also is able to pick up and transport another woman who is a member. Jo feels the choir has given him back his self-confidence and the excitement and enthusiasm of the members of the choir and the leaders is very infectious. He's even arranged music for them to sing and is an enthusiastic soloist!

Spending some time with Jo showed me that even in the midst of personal hardship, seeking out joyful things and activities is the key to being happy. Jo's lively mind and enthusiasm for the choir that now gives him so much, was very inspirational.

Researcher Profile - Dr Daniel Myall



Dr Myall hard at work on his sums!

At the NZBRI I assist with mathematical, statistical, and programming aspects of research in Parkinson's. I have a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics from the University of Canterbury, which I followed up with PhD in Medicine from the University of Otago.

From an early age I had an interest in understanding how the brain works. Initially I combined this with an interest in mathematics to look at models of how neurons in our brain communicate. I then moved more towards research in Parkinson's. Recently I have gained an appreciation of brain disorders with numerous relatives suffering from a range of conditions, and this has reinforced the importance of research into the brain and its disorders.

I'm involved with several projects, with my main focus on determining which people with Parkinson's are at greatest risk of future cognitive decline. I'm also involved with estimating the number of people in New Zealand who have Parkinson's, and how this will change with an ageing population.

When we know which people are at greatest risk of cognitive decline we can then focus on these people, to understand what is happening in the brain and investigate potential interventions which may slow down cognitive decline or improve quality of life. Additionally, by knowing the number of people with Parkinson's, we can determine what health resources will be required to best support these people, both now and in future years.

Longer term, the more we understand what is happening the brain, the more we can focus our research towards avenues that will benefit patient outcomes. We want to move towards individualised medicine where, based upon their predicted future outcome, treatment is tailored to an individual patient.

I'm a born and bred Cantabrian and for most of my life lived in east Christchurch. I now live in Ohoka with my wife, three children, sheep, chickens, and lots of pūkekos and quail. My favourite place to be in weekends is mountain biking in the New Zealand wilderness.

The NZBRI is a great place where people from a range of backgrounds can work together, combining their skills towards understanding what is happening in diseases such as Parkinson's. One of the most valuable aspects of NZBRI are all the research volunteers who donate their time and who are a critical part of our research.

FBI and Fundraising news

2016 has seen a whirlwind of fundraising activity benefiting the work of the New Zealand Brain Research Institute, most recently with the inaugural Opera meets Art. Combining two genres proved a big hit with the Canterbury public. Ticket sales far exceeded expectations seeing us needing to organise extra last-minute seating.

The Christchurch Art Gallery foyer provided a magnificent backdrop for 22 singers performing popular opera tunes. Ten local visual media artists provided works to be displayed and sold on the night; helping the Friends of the Brain Research Institute (FBI) to raise more than \$14,000. Twelve

year old violin prodigy, Justin Hodges, wowed the crowd and captured hearts with skills that have seen him win numerous awards. Opera meets Art was so successful, that the FBI will make it an annual event. A big thank you goes to Sharolyn Kimmorley and Stuart Mauder, The Opera Club, Lizzies Cuisine, Pegasus Bay Wines, Avenues and The Press, all of whom ensured the evenings success.



30th June sees the return of the popular "Great Brain Teaser" quiz night. It will be held once again at the Rydges Latimer Christchurch, who is great supporters of all our events. This night features a mix of eclectic general knowledge questions to work the "grey matter" together with a large dose of laughter. The Christchurch Casino sponsors the top prize, with more than \$2,000 in prizes in total.

The FBI has firmly established their annual golf tournament as a "must go to" for all Christchurch golfers and businesses. A perfect way to mix business with pleasure, we are pleased to announce that the November 25th event is once again supported by Principal Sponsor, Christchurch Radiology Group. With Shirley Golf Club's addition of a new multi-purpose clubhouse, the event can accommodate even more players. After consistently selling out, we'll now be able to host an expanded field of 36 teams, so be in quick to secure your spot.



A special thank you goes to the Friends of the NZBRI committee, who are tireless advocates of our work. They utilise their time, expertise and connections to raise funds for our worthy cause. The 2016 committee members are; Mel Brew, Gabrielle Tasman, Ivan Donaldson, Liz Barry, Fay Keeling, Doug McCaul and Sharon Rees-Thomas, supported by the NZBRI's Fundraising Manager, Caroline Wagteveld McKenzie. Our special thanks go to retiring Chairperson, Kathryn Mulcock for her work on the committee over recent years.

We are always looking for new ways to fundraise to support the vital work of the New Zealand Brain Research Institute. When partnering with companies and service groups, the fundraising staff of the NZBRI provide more than a combined thirty years in event management. If there is an opportunity you think maybe a good fit, please don't hesitate to telephone Caroline to discuss further.

If you are interested in attending one of these events, donating a prize or providing sponsorship, please contact caroline@cmrf.org.nz or telephone on 353 12415.

