

World First Exoskeleton Clinical Trial Starts In the Hunter

3 November 2016

Hunter's Exoskeleton for Lower Limb Exercise and Neuro-rehabilitation (HELLEN) in World First Clinical Trial for Stroke Survivors and People with Acquired Brain Injuries



HELLEN in action with Chief Investigator Jodie Marquez and PhD Candidate Nicola Postol from the University of Newcastle. Standing in HELLEN is AIN Director Louis Rowe who is paraplegic.

“We are excited to share with the Hunter community that we have received ethics clearance to commence the first clinical trial involving a Rex Bionics exoskeleton to provide robotic exercise therapy to Hunter residents who have suffered a stroke or who live with an acquired brain injury. The HELLEN trial is now recruiting participants,” AIN CEO Trish Leonard said. HELLEN is Australia’s first hands-free self-supporting rehabilitation exoskeleton, made possible by a \$99,000 grant contribution from Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation.

“We are very proud to be working with a dedicated research team at the University of Newcastle, involving Assoc. Prof Neil Spratt, Dr Andrew Bivard, Jodie Marquez and Nicola Postol, who are passionate about searching for new and more effective clinical practices for maximising the recovery of people with stroke and other acquired brain injuries,” she added.

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Chief Investigator Jodie Marquez commented “We are looking for people who had a stroke or brain injury over 3 months ago to take part in exercising in HELLEN. This study is suitable for you if you are severely mobility impaired and need assistance for standing activities. You also must be a resident of the Hunter and over the age of 18 years. This research involves a 12 week exercise program. You will be asked to attend the University of Newcastle twice a week to participate in upright exercises assisted by HELLEN.”

Nicola Postol a PhD candidate who has more than 16 years of clinical experience as a neurological physiotherapist will be delivering an individualised exercise program to each participant recruited into the trial. “We hope that this research will help us determine if robotic exercise therapy is beneficial for people with stroke and brain injuries, which will allow us to recommend this program to more Australians as part of their ongoing neuro-rehabilitation.”

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chairman, Michael Slater said the Charitable Foundation was extremely proud to help AIN bring this ground breaking technology and clinical trial to people in the Hunter.

“Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation is committed to ensuring that people facing disadvantage in regional NSW, including stroke or acquired brain injury, have access to world class support and services such as that set to be delivered with the use of HELLEN.”

Stroke is one of Australia’s leading causes of disability and over 440,000 Australians live with the life-changing effects of a stroke. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, over 700,000 Australians have an acquired brain injury, with daily “activity limitations” and “participation restrictions.” Three of four of these people are aged 65 or under.

HELLEN is currently open to 20 participants. For more information and to see if you are eligible please email info@ain-rehab.org.au or contact 0498479422. “With the Hunter community’s support, exercise therapy in HELLEN could be offered to more residents. Evaluating the outcomes of more participants helps build the evidence needed to drive best clinical practice in community neuro-rehabilitation. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation by visiting www.hellen.org.au,” Ms Leonard said.

*** Ends ***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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