

The official magazine of

CATWALK™

Funding research to cure spinal cord injury



December 2022

NZ Grocery Charity Ball

Running So Others Can Walk Again
Neuromodulation For Spinal Cord Injury

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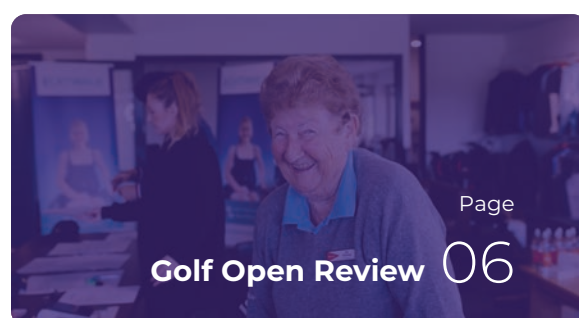
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December 2022 This issue

A special thank you
to our supporters
who help us produce
this magazine

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Trustees: David Pretorius (Chair), Grant Sharman (Deputy), Tom Brady, Paul Wilcox, Fiona Webby, Simon Manners. Kirsty Rueppell

On the cover: The NZ Grocery Charity Ball Trustees with CatWalk Chair David Pretorius, Ambassador Jamie Astwood and Deputy Chair Grant Sharman.



Founder's Footnote



Dear CatWalkers

'Tis not about how many breaths you take but the moments that take your breath away"

Recently I've been lucky to experience the warmth, hospitality and genuine kindness of one of Australia's iconic beef farming families in North West Queensland and also share in meeting their talented, loyal and committed friends. It was further affirmation that good people are not simply good people, they're great people!

CatWalk began 17 years ago thanks to a small group of talented, loyal and committed friends. Each and every one of those girls I still speak to regularly. Each has gone on to do incredible things whether that's own and run an international baby clothing company, gain a reputation as one of NZ's most formidable health solicitors, develop the world's best shoe shop online for women with long feet, regularly internationally sell NZ's premier showjumpers and

eventers, manage NZ's government health communications during the Covid crisis, identify and support NZ's top equestrian athletes attain their goals personally and financially, or be the sexiest granny in a bikini I've ever seen! Each has made me proud on multiple occasions, each has shared their journey of highs and lows, each has been responsible for so much laughter in my life despite that past moment in time which changed my own "brand" from that of International Equestrian to the blonde in the chair.

Thanks to their belief in me, that in turn gave me the confidence to also actually believe in me. I'm now often asked if I'm 'The CatWalk Girl' and I take it as the highest compliment. CatWalk has grown enormously from the depths of our lounge where we'd do all nighters brainstorming how we could woo a person or get a business on board but it still has the same core values of genuinely good people doing great things. You'll see lots of examples in this issue thanks to The CatWalk Golf Open, The Grocery

Charity Ball, The Queenstown Marathon and so much more. THANKYOU.

As we sit at home at the time of writing - closing in on the final mare to foal and then into the thick of yearling prep - Sam and I are reflecting on LA homebred Roch 'N' Horse's win in the Darley Champions G1 Sprint on November 5 at Flemington. For us and her ownership group which includes CatWalk vice chair Grant Sharman... it is proof that dreams do come true. And as Sam has quoted "The best day of our lives."

I truly wish every passionate racing person that special G1 moment because for Sam and I it's made every crazy hour worked on the farm and with the horses and our team worthwhile. So many messages and calls has been humbling and emotional. A whastapp message pings through from the world's greatest horseman Mark (and Carolyn) Todd "Well done on your big win". This was the icing on the celebration cake.

Thank you to you all, and all the best for your own magical moments in 2023

PS Looking for the perfect gift... The Great Dexter trowel is it! It's a definite need not a want! You can purchase this special lifetime tool from the CatWalk website www.catwalk.org.nz

Catriona



International Patron

Heading into the Christmas and holiday season, I want to thank everyone for their love and support over recent months. It's been a time to reflect on what unites us, and for Mike and I, this is definitely family.

From my earliest days, I remember having a lot of fun with family, including my grandparents, and being able to experience so many different things. I know I'm very lucky that my parents and grandparents were able to do that

for Peter and I. Whatever they were involved in, they wanted us to be a part of also, and as a result we met so many incredible people and had some amazing experiences along the way.

In my family, my mother will always be my role model. To recognise the loss of the Commonwealth family at the passing of The Queen, I want to reshare my mother's words.

"We will all share unique memories. I offer my thanks to each and every one who shares our sense of loss. We may have been reminded how much of her presence and contribution to our national identity we took for granted."

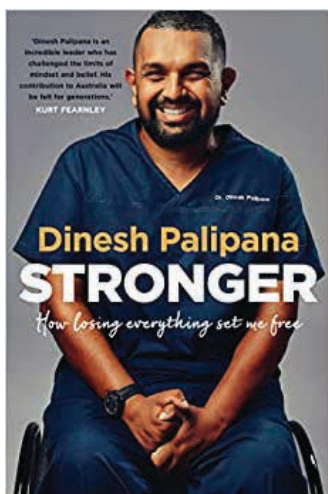
As CatWalk's latest newsletter reinforces, there is so much to look forward to in the international effort to beat Spinal Cord Injury. Here in the UK, that includes some fantastic work at the Queen Elizabeth National Spinal Injuries Unit in Scotland. This is another reminder of the things which can unite us, wherever we are.

In closing, to the CatWalk family in New Zealand, I send my very sincere personal thanks for your support, and I wish you nothing but the best for 2023 and beyond.

Zara Tindall, MBE

Book Reviews

Stronger - Dinesh Palipana



A puddle of water on a highway changed Dinesh Palipana's life forever.

Halfway through medical school, Dinesh was involved in a catastrophic car accident that

caused a cervical spinal cord injury. After his accident, his strength and determination saw him return to complete medical school - now with quadriplegia. Dinesh was the first quadriplegic medical intern in Queensland, and the second person with quadriplegia to graduate medical school in Australia. Despite all of the pain and hardship he's faced, Dinesh now sees his accident as a turning point for the better in his life. He believes it has made him a better doctor, with a stronger grasp of the concerns and fears of his patients, and a more sensitive, open human. He fights for equal and equitable access for disabled people, and is a compassionate and skilled doctor working in one of Australia's busiest emergency department. Despite everything he's been through, Dinesh believes he is now happier, stronger and more capable than he was before the accident. It helped him to clarify what was important

in his life, and taught him that happiness and strength can always be found within.

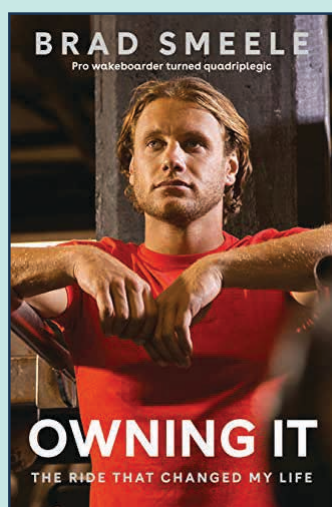
Dinesh Palipana OAM is a doctor, lawyer, disability advocate, and researcher. He became the first medical graduate with quadriplegia in Queensland, then the first graduate doctor with quadriplegia to begin work in the state. He was the second graduating doctor with quadriplegia to start working clinically in Australia.

Dinesh works at the Gold Coast University Hospital and Griffith University. He was the 2021 Queensland Australian of the Year. He was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 2019. He was the third Australian to receive a Henry Viscardi achievement Award in New York, awarded in 2019.

Stronger is available in Kindle, Audiobook and Paperback versions.

Owning It - Brad Smeele

Deeply thoughtful, honest and riveting story of a high-achieving sportsman who became a quadriplegic.



Brad Smeele's thrill-seeking, fast-paced life as a professional wakeboarder came to an abrupt halt when an accident caused him to become a quadriplegic.

Wakeboarding is like waterskiing, but on a single board with aerial tricks added in. It's a freestyle sport for super athletic adrenaline junkies. Brad was at the height of his career, pushing the sport to new limits and perfecting tricks that no one else could achieve. He was also a sought-after model and relished his free-wheeling lifestyle.

But in July 2014, while practising his latest trick, he landed badly. Catastrophically, in fact. He landed on his neck, completely crushing his spinal cord and becoming a quadriplegic immediately.

For someone whose whole life was built around his physical prowess, this was completely and utterly devastating.

Brad has had to work through a great deal, from being an incredibly physical person in all senses of the word to being someone with very limited use of his body. The struggle has been monumental, but he's come to a place of acceptance.

In this book he shares his epic story and the lessons he has learned through an unexpected teacher. He brings the same focus and determination he brought to his wakeboarding career to inspiring others.

Owning It is available in kindle and paperback versions.



The CatWalk Golf Open

Thursday 6th October saw the running of the first CatWalk Golf Open. After two postponements thanks to Covid related delays, the players and organisers were all looking forward to hitting the greens at the beautiful Wainui Golf Course.

Situated 20 minutes north of Auckland, Wainui is an 18-hole championship course which winds its way through rolling hills and natural waterways. Also on site is a comprehensive golf shop and

magnificent function venue which overlooks the course.

It was in the shop that our 90 golfers met on what was a blustery day. After the registration, sausage sizzle and briefing by Wainui Golf Pro Mike Duncumb, the teams set off to their starting tees. It was quite a sight to see 40 golf carts whizzing off in all directions along the paved tracks!

The player ability ranged from those with a 2 handicap through to some intrepid spinal cord injury researchers who, by their own admission, were very much novices to the game. We were thrilled to have two CatWalk Patrons on course, with Richie McCaw and Dion Nash both playing. Ex All-Black, Ali Williams also made the

day alongside an array of corporate and private teams. Special mention also of our one lady player, Chin Teo!

As in true CatWalk style, the players were treated to many surprises along the course. Hole 11 saw Nick Hanna, NZ Long Black and XDL Champion at the ready to take a tee-shot on the Par 5 hole 11 – all for a “tip” to CatWalk of course. With Nick having a drive of over 350m, most players took advantage of this to get them a bit closer to the pin.

Nearest the Pin on Hole 14 was awarded with the use of an Aston Martin for a day courtesy of SIXT Rentals, and once players finished on hole 9 they could drive up to the Batched Bar to be served a sampler of Batched Cocktails – Espresso Martini or Gin.



With thanks to all the players and supporters, over \$68,000 was raised for spinal cord injury research.

The Wainui staff kept everyone well nourished with on-course food and beverage carts travelling around throughout the day.

Players started arriving back to the clubhouse around 4pm and after warming up with some delicious hot food, MC Rachel Smalley welcomed everyone and introduced

Chris Wilson, Managing Director of major supporter Jarden, who spoke to the audience about the history of Jarden and the ongoing commitment they pledge to CatWalk. CatWalk Chairman David Pretorius then spoke of the specific research projects being supported by the fundraising from the day. He also announced the MVP which was awarded to Ollie Bradshaw for his massive contribution towards the success of the day. Sadly due to ill-health, Ollie was not on course but was able to watch the recording of the presentation of the special trophy created by CatWalk supporter Jackson Lovelady. The raffle and auction took place with master auctioneer Steve Davis encouraging the bidding on 5 special experiences, followed by the moment everyone was waiting for –

the announcement of the winners:

CatWalk Green Jackets for the winning team – Dan Kirton, Hamish Edgar, Hugo Baird and Edward Baillieu.

CatWalk Red Jacket for the winning individual – Brendan Cullum

With thanks to all the players and supporters, over \$68,000 was raised for spinal cord injury research. The day was deemed a huge success with many players asking what the 2023 date will be so it can go in their calendars. For more information and to register your interest, please visit www.catwalk.org.nz

See who you're supporting with your donations

Sydney Neurostimulation

eWalk Clinical Trial

Application of non-invasive neurostimulation (electrical currents) to the spine to wake up neural pathways.

Total commitment: \$1,750,000 (payments also made in 2021)

2022
1 April '21-
31 March '22
\$967,519

2023
1 April '22-
31 March '23

2024
1 April '23-
31 March '24

Auckland Connor Clemett

Gene therapy and cell transplantation in chronic SCI - Extension payment due to COVID-19 lockdown

This project aims to combine the gene therapy approach with enriched cell transplantation to promote stronger connections for recovery.

Total commitment: \$114,777 +extension (payments also made in 2018, 2019, 2021)

\$17,915

Auckland

The NZ Brain Bee Challenge (NZBBC)

This high school competition encourages students in Year 11 to learn about the brain and its functions, the latest advances in neuroscience research and career pathways.

Total commitment: \$95,000 (committed 2020 - 2024)

\$15,000

\$15,000

\$15,000

Auckland Dr Simon O'Carroll

Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility (SCIRF)

Underpinning our research, the goal of the SCIRF is to maintain ongoing research programmes to develop novel treatments for SCI and to attract new ideas through local and international biomedical and clinical collaborations.

Total commitment: \$580,880 (committed until 2025)

\$116,176

\$116,176

\$116,176

Auckland Dr Amy Chapman

Generating human oligodendrocyte cells for the treatment of SCI - Postdoctoral funding - Extension payment due to COVID-19 lockdown

This study investigates whether the precursor cells of human oligodendrocytes (highly specialised neural cells) generated from human skin cells can be used for cell transplantation to promote natural repair and improve electrical pathways.

Total commitment: \$186,842 (payment also made in 2021)

\$94,284

Sydney NeuRA, SpinalCure and CatWalk

Project Spark: sparking a revolution in the way spinal cord injury is treated

Building on the eWALK trial evidence, this project aims to take the research out of the lab and into mainstream use. Project Spark involves a series of rigorous clinical trials and community-based studies with the initial aim of improving respiratory, hand and upper limb function.

Total CatWalk commitment: \$1,050,000 (committed 2022-2024)

\$350,000

\$350,000

Auckland *Dr Bruce Harland*

Electroceutical therapies to treat spinal cord injury in a preclinical model

This fellowship will create and test second-generation bioelectric implants that are flexible, and use electrodes that are less prone to degeneration. It will focus on one of the most promising therapies to spinal cord injury and explore how well the implants are tolerated; seeking to provide evidence for axonal regeneration.

Total commitment: \$246,362

Auckland *Dr Brad Raos*

Computational modelling and analysis to inform electrical treatments following spinal cord injury and assist in development of electrical biomarkers

This impressive project will provide a means to both record and stimulate directly from the spinal cord. It has high potential to provide breakthroughs, not only in terms of treatment but also in understanding of spinal cord injury.

Total commitment: \$246,362

Auckland *Associate Professor Darren Svirskis*

Applying sustained electrical fields to achieve functional recovery after SCI

This project aims to determine the efficacy of sustained electrical fields incorporated into a bioelectronic implant to direct axonal regeneration after SCI.

Total commitment: \$337,942

(payment also made in 2021)

Auckland *Dr Sheryl Tan*

Calcium binding buffer proteins and neuroprotection

A series of functional studies will be conducted using human spinal cord tissue and stem cells to see if the distribution of calcium binding buffers are altered in the injured spinal cord and therefore if they create neurodegeneration.

Total commitment: \$186,818

Auckland *Dr Amy Chapman*

Generating human oligodendrocyte precursor cells from adult human dermal fibroblasts – Project funding

Extension payment due to COVID-19 lockdown

This project will compare the viability and differentiation of cells encapsulated in 3D bio printed hydrogels verses the traditional flat 2D substrates.

Total commitment: \$55,833

+extension

Total :

\$123,181

\$123,181

\$106,884

\$106,884

\$142,564

\$64,700

\$91,226

\$95,592

\$55,833
+
\$23,500

2022

1 April '21
31 March '22

2023

1 April '22
31 March '23

2024

1 April '23
31 March '24

\$1,524,017

\$871,533

\$711,241

Thank you for all your support!

Your generosity enables critical research and gives hope to those with spinal cord injuries that they will walk again.

Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility



Progress Update December 2022

What is it and how does it work?

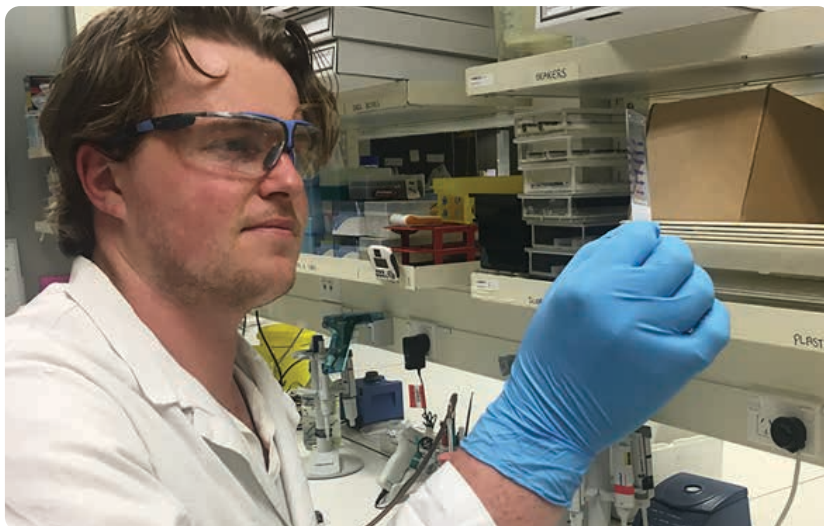
This has been another productive year in the SCIRF, and we have several exciting projects that we will get underway next year.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the achievements of some members of the SCIRF. Ph.D. student Connor Clemett, who submitted his Ph.D. earlier this year, has just had his oral exam. Connor did an excellent job of defending his thesis and was nominated for the Dean's list. Inclusion on the Dean's List is awarded to only a select number of doctoral candidates each year. It recognises work that is of exceptional quality in every respect, including scholarship, research content, quality of expression, and accuracy of presentation. This is an excellent achievement by Connor, highlighting the excellence of his work. Master's student Jerram Sheehan was awarded a First Class Honours for his thesis in recognition of the high-quality work that he carried out.

A combination approach to targeting spinal cord injury.

Due to the complexity of a spinal cord injury, it is now well understood by researchers in the field of spinal cord injury that it will be necessary to target different parts of the injury to have an effective treatment – what is known as a combination approach.

The work of Connor and Jerram, which built on the previous work of Ph.D. student Jarred Griffin showing that using gene therapy to express a specific protein can remove scar tissue and promote nerve cell growth and functional



Ph. D. student Connor Clemett was nominated for the University of Auckland's Dean's List, in recognition of the exceptional quality of work he undertook during his study.

recovery, found that this protein also changes the immune system in the spinal cord and is involved in the growth of cells called oligodendrocytes – which are crucial for nerve cells to function correctly and are lost after injury. We will now use our gene therapy to express this protein in oligodendrocytes with the hope that this will 1) help protect these cells and 2) remove the scar, 3) change the immune system to reduce inflammation, and 4) promote nerve cell growth. We will also combine this with 5) exercise rehabilitation to promote regrowth and the proper reconnection of nerve cells in the spinal cord. We believe this **combination approach (Fig X)** using our gene therapy can potentially be a more effective treatment for translation to the clinic.

Testing a clinically used drug as a treatment for spinal cord injury

Another project we plan to get underway next year builds on our previous work with the peptide

that stopped inflammation in the cord. We will test a drug shown to reduce inflammation in other diseases but with the added benefit of promoting the growth of new oligodendrocytes, the nerve-protecting cells. We think that having a drug that does both of these things will lead to better treatment. This drug is already used clinically and would be what is referred to as 'repurposed' for use in spinal cord injury – speeding up the process, as it has already been through trials in people to prove that it is safe.

Looking for novel targets for spinal cord injury repair

As part of his Ph.D. project, Connor looked for novel genes that might be affected by our gene therapy and discovered a gene that may be a key regulator or "master-switch" for injury. We will look to recruit a student to follow up on this exciting finding to see if this can be targeted as a potential treatment.

Visualising changes in the spinal cord after injury

The work being carried out by Ph.D. student Zahra Laoubi, in collaboration with Dr. Juliette Cheyne and funded by the Jon and Louise Nicholson Spinal Cord Injury Research Scholarship, is ongoing. Zahra aims to understand how changes happen in the brain, and spinal cord in real-time and therefore understand more precisely how treatments work. This challenging project uses a tiny camera attached to the rat to study changes in nerve cell activity in the brain and spinal cord as they happen. Zahra is continuing to make excellent progress in allowing us to see how activity changes in the brain and spinal cord with injury. Ultimately we will use this approach in conjunction with treatment and be able to accurately measure its effect and how we might improve it.

Clinical Study

The project being carried out by Dr Sam Parittotokkaporn in collaboration with Drs Suresh Subramaniam and Anna Lawrence at the Auckland Spinal Rehabilitation Unit, to test the potential for in-home use of Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS) as a means to improve bladder function for people with spinal cord injury is almost complete. Issues such as poor bladder function are serious issues for people with SCI, who often find it difficult to attend hospital or clinic visits. Therefore, the ability for individuals to improve bladder function in their own home has potential to make a real difference for people's quality of life. The results show that using the in-home TENS improved bladder issues for a number of participants. Dr Parittotokkaporn plans to build on these exciting findings and also to see whether in-home TENS could

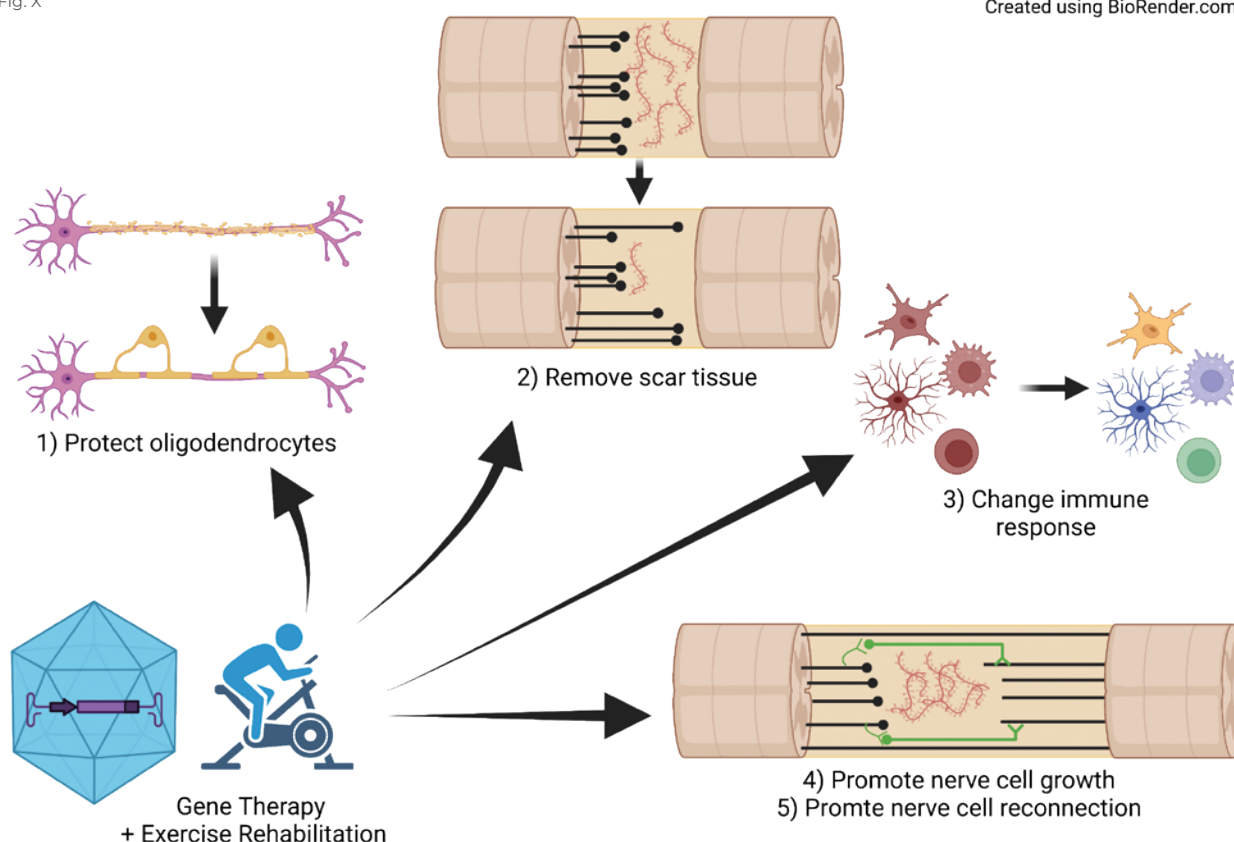
be useful for treating neuropathic pain or even helping with muscle function when combined with exercise rehabilitation.

Due to the complexity of a spinal cord injury, it is now well understood by researchers in the field of spinal cord injury that it will be necessary to target different parts of the injury to have an effective treatment.

Combination Approach

Fig. X

Created using BioRender.com



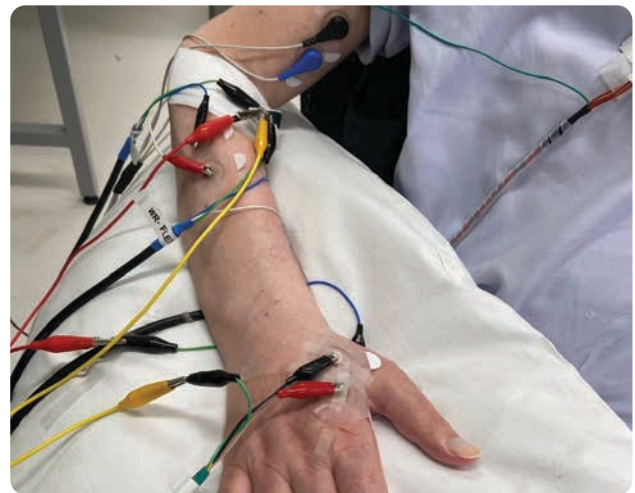
By targeting different parts of the damage that occurs after a spinal cord injury, we think our combination approach will be more effective in promoting recovery.

eWalk Trial

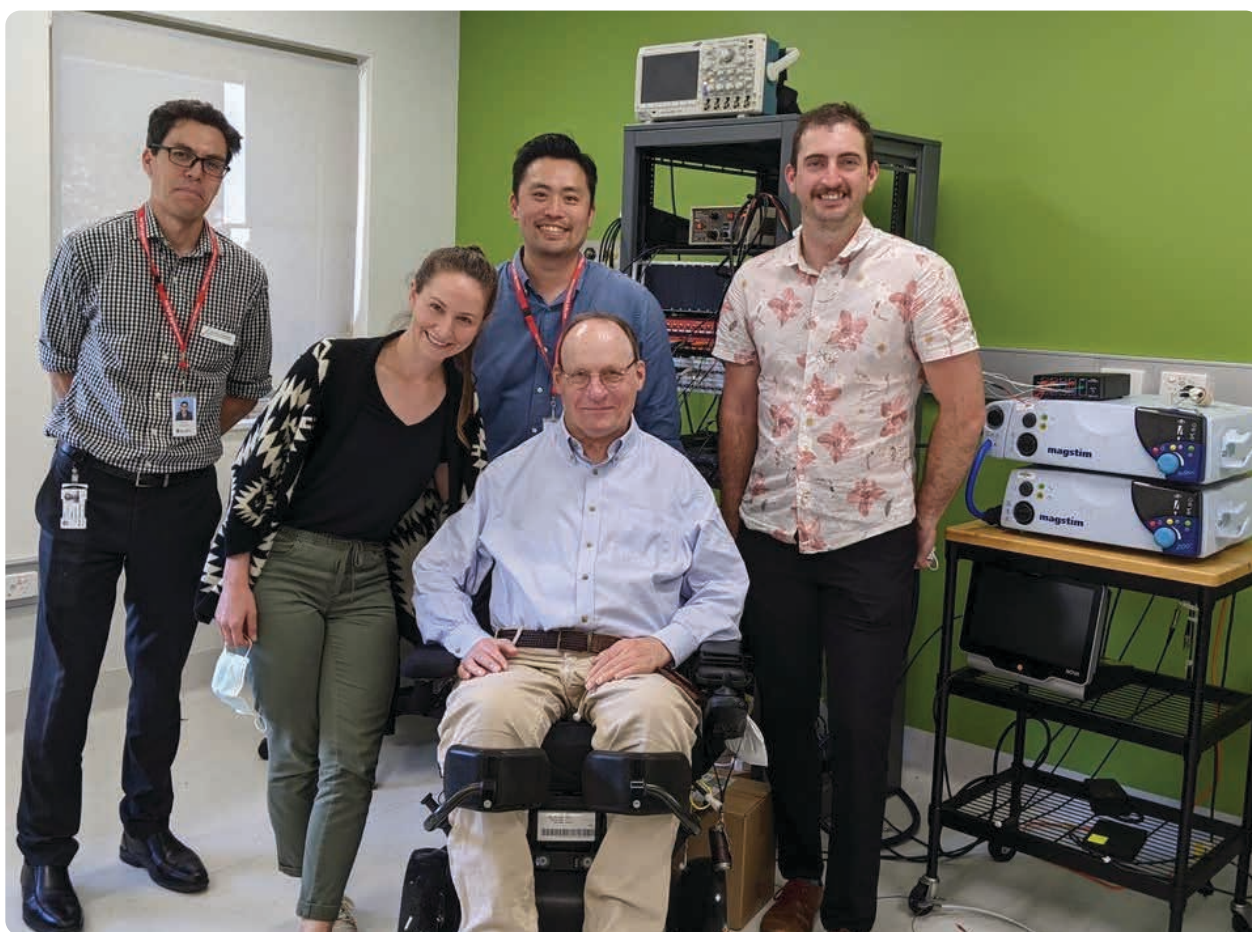
The eWalk trial has recently received a jump in capacity with a second Australian trial site opening in Melbourne and led by Prof Gavin Williams at Swinburne University's Hawthorn campus.

Volunteers are now being recruited in Sydney, Melbourne, Toledo (Spain), Chicago and Glasgow.

Our latest clinical trial, dubbed "Get a Grip"—the first of Project Spark's community based studies—is targeting upper limb function, and also respiratory function, which is obviously number one on the wish-list for those dependent on a ventilator. Preliminary studies are underway with Spinal Cure Executive Director, Duncan Wallace, being one of the volunteers for these preliminary tests in early November.



Above/Right: The electrodes on the arm are sensors to pick up messages getting to the muscles.
Bottom Right: Electrodes on the neck and shoulders deliver the stimulation.



Dr Peter Sturgess PhD, Dr Annie Palermo PhD, Dr Terry Trinh PhD and Dr Harrison Finn PhD with Duncan Wallace

These tests involve single day studies of 10 able bodied and 10 quadriplegic volunteers for the purpose of refining the optimal stimulation settings and placement of electrodes. Four stimulation methods are tested, each at a range of intensities:

- Normal stimulation (equiv TENS machine) – Electrodes on neck and shoulders
- Normal stimulation (equiv TENS machine) – Electrodes on neck and hips
- Biphasic stimulation – Electrodes on neck and shoulders
- Biphasic stimulation – Electrodes on neck and hips.

The first volunteers are expected to be enrolled in Sydney around Christmas, and will roll-out to Perth WA and a third site in 2023.

Current plans are for the trial proper to start treating the first subject at a NeuroMoves in Sydney in late Feb/early March.





Spinal Cord Injury Research Symposium

The brainchild of Associate Professor Darren Svirskis - the newly appointed Chair of the Spinal Cord Research Group at the University of Auckland - the Spinal Cord Injury Research Symposium on Thursday 24 November (sponsored by The CatWalk Trust), brought together over 50 stakeholders with a mutual interest in improving the lives of those with spinal cord injuries.

With the objectives of; gaining a better understanding of what the needs are for those with spinal cord injury, dissemination of research

progress related to the injury, and the formulation and refinement of research projects; the day proved a powerful opportunity for cross-integration of disciplines, experiences and priorities.

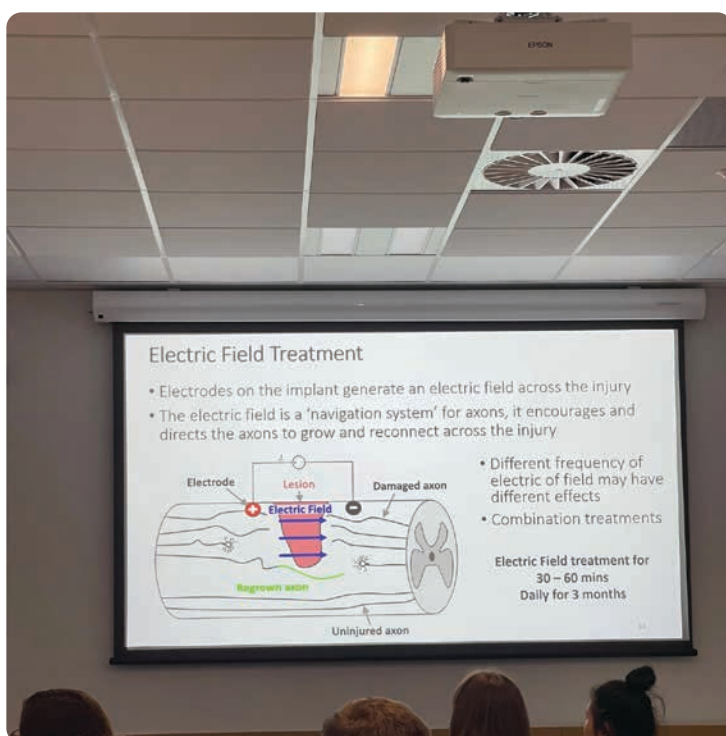
Ten researchers provided presentations detailing their individual (but interconnected), projects, culminating in a keynote address from bioelectronics expert, Dr Maria Asplund, a visiting collaborator from the University of Freiburg.

The symposium truly showcased real-world applications and injury treatment advancements thanks to pioneering laboratory and clinical progress currently underway right here in New Zealand. As a result of the research advancements; hope is alive and well.

With poignant lived-experience feedback from five individuals who live with a spinal cord injury, the day provided the opportunity to prioritise research focus - as requested by those who want (need) it most.

CatWalk are proud to have supported this invaluable Symposium. We aim to strengthen the link between donors, researchers, clinical experts, and beneficiaries of spinal cord injury research.

Spinal cord injury is a whole-of-world problem that was always seen as impossible. CatWalk has a clear boundary of purpose which is funding research that will mean, in the future, a broken spinal cord is a reversible injury.



“[when I had my accident] I was given 10 years to live. Because you, as researchers, are at the cutting-edge, you think this is just how it is. But it’s not how it was.

Grant Sharman C5/6 Quadraplegic, injured 1977.





HAVE WHEELS

Will Travel

**WHEELIE CAMPERVAN COMING SOON
for any wheelie to hire**

If you'd like to know more, send your
name, address, phone & email details to
chris@catwalk.org.nz



Have Wheels Will Travel



Catriona and Chris Cunard of ACM Motorhomes

A want to travel through New Zealand the way able-bodied do on a whim and hassle-free has encouraged one wheelie to not just talk about what's possible but to make it possible.

This campervan has been designed specifically for the wheelie. Some wheelies will be able to drive it if they have an ezi-lock system on their chair and fit within certain dimensions, but the non-negotiable was that the wheelie gets to travel up front. Due to the regularity of campervans often being

built to high specifications and then not getting out and about as often as owners initially thought, a proposal was put together and presented to generous supporters so that every wheelie gets the opportunity to roam NZ hassle-free. 40% of the rental fee will go to the rental company with 30% going to CatWalk and 30% going to The NZ Spinal Trust. It is quite literally the gift that keeps giving.

To be kept in the loop on the launch date and location of the Have Wheels Will Travel campervan and up to date on when you can book your wheelie accessible campervan holiday please email your contact details to chris@catwalk.org.nz.

THE ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS GIFT

The Dig Deep for CatWalk Garden Trowel



Commissioned from world renowned garden tool manufacturer Sneeboer in The Netherlands, the hand forged Dig Deep for CatWalk trowel is lifetime quality, branded with the Dig Deep lovemark and comes cocooned in a New Zealand merino wool recyclable draw-string pouch. You will be giving the most sought after limited edition gift knowing that all proceeds from your purchase will go to fund research into curing spinal cord injury.

CORPORATE GIFTING SPECIAL BUY 9 GET 1 FREE

Choose this bundle offer and you will pay for 9 trowels and receive the 10th complimentary - saving \$145! A great option if you want to reward your hardworking team with a lifetime quality gift and support a great cause all at the same time. Your customers, employees and suppliers will be thinking of you every time they plant their herbs or dig up their potatoes. And it's our way of saying thank-you for sharing the CatWalk story.

Cover off a whole bunch of Christmas pressies for clients, customers, staff, family and friends this year in one click of a button!

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\$145 + Post

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for CatWalk

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Simon O'Carroll and Louise Nicholson

Emeritus Professor Louise Nicholson CNZM

We would like to acknowledge and thank a very special lady who has recently stepped down from the CatWalk Board.

Louise was profiled in our June 2021 magazine after being awarded the CNZM for Services to Neuroscience and Education in the 2021 New Year's Honours. In that article we talked about her love for science from childhood, her distinguished educational and professional career, her love of family and the outdoors, and her over-riding passion of finding a cure for spinal cord injury.

Louise believes in fostering young bright minds, and so in 2006 she founded The Brain Bee Challenge, a competition for high school

students in year 11 to learn about the brain and its functions, learn about neuroscience research, find out about careers in neuroscience and to dispel misconceptions about neurological and mental illnesses. It was in 2008, while looking for funding to support this event, that Louise met CatWalk Founder Catriona Williams.

This meeting was the catalyst for the future with CatWalk seed funding the initiative led by Louise and Dr Simon O'Carroll to create the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility at Auckland University Centre for Brain Research.

In 2014 Louise was diagnosed with a brain tumour, the cause of the constant headaches which had plagued her over the years. Removal was not possible, so the tumour sits in her brain still, and is

“Louise can simplify complex science down to a level where mere mortals can understand (some of) the intricacies of the human central nervous system. CatWalk is privileged to have her mind working for spinal cord injury research..”

monitored for its slow growth. It was due to this health issues that in 2017 Louise reluctantly took retirement from the University. We were honoured to then have her join the CatWalk board early in 2018.

GM Meg Speirs spoke of how Louise was a valued member: "Louise managed to speak 'layman' - not an easy feat with a brain like hers. The CatWalk Board rely on independent experts to provide us with funding guidance, however sometimes we need the details abridged further still. Louise can simplify complex science down to a level where mere mortals can understand (some of) the intricacies of the human central nervous system. CatWalk is privileged to have her mind working for spinal cord injury research."

Louise has stepped down from the board as of August this year as she concentrates on recovering her health following further surgery on the brain tumour.

Louise, thank you does not seem enough for all that you have done, and continue to do for CatWalk and for spinal cord injury research. We wish you all the very best as you recover your health, and look forward to seeing you again soon.



"Louise is a one in a million human being that I'm very proud to call a close friend" says Catriona. "I'm also incredibly humbled by all the work and energy she dedicates to CatWalk. The saying goes "no one cares about what you have to say until they realise that what you have to say you really care about" is right on the mark when you discuss Louise's favourite subject.

Her want to make a difference to Spinal Cord Injury research has not wavered in 15 years, as mentioned, this is highly contagious to anyone lucky enough to spend time with her.

With thanks to her neurological background she thoroughly understands the science and research that is happening worldwide. Louise is confident that functional gain and a serious SCI breakthrough will happen in her lifetime. Quite simply she believes and so do we."

Catriona, June 2021.

The NZ Grocery Charity Ball



CatWalk GM Meg Speirs and Grant Sharman



The NZ Grocery Charity Trustees with Jamie Astwood, Grant Sharman and David Pretorius



Auctioneer Morgan Carter encouraging the bids!



Brad Smelee and Toni Street



Toni Street and Morgan Carter



Bryce Dineen and Michaela Austin - Wish4Fish

As the saying goes “good things take time” – and this certainly proved the case with the NZ Grocery Charity Ball.

With the initial 2021 date being postponed twice due to Covid, the Trustees, guests, and organisers were all looking forward to the ball going ahead on the 29th October at the Cordis in Auckland.

680 guests filled The Great Room to capacity, and were welcomed by MC and CatWalk Patron, Toni Street, who had so generously given her time to officiate. The evening programme began with CatWalk Chairman, David Pretorius, who gave an overview of CatWalk, and the current projects we are funding.

After dining on delicious fare from the Cordis, the guests were

entertained by the incredible Marcus Winter thesandman.co.nz who told a story through sand art. Guests also had the opportunity to bid on a wide variety of items on the silent auction which ran throughout the night.

The live auction attracted strong bidding under the hammer of auctioneer Morgan Carter with great support from Toni as his “bid spotter”!

The Grocery Charity Ball 2022 Supporting CatWalk



Christine Douglas - The Village Goldsmith, and Brad Smeele



David Pretorius



Great Goodie Bags!



Ambassador Jamie Astwood, Toni Street and Deputy Chair Grant Sharman



Enjoying the night



Marcus Winter - The Sandman

Brad Smeele then took to the stage, and the audience was mesmerised as Brad spoke of his life as a tetraplegic following a wakeboard accident. To be able to help those such as Brad to get an improvement in functionality was at front of mind as was evident by the overwhelming generosity of the guests who pledged donations direct to spinal cord injury research.

Guests danced the night away and each left with a goodie bag packed with treats that had been generously donated by so many businesses.

It was an overwhelmingly successful night, and we were all ecstatic with the resulting donation to CatWalk of \$306,000 which was beyond all expectations.

Our sincere thanks to the NZ Grocery Charity Trustees, their sponsors, and guests for supporting CatWalk.

We also thank our wonderful CatWalkers who so generously donated prizes for the silent and live auctions. We were proud to be able to present such an array of items and experiences from the CatWalk family.



Elise Stables

3 Peaks Conquered –

Elise Stables is no stranger to pushing outside her comfort zone.

Back in 2019 Elise took on The Mongol Derby, a grueling 1000km across the Mongolian steppe on semi-wild horses, the longest and toughest horse race in the world! Elise chose to support CatWalk in that venture, and in August this year took on another challenge to support CatWalk – conquering

three South Island peaks all while wearing full firefighting gear.

“The hike over the three peaks was amazing. My trainer, Lucy Hunter, picked me up at 4:15am and we drove to Mt Roy meeting three of my friends, Laura Cockroft, Brooke Woodrow and Brittany Lorck and all 5 of us set our up Mt Roy, it was super cool to have the girls there as the banter made the walk go a bit quicker. We made it up there in 2hrs 53min, there was a lot of snow and we had to divert and sort of

make our own track to get up to the summit. We got some pictures and had a wee celebration and set off back down to get to the next mountain, the downhill definitely hurt more.

Lucy and I drove to Isthmus, picking up fellow fire brigade member, Sam Jenkin. So the three of us started up Mt Isthmus. I was definitely a bit quieter heading up this one, but none the less we summited in 2hrs 59min, felt great to get it under 3 hours. There was



\$5700 raised!

again a lot of snow but it was dry so made it easier to walk through. We took some more photos and stopped for some food but I was quick to wrap it up and get down to get on the road to Mt Iron.

Mt Iron was heaps of fun, a lot of my friends were all there to walk with me, the fire trucks were there and members of the brigade. I got to the top of Mt Iron and was surprised by another group of my friends jumping out of the bushes with party poppers. We popped a

bottle of champagne and all began to walk down, when I reached the bottom the trucks were there with sirens on and everyone was cheering, such a great experience.

By the end of the day I'd covered 37km and 3200m carrying about 18kg, it took me 13.5hrs and it was the best 13.5hrs ever. I was so overwhelmed with the support. We managed to raise \$5700 and I hope were able to inspire people to get out and back more incredible charities like this one".

“When I reached the bottom the trucks were there with the sirens on and everyone was cheering, such a great experience.”



Amy and Charlotte

Running So Others Can Walk Again

- Amy Smith

Running so others can walk again' got me right at the core... As a former trail marathon/ultra runner who was suddenly paralysed, this phrase called to me... deeply.

In what felt like a quick breath, I went from living the Summer Holiday dream to being paralysed, from the waist down with a T9/10 injury. What 'will never happen to me' had happened to me early New Year's morning of this year. After what turned out to be a spontaneous and rare medical event resulting in a severe spinal bleed, I had gone from that trail loving, marathon running, mother of two young kids, to lying in a bed, unable to move, with the reality from the doctors that I may never walk again.

Fresh home from a gruelling two months in hospital (which all SCI patients can relate to), I continued working through every small goal that used to be taken for granted. However it was then I realised that I needed a really BIG goal to focus on and work towards (and simply something to look forward to and hope for!). So it was then, back in March, very much wheelchair bound, that I reached out to Bryce and Renee from Total Sport to even see if they'd support such an audacious goal - can I enter and will you support me across the course even though I can't walk? Their response? 'Hell yes we'll support you!' So it was all on from that moment, and we never looked back.

It wasn't hard to convince some old running friends and family to be part of my relay team to run/walk/crawl the 100k Taupo

Ultramarathon with me. Also keen to support me were my beautiful work colleagues who entered a team to run the course alongside us (some of those which had never owned a pair of running shoes!).

The journey of the last 11 months has been nothing short of a miracle. The end result of a lot of luck combined with sheer determination (blood, sweat, tears!) - along with the incredible support of my dear family and friends - was being given the gift of getting out of my wheelchair. Not only had I made it back to walking? I could run. Not like I used to, but more than I could've ever hoped for!

So early that fresh October morning our two teams got ready to run the 100k relay, the run we were doing so that others could walk again. We were so proud to support the great work of CatWalk

conducting ground breaking and important research to cure spinal cord injuries, because life in a wheelchair is simply FAR harder than any ultra marathon. With \$5k that we had raised on the line, we had to finish! I, had to finish... But we were right up against it in the days preceding...

However, neither sick kids with the resulting lack of sleep (severely affecting my balance and coordination), losing a teamie last minute, distance reshuffles adding 9k to my leg (!) or keys accidentally being locked in cars between relay drop-offs, could stop our two teams from running that beautiful, crisp October day.

I just couldn't believe yet again that morning, what amazing people I had in my life! Our first leg runners were up smiling at 4am for the 5.30am start, and those smiles just got bigger and bigger as we each transitioned at those relay crossover points, finishing around 6pm. We not

only finished, we finished strongly and that little blue glass medal has become a symbol of courage, resilience and hope as I walk past it on my medal rack (the rack that I thought I'd never be adding to again). It's also simply a beautiful reminder of the memories of pushing through THE hardest, but most fulfilling and stunning run I'd ever done.

Don't get me wrong, it was TOUGH... I remember saying to my dear friend Charlotte at about 15k in 'I'm not sure this was a good idea! I don't know if I can do this!!' But she simply replied 'but we ARE doing it, right now' and I thought, 'yes! We are!' And so we carried on, one tired set of quads, and one pins and needly, half numb foot in front of the other. It was also then that I thought this discomfort I'm feeling is representing freedom, and there would be millions of SCI patients in the world right now who would give anything to experience what I was so lucky to be able to do, run

my leg of a race with the dearest of friend's beside me. The views were stunning.

So it's not lost on me that I've had the chance to step out of wheelchair life, not only back to walking, but back to running. It's a life blood for me and something that every spinal cord injury patient should have as hope for their futures. So I am beyond proud and incredibly grateful every single day, it's a feeling that words just can't describe. Something everyone in this situation deserves to feel.

Like researching for a cure, this event was a team effort! Teams of absolute rockstars! A big thank you to George, Jessie, Devon, Liz, Scotty, Ellie, Charlotte, Adina, Bryce, Renee and of course my wonderful support crew that is my hubby, two children and my incredible team of Physios! We did it! Together. So that hopefully others can too. Because hope is everything in recovery.



The Team at registration





Barenbrug and Farm Source Collaboration Continues to Support CatWalk

Since 2019, Barenbrug and Farm Source have collaborated through the production and sale of the Equine Specialist Horse Pasture Mix. With a donation of \$50 per bag sold, this initiative has raised \$22,600 to support spinal cord injury research.

Barenbrug has been helping grow the best pasture in New Zealand for over 30 years, firstly under the Agriseeds banner and more recently known as Barenbrug.

The Barenbrug group is the largest privately-owned seed company in the world, with 22 research and development locations across the world and continues to lead the way in pasture development under the

guidance of the fourth generation of the Barenbrug family based in the Netherlands.

In New Zealand, Barenbrug employ over 60 staff throughout the country including plant breeders, microbiology, sales and seed production specialists. Being part of a global company enables the sharing of knowledge and technology which is utilised in the trialling and development of pasture throughout the country.

Farm Source is a network of 68 stores throughout all regions of New Zealand. They offer a full rural supplies and support service with knowledge and expertise to help farmers and lifestyle block owners, while also supporting local communities and initiatives such as the Equine Pasture Mix.

Most pastures in New Zealand are dominated by perennial ryegrass

and white clover, largely sown for sheep and cattle. Such pastures are not ideal for horses.

As well as having relatively low fibre, ryegrass also tends to be high in sugars, particularly during spring and autumn. This can have negative behavioral impacts on some horses and also cause serious problems such as contributing to laminitis.

The Equine Specialist Horse Pasture Mix contains brome, cocksfoot and a small amount of low endophyte ryegrass. Brome and cocksfoot contain no endophyte and are higher in fibre content than ryegrass.

Bags are available at \$215+GST per 25kg bag (recommended sowing rate for 1 hectare).

For more information and to place orders please contact your nearest Farm Source store
<https://store.nzfarmsource.co.nz/>



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Support a great cause. Purchase yours now!

1 bag/ha recommended sowing rate. Limited stocks.
Seed available from your local Farm Source store.



From left:



Taupo Great Lakes Relay

Since 1995, a fantastic running race called the Taupo Great Lakes Relay has taken place in which teams of athletes run around the lake.

Our Chairman, Dave Pretorius, who works at Jarden as a wealth adviser, has managed over the last 9 years to cajole and persuade his fellow Jarden employees to join him. This year, after a Covid-induced delay, the event took place on October 8th, and Jarden registered over 80 athletes to travel down to Taupo to compete. The event is New Zealand's largest corporate relay. To add a lovely touch to their corporate-building campaign,

Jarden decided to also raise money for charity whilst training and eventually running, and CatWalk was selected as one of several recipients. After a long day filled with exercise, fun, support and humour, Dave was happy to announce that over \$22,000 had been raised in total, of which nearly \$11,000 was allocated to CatWalk. From a small idea, a very tidy sum has been raised by so many generous supporters. CatWalk (and Dave) are extremely thankful for this effort from all the athletes, their families and friends.





“If you think you’re having a bad day, you can guarantee that there is someone not very far away that is having a much worse day than you, so I suppose I’ve spent more time being grateful for what I have, rather than what I didn’t have.”

Left: James McPhedran

A journey of courage and determination



James was enjoying a summer holiday in Golden Bay in 2017 when his life took a dramatic turn.

Waking up one morning he noticed a tingling sensation in both legs. After visiting the local medical centre, he found his tranquil holiday abruptly cut short and he was then admitted to Nelson Hospital.

That first night in hospital, James quickly realised that what was happening was potentially very serious and that his recovery was going to be a very long haul. He recalls lying in the darkness of that hospital ward giving himself a “serious talking to as I knew I had to

be positive for my wife and family. I needed their support now more than ever.”

James was transferred to Christchurch Hospital and then two weeks later to the Burwood Spinal Unit. James was facing the very real possibility of not walking again. His original diagnosis of Transverse Myelitis was changed to compression of the spinal cord. He was now facing the prospect of surgery and an outcome that was uncertain. He went ahead with the surgery and was cautiously optimistic regarding his recovery. “I wanted to walk, I thought I probably could, it wasn’t a complete injury to my spinal cord, you know I’ve got a chance” says James.

When describing the support, he received while at the Burwood Spinal Unit, James uncharacteristically struggles for words. He found the support of those around him as “quite a humbling thing. It’s quite overwhelming how much effort people put into your recovery to

“When you’re learning to walk again you find the mental and physical fatigue quite significant.”

achieve the best outcomes for you” as he describes the support of his physio, occupational therapist (OT) and Peer Support workers and also from Debbie Le Cren his Vocational Rehabilitation specialist from the New Zealand Spinal Trust. “She worked extremely hard with my area manager to help me get back to work” says James.

Debbie describes her first meeting with James, observing him as understandably shaken. She was also curious as she realised that she recognised James from somewhere. They both quickly concluded that it was from the wine shop where she had been to a wine-tasting event organised by James at Liquor King. “So that was a nice connection, he is so passionate about wine” says Debbie.

James is not one to count, but after spending a total of 159 days in the hospital, he viewed his stay despite the challenges he faced positively. He recalls long days relearning things, describing one of the hardest things was learning to dress himself again. He admits to putting his OT through hell “trying to get a bloody sock on my feet. I think I told her at one stage, I was just going to give up, you know be a bit cold in the winter” he says with a wry smile. Despite it all, before leaving the hospital he quite remarkably got to his feet and tentatively made his first steps. Until then, he had been primarily using his wheelchair. “Walking at that point, was part of the progress, but it wasn’t very practical.” he says. For James there was still quite a road to recovery ahead and questions on how a potential return to work was possible.

“When you’re learning to walk again you find the mental and physical fatigue quite significant.” James treated his home like a training ground while rehabilitating. He took great delight in surprising his wife with his progress on her return home. “Who mowed the lawn?” she asks one day not quite believing what she was seeing and readying herself to ring two or three friends to ask them who had mowed the lawn. James had strategically worked out how to get the mower from the garage, down the step and onto the lawn. Once he had started the mower, “I effectively used it like a walking frame” with a broad grin on his face.

James, however, admits to not quite pulling it off on other occasions. He narrowly missed a rose bush one day after catching his foot on the boxing on the edge of the garden and landing in the mint bed. Lying there with the smell of mint around him, he was left contemplating how he was going to get back up, but “that’s alright, you just sit there for a few minutes...I managed to get hold of a post” he says nonchalantly, and goes on to say “I left a bum-shaped impression in the mint bed.”

“Being at work helped me recover as well.”

Debbie says, “James was always very keen to try and return to work, though his paralysis made the idea of returning to work challenging. James didn’t know if he could go back to work, or what that might look like and how that would even be possible.”

In describing what is important for any client Debbie states “for anybody, it’s the hope that work is achievable, and we want people to believe there is hope for a return to work.” A recently published vocational rehabilitation study* amongst the SCI community provides evidence that supports this view. The study conducted by Dunn and others in 2022, concluded that the establishment and maintenance of hope, through trusted relationships supporting and identifying an individual’s inherent potential, along with appropriate resources through the rehabilitation journey improves long-term employment outcomes for people with SCI.

When someone is ready to start a return to work one of the key things is looking to create a plan for a graduated return that can be built on and that is sustainable. Debbie will, along with medical staff discuss with people how to manage fatigue during their return to work, which is critically important. She will also check back in and monitor how clients are managing week to week and whether to increase hours or stay the same.

So, it was for James after starting with an initial 8 hours per week he gradually progressed to 30 hours and then an eventual return to full time hours at Liquor King in May 2020. It took some time to build the stamina and energy to continue to increase his hours and he acknowledges his extremely supportive area manager. “Being at work helped me recover as well” says James.

James continues to take on and relish new opportunities and has started a new role at the start of this year as a sales representative for HaHa wines. It’s a travelling role taking him to Nelson, Blenheim and around Christchurch. Not only that he also is back to playing 18 holes of golf and also some lawn bowls, both of which he feels very privileged to get back to. Not sweating it when he has a bad hole on the golf course “I’m just so happy to be out there” he says.

Today James says “I’m 95% fine, so I’m very grateful for that. It’s nice to come back, I realise how fortunate I am. I wanted to be as useful as I possibly could for my family, whether that was going to be in a chair or walking. I wanted to recover as much as I possibly could. The Spinal Trust has been a huge part of my recovery. When I was in the chair in here (BSU) I looked at people like Brett (Peer Support) and I thought gosh, these guys work hard, they get out there and do stuff.”

James goes on to say, “If you think you’re having a bad day, you can guarantee that there is someone not very far away that is having a much worse day than you, so I suppose I’ve spent more time being grateful for what I have, rather than what I didn’t have.”

James’s determination, practical attitude, humour and realistic stance of not getting too ahead of himself, have undoubtedly aided in his recovery and his return to full-time work, surprising his clients, family and friends along the way with what he has achieved.

*Dunn, J. A., Martin, R. A., Hackney, J. J., Nunnerley, J. L., Snell, D. L., Bourke, J. A., Young, T., Hall, A., Derrett, S. (2022). Developing a Conceptual Framework for Early Intervention Vocational Rehabilitation for people following Spinal Cord Injury. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-022-100609>



Queenstown Marathon

After two postponements due to Covid, the Queenstown Marathon took place on 19th November.

Unfortunately, some of the original team members were not able to attend the new date.

Our special thanks and gratitude to Brodie Kane, Susan Simpson, Rosie McLeod and Connor Cowley who all lined up for CatWalk.

Thanks to everyone who supported our CatWalkers, we have \$7300 raised for spinal cord injury!



Above: Brodie Kane

Some fun facts from the day:

- Over **12,000** athletes are taking part across four distances
- More females than males are taking part (**58:42**)
- Average age of those participating is **38**
- **69%** are taking part in the event for the first time
- **91%** of participants are travelling to the event from outside the Queenstown-Lakes District
- Entrants represent **97** different countries
- International athletes make up **14%** of entries
- The oldest participant is **87**-year-old David Graham, taking part in the Half Marathon

Thanks



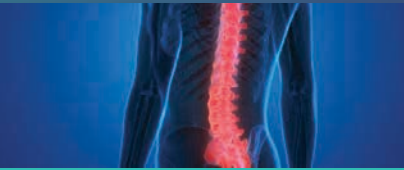
Thanks to George and Luce Williams, \$4600 was donated from the sale of two outstanding rams who were offered at the Grassendale Genetics rams sale on 27th October at Solway Showgrounds, Masterton.

<https://grassendale.nz>

Thanks!

Corporate Supporters





Donate to spinal cord injury research

Your donation will help fund world-class spinal cord injury research and contributes to our vision of a world free from spinal cord injury research.

Become a Core Supporter

Just as a strong core is needed to support our bodies, our Core Supporters strengthen our ability to fund innovative spinal cord injury research by giving a donation regularly.

Leave a legacy by naming CatWalk in your Will

Leaving a gift in your Will could benefit spinal cord injury in a transformational way by ensuring the vital research endures until a cure is found.



[Donate Here](#)

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Donations can be made using either Visa or Mastercard or by internet or telephone banking:

Account name: **The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Trust**

Account number: **02-0108-0525933-00**

Bank: **Bank of New Zealand**

Branch: **Private Bank**

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The additional details required for an international transfer are:

Physical address: **Level 29, 188 Quay Street, Auckland 1010, New Zealand**

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