

# CATWALK

NEVER SAY NEVER

SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH TRUST



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF  
**The CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Research Trust**



Six Senses Fiji – major supporters of the 2018 Pot of Gold Raffle. More information on Pg 6&7

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December 2017

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

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# Founder's FOOTNOTE

First and foremost a big HIGH FIVE to CatWalk deputy chairman David Pretorius and his 27 strong NY Marathon Team.

A personal challenge set and achieved by all through intensive training and bloody mindedness – a special thank-you to this 2017 team for flying the CatWalk flag so proudly and spreading the word on our goal. You ALL rock.

My personal training has moved up a level with thanks to local support from Linda and Steve Oldfield at Shapeshop and the team at Massey University, Lynette, Josh and Olivia. I've been motivated by a number of different people and this issue spotlights a few of them.

It explains how some get back on their feet again whilst others gained wonderful health benefits. The possibilities are exciting and reiterate CatWalk's byline 'Never Say Never'.

Four days after those crazy CatWalk marathoners completed their NY challenge on 10/11/2017 I struck 15 years in a chair. A couple of special phone calls came in from friends and we discussed what's been achieved. No tears just lots of laughs on the challenges we have overcome and the goals we have all achieved. Still, the focus is strong...we

don't want anyone having to go through what we have so keep believing because we are and so do the researchers. CatWalk Board member, Emeritus Professor Louise Nicholson and her husband Jon made a \$1 million dollar donation directly to SCI research at Auckland University because she believes the cure will be discovered in her lifetime – that says it all. So keep up the fight CatWalkers, stay healthy fellow wheelies, we are getting mighty close.



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR

# International Patron

## Dear CatWalk Friends

Based on this bumper newsletter, it's clear 2017 was another terrific year for CatWalk. And as you flick through these pages, please take a moment to reflect, and acknowledge everyone who has contributed to making a difference.

In particular, I've always admired the dedication of your team towards the long game. A cure for SCI was never going to be something that happened in days, weeks or months.

Just like training a top event horse, or preparing for a marathon, good things take time and in many cases, that means years. Slowly but surely though, whether it's here in the United Kingdom, in the

United States or in New Zealand it's obvious to me that you are helping take the world there.

This global focus is reflected inside, as CatWalk once again makes its mark in the New York marathon, and you highlight exciting rehab opportunities in Australia.

The momentum continues to build.

*Zara Tindall MBE*

## NATIONAL PATRONS

Sir Brian Lochore, ONZ, KNZM, OBE; Richie McCaw ONZ; Dr Rick Acland, Dion Nash; Lance O'Sullivan, ONZM; Aaron Slight MNZM; Toni Street, Sir Mark Todd, CBE; Sarah Walker, Duane Kale ONZM, Hon Dame Lowell Goddard DNZM

## TRUSTEES

Scott Malcolm (Chairman); Emeritus Professor Louse Nicholson, David Pretorius (Deputy Chairman), Simon Monks, Grant Sharman, Tonia Cawood, Vikki Maclean.





*L: CatWalk General Manager, Meg Speirs and Dr Rosi Lederer, Scientific Coordinator, Wings for Life International. || R: Meg Speirs and CatWalk International Research Advisor, Martin Codyre with assistance dog Hilda.*

## ISCoS ANNUAL Scientific Meeting

The International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS), Annual Scientific Meeting was hosted in Dublin city in late October. The 2017 meeting attracted over 1,000 spinal cord injury (SCI) specialists to share knowledge about research innovations and clinical advancements.

Through its medical and multi-disciplinary team of professionals, and a membership of over 1,000, ISCoS fosters SCI education, research and clinical excellence. General Manager, Meg Speirs, attended the Dublin meeting as CatWalk's representative and took part in the intensive three day forum.

Over the course of the meeting, some of the comprehensive list of topics included: surgical management following injury, advances in computerised testing to improve outcomes, targeted data collection and reporting, bladder and bowel dysfunction, pressure ulcer management, progressions in implanted electrical stimulation, exoskeletal-assisted walking, cognitive behavioural therapy, pain management programmes and, considerations for moving clinical trials forward.

The knowledge gained was vast, but once again we are reminded of the complexity of the injury that we are all working towards curing, and how important international collaboration is to the combined goal. Both confidence and commitment are at an all-time high, and with the brightest minds in the SCI community all converged into one place, the collective international drive to fix SCI is inspiring - it is simply not a matter of 'if', but 'when'.

The meeting also provided an excellent chance to meet up with existing associates and to continue discussions around collaborative research opportunities. The more we can share and communicate, the faster we will cure SCI for good.



## PUHINUI INTERNATIONAL EVENT Supporting CatWalk

For Horse Trials enthusiasts all roads lead to the Puhinui Reserve near Auckland Airport when the Puhinui International Horse Trials take place from the 7th to the 10th December. It is the pinnacle of the spring season and attracts riders from all over the North Island as well as a contingent of the best from the South Island.

Along with the Taupo three day event "Puhinui", as it is known, is one of the most sought after titles in eventing. It is also an opportunity for those seeking higher honours to impress the National Selectors, who name their emerging talent squads at year end. Classes range from 95cm up to the International 3\* level, which is the highest level competed in New Zealand.

Puhinui's 3\* class will be wide open this year with the winners of the past two years, Virginia Thompson and Star Nouveau, crossing the Tasman and stepping up to the 4\* event in Adelaide in November, along with Donna Edwards-Smith and her two stars, Mr Hokey Pokey and DSE Tangalooma. Possible contenders for the title include Olympian Jock Paget, Sam Felton, Canterbury's Emily Cammock and Kirsty Sharapoff

This year Puhinui has partnered with CatWalk to support the Foundations objectives and to raise further funds for the vital work which CatWalk does in supporting spinal cord injury research.

CatWalk founder Catriona McLeod, as she was then, was 2nd once by 0.1 to the winner, CatWalk Ambassador Kate Lambie. Catriona competed every year up until 2002

"Puhinui is a special event for all sorts of reasons and one very significant one for me – Sam proposed to me while in Auckland for the 2000 event!"

<http://www.3dayevent.co.nz/>





# JOIN CATWALK FOR A MAGNIFIQUE FRENCH *voyage*



## 2019 DATES:

**WEEK 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

Monday 27th May 5pm - Monday 3rd June 10am

**WEEK 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Monday 3rd June 5pm - Monday 10th June 10am

**WEEK 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

Monday 10th June 5pm - Monday 17th June 10am

**WEEK 4:** \_\_\_\_\_

Monday 17th June 5pm - Monday 24th June 10am

**CatWalk will turn on the aristocratic charm providing an exhaustive seven day cycle tour of pure joie de vivre. Chef de mission for the entire trip will be none other than *Madame* Catriona Williams.**

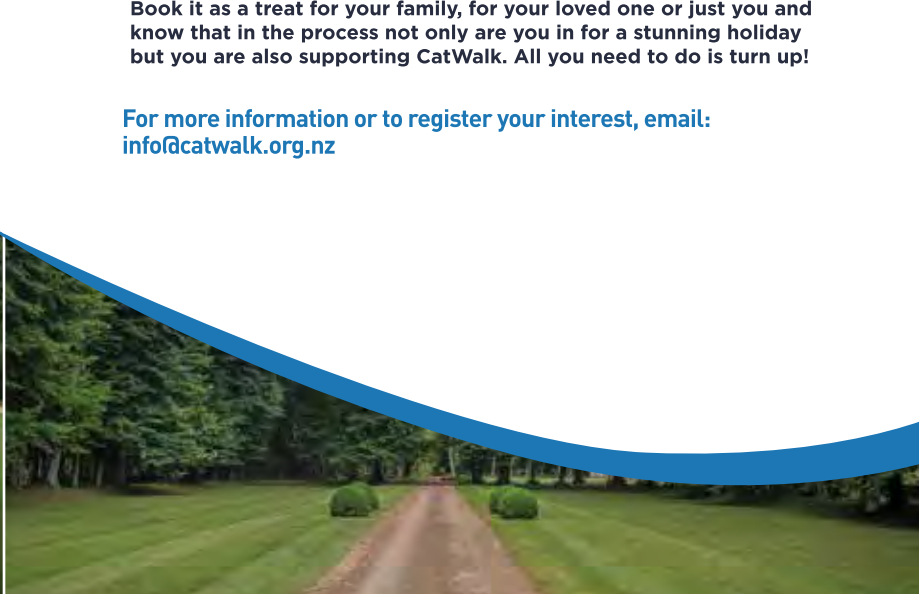
If it's French splendour, style and gastronomy you seek with a little exercise and adventure on a bike, then here is the perfect opportunity to experience a once in a lifetime gift from a magical CatWalk supporter, Anita Mackenzie. Anita has allowed us to offer the ultimate French adventure to you by staying in her privately owned Chateau d'Oyre in the Loire Valley, accommodating up to 27 guests.

We can guarantee it will exceed your expectations as you are transported into a fairy-tale realm of storybook villages, time burnished towns and exquisite scenery. There's magic at every turn in the enchanting Chateau that sits on acres of Versailles-esk grounds with 200 year old trees edging its postcard-like surrounds.

Live like nobility for a week enjoying the use of the Chateau d'Oyre and its grounds and whilst there explore the famous Loire Valley on bike discovering the produce markets, celebrated wineries and stunning restaurants. Along the way gathering a taste of the many thousands of years of rich architecture, artistry and agriculture. A swimming pool, wifi and an English TV (just in case) ensure all needs are met.

**Book it as a treat for your family, for your loved one or just you and know that in the process not only are you in for a stunning holiday but you are also supporting CatWalk. All you need to do is turn up!**

**For more information or to register your interest, email: [info@catwalk.org.nz](mailto:info@catwalk.org.nz)**



## 2018 POT OF GOLD

- \$250.00

Imagine a world free of paralysis caused by spinal cord injury. Help us find a cure by supporting this raffle and be in to win an incredible experience!

### Prize One



**5 night stay for up to 8 people in a Beachfront Pool Residence**

SIX SENSES FIJI RESORT

- Five (5) nights for up to eight (8) people in a Beachfront Pool Residence.
- Daily buffet breakfast for up to eight (8) people.
- Prize Value: FJD37,500.00 including taxes and breakfast (approximately NZ\$26,000.00).

### Prize Two



**5 night stay for 2 people in a Beachfront Pool Villa**

SIX SENSES FIJI RESORT

- Five (5) nights for two (2) people in a Beachfront Pool Villa.
- Daily buffet breakfast for two (2) people.
- Prize Value: FJD14,000.00 including taxes and breakfast (approximately NZ\$9,700.00).

### Prize Three



**1 night stay for 2 people including gourmet dinner and full breakfast**

KAURI CLIFFS LODGE

- One (1) night's accommodation for two (2) people (based on double occupancy) in a suite at The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs.
- Inclusive of pre-dinner drinks and canapes, gourmet dinner and full breakfast, non-alcoholic mini bar & Wi-fi.
- To be undertaken between April 30th, 2018 and November 14th, 2018.
- Prize Value: NZ\$2,748.50.

#### Terms and Conditions:

Limited to 200 tickets

Numbered 001 - 200, \$250.00 per ticket.

1<sup>st</sup> number drawn has the first choice of prize, 2<sup>nd</sup> number drawn has the second choice of prize, 3<sup>rd</sup> number drawn receives the remaining prize.

All prizes have been generously donated by the suppliers.

For further information please visit [www.catwalk.org.nz/pot-of-gold-raffle/](http://www.catwalk.org.nz/pot-of-gold-raffle/)

Organiser:- Meg Speirs,  
407 Queen Street Masterton.

Winner will be drawn on Monday, 30th April 2018 under Police supervision.

See our website for further terms and conditions.

#### Prize One: SIX SENSES FIJI RESORT 5 night stay for up to 8 people in a Beachfront Pool Residence

- Five (5) nights for up to eight (8) people in a Beachfront Pool Residence.
- Daily buffet breakfast for up to eight (8) people.
- Prize Value: FJD37,500.00 including taxes and breakfast.

Value (approx) NZ\$26,000.00

#### Prize Two: SIX SENSES FIJI RESORT 5 night stay for 2 people in a Beachfront Pool Villa

- Five (5) nights for two (2) people in a Beachfront Pool Villa.
- Daily buffet breakfast for two (2) people.
- Prize Value: FJD14,000.00 including taxes and breakfast.

Value (approx) NZ\$9,700.00

#### Prize One & Two Terms & Conditions:

- Voucher valid from May 1st 2018 to December 21st 2018.
- Blackout period applies for July 2018 School Holidays.
- Reservation is subject to availability with advance reservation only.
- This voucher may be combined with another reservation. Should you wish to extend your stay, please contact our reservations team.
- The voucher must be presented upon arrival at the resort.
- Travel to and from the resort is the responsibility of the winner.

#### Prize Three: KAURI CLIFFS LODGE

##### 1 night stay for 2 people including gourmet dinner and full breakfast

- One (1) night's accommodation for two (2) people (based on double occupancy) in a suite at The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs.
- Inclusive of pre-dinner drinks and canapes, gourmet dinner and full breakfast, non-alcoholic mini bar & Wi-fi.
- To be undertaken between April 30th, 2018 and November 14th, 2018.
- Travel to and from the lodge is the responsibility of the winner.

Value NZ\$2,748.50

# SIX SENSES FIJI Major Donator

## for Pot of Gold

Let us introduce you to the luxury of the newest Six Senses Resort in Fiji.

Located on the idyllic Malolo Island, Six Senses Fiji introduces a refreshing new approach to island getaways. Fronting a protected bay with sandy beach and all-tide swimming in the turquoise lagoon, 24 pool villas reflect a contemporary take on Fijian tradition with thatched roofs, carved features and ever-smiling Fijian hosts offering heartfelt service.

For families and larger groups, multi-bedroom residences create a feeling of a private island home and capture the essence of Fijian design and culture. Ideal for guests looking to combine quality private time and the benefits of resort living, the residences are set amongst lush tropical gardens and offer a choice of ocean, marina and beachfront panorama views.

Each residence features two to five bedrooms with a private pool, fully equipped kitchen, dining room, indoor and outdoor living space and outdoor barbecue. With easy access to the resort's deli and bakery, residents feel at home cooking in or visiting one of the resort restaurants. All residences include a GEM (Guest Experience Maker) and nanny, plus residents can take advantage of all the resort activities as they wish.

Sustainability is a principal notion at Six Senses Fiji where all residences and facilities are 100 percent solar powered by the first microgrid in Fiji to use Tesla batteries. Guests can nurture their wellness at Six Senses Spa Fiji that features a yoga pavilion and alchemy bar. Espousing the wisdom of ancient Pacific healing techniques, indigenous medicinal plants combine with highly skilled therapists to create journeys that energize and relax.

From beginners to pros the resort offers water sports for all skill-sets. Guests can snorkel, scuba dive, sail and surfers will be awed by the world-famous Cloudbreak just a 20 minute boat journey away. The Bula-tin activities program offers a diverse range of out of the ordinary experiences including resort farm and local village visits, cinema viewings under the stars and none more romantic than a sunset cruise.

Dining at Six Senses Fiji is a remarkable experience. Striving to create memories not just meals, the food and beverages team use ingredients from the resort farm and local fishing village that ignite guests' senses. Dine at the vibrant Tovolea restaurant for carefully selected daily changing menus or indulge in a delicious pizza at the TeiTei Pizzeria. For something different, guests can visit Vunabaka Village where they will be spoiled for choice with a bakery, deli, cafe and ice creamery. The resort boasts a water bottling plant where all drinking water is treated to the highest international standards, purified, mineralized and bottled in Six Senses glass bottles. Water is not imported to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and in support of zero waste.

Either 35 minutes by Six Senses boat or 10 minutes by helicopter from Nadi, Six Senses Fiji embraces the traditions of the South Pacific while presenting modern living and natural luxuries. Views of Fiji's most dramatic beaches, the turquoise ocean, offshore reefs and stunning sunsets combine to set the scene for an unforgettable holiday.



Kauri Cliffs is a name synonymous with style and elegance in New Zealand. Resting on an unspoilt coastline where high cliffs give way to three pristine private beaches, Kauri Cliffs is experiential travel at its best.

Named the number one resort in Australia and New Zealand by Travel + Leisure, Kauri Cliffs is synonymous with style, elegance and luxury in New Zealand. The property is a leisure traveller's dream. Activities abound with the David Harman-designed golf course, immersive local heritage tours, bountiful fishing, and bush walks, mountain biking, quad biking and spa sanctuary hidden within native forest.

## Pot of GOLD RAFFLE

Following on from the resounding success of the 2017 Pot of Gold raffle we are excited to present to you Pot of Gold 2018.

Thanks to the extremely generous support of Six Senses Fiji and Kauri Cliffs who have donated three luxurious holiday destinations.

Only 200 tickets are available in the Pot of Gold Raffle. Don't miss out on securing your ticket!

# Resetting Rehabilitation A New Order?

This month, CatWalk presents a comprehensive three part feature focused on the key themes of Conviction – Aussie Ken Ware’s faith in a ground-breaking therapy programme; Courage – Matt Hall’s fight back from SCI; and Constructive Challenges – Making Strides and the goals a special group is setting for itself every single day. Let’s start at the beginning, in a small gym in Western Australia.



**M**ind, Matter and Making a Difference Ken Ware didn’t set out to change the world – he just wanted to be Mr Universe. Seriously.

The one time Aussie body builder was working out in a gym nearly 30 years ago when he noticed “the old fellas” in the other corner were getting better results. Certainly better than the screaming and shouting coming the fiercely ambitious 20-somethings in his corner.

And as Ken started taking advice from his elders, he was surprised by the secret to their success.

“They simply told me to slow down, to think, to use lighter weights and get my technique sorted out.”

Initially sceptical about how any of that could lead to improvement, Ken decided to give it a go, with an initial goal of making the Mr Queensland finals inside four years. Instead, he was competing at the World Champs in two. The old guys were right.

In fact, the more weight he took off and the slower he went, the better things got. This didn’t make sense ... but weirdly, it was working.

And then something really odd started happening. Despite the lighter weights

and ‘go slow’ policy, after certain sets, Ken noticed a recurring tremor in the same muscles he’d been working. The “quivering” happened too often to be a coincidence. Ken couldn’t be sure why the tremors were so important – but something told him they were.

For the time being, the key lessons he was learning were to enhance his calmness and composure. He let the tremors come along for the ride, with little thought of any wider benefit.

“At first, everything about these workouts was about me. I didn’t have any idea it could help others.”

Then in the late 1980s, Ken was asked for advice on a sore shoulder. As he utilised traditional advice on lateral raises and the like, the same tremor appeared

After encouragement from Ken to let it work through, the client reported a “pretty miraculous” recovery and felt noticeably better within 24 hours. Ken still wasn’t sure about what to make of his observations, and stayed quiet, a little nervous about what those supposedly “in the know” would think.

During the ‘90s and beyond, Ken quietly continued charting his research into

tremors. Those years of dedication were rewarded with academic recognition in 2009, and he was invited to speak to internationally – firstly in Italy, then the United States.

It sounds like something out of Crocodile Dundee: “I was nervous as hell, I’d never spoken to a professor in my life.” And now this down to earth Aussie was lecturing to rooms full of them.

What he was addressing in those early talks is what’s come to be known as NeuroPhysics Therapy ([neurophysicstherapy.global](http://neurophysicstherapy.global)) – a gentle, exercise-based treatment which engages and triggers the body’s natural healing processes through very light and controlled resistance training --- and harnesses the power of muscle tremors along the way.

A significant ‘big bang’ moment came when Ken connected with great para athlete John Maclean ([johnmaclean.com.au](http://johnmaclean.com.au)) . Their journey’s been extensively chronicled online and is a must read. John’s personal mission statement is “ONLY POSSIBILITIES” and by the time he approached Ken in April 2013, he was already at the top of his para game. But then, and after 25 years as an incomplete paraplegic, John was able to take the first steps towards achieving





*L: Ken Ware reviewing data analysis for scientific publication with gait technician Lloyd Bainbridge.  
R: Founder of NeuroPhysics Therapy, Ken Ware working with a spinal cord injured patient, Emma Henderson.*

his dream to walk again, thanks to Ken's "tremor trigger" process.

"It was a huge leap of faith for John," says Ken. "Together I'd say we altered beliefs. Him doing unassisted steps for himself, but also showing the world how our understanding of SCI needs to change."

And not just SCI but also conditions such as muscular dystrophy where the brain, working in conjunction with the muscles, can find new ways to harness nervous energy.

Ken's now eager to teach others, so his work can continue to expand beyond his Gold Coast base. Training NeuroPhysics therapists in countries as diverse as Australia, Denmark, New Zealand and Brazil is part of that.

"We're getting more traction and the more knowledge I have, the more I feel the responsibility of sharing it. I'm a slow burner I guess. I'm 60 now and more enthusiastic than ever."

One New Zealander happy to sing Ken's praises is Tauranga's Richard Cashmore. Seven years ago, Richard was visiting the favourite family holiday spot in Coolangatta when he opted for a fateful body surf on the last day of a mid-winter break.

"I thought I'd catch the last wave of the day. Bang. There was nothing from the neck down. The lifesavers were there to get me out – being paralysed underwater isn't too good."

Slowly, some movement returned but Richard was still unable to walk. An initial operation in Australia enabled him to stand, but he wasn't in good shape.

Flown home, the normally active Kiwi found himself bed-ridden, slowly progressing towards a wheel chair, then a walker and eventually a standing shuffle. A second operation in Auckland months later was followed by a strict regime of exercise and getting back on his feet, but then progress plateaued.

Richard heard about Ken's work at the beginning of this year. When he came off the plane for their first round of therapy, he was in a chair and unable to walk further than 20 metres.

Three weeks later and he was walking and jogging freely. Recounting those seemingly miraculous results Richard scoffs at any suggestion of 'quackery.'

Instead, for him it's been about retraining the brain the way it was before the accident.

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**"Ken always describes the brain as the strongest part of the body. He's very down to earth, and he's not a quack. He's totally dedicated and committed."**

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Variouly describing his mentor, and now friend, as supportive, encouraging and challenging, Richard says Ken has helped not only that serious neck injury but a pre-existing lower back problem which had required three earlier operations.

"I've got so many benefits. We've made huge strides on my neck injury and I've cut right down on medication. Ken talks and thinks about pain and injury in a different way."

A different way of thinking about SCI that's making a huge difference in real lives.

# Matt Hall

## Learnings from Life

It was a hot January day in the summer of 2017, and home on holiday from Singapore, expatriate Kiwi teacher Matt Hall was revelling in the time spent catching up with family and friends.

As that day moved closer to early evening, Matt decided to join the kids in his friends' Te Puke pool.

"I wanted to jump right in. But I assumed too much about the depth. I plopped in – and bang, that was my neck."

While it might be difficult for a listener to hear what happened next, Matt is matter of fact about the process. In fact, rather than dwell on all the negatives, he knows he's also experienced his share of good luck. And as our talk continues, and explores the impact of NeuroPhysics on his recovery, it's clear a rationalist's approach to life has stood him in good stead.

"I was drowning, I knew that straight away. My legs and arms wouldn't move."

The first stroke of luck was one of Matt's friends being a surf life saver. He wanted to help his mate get out but in the end decided to hold him in the water until the ambulance arrived, in the process helping keep his neck cooled. That's a particularly interesting interaction into recent CatWalk funded research which limits damage immediately after an SCI.

Matt's 'luck' continued – he was flown straight to Auckland very soon after the 5pm accident, taking advantage of the recognised 'golden period' post injury, and by 1am he was undergoing the first of several operations.

But the news next morning wasn't good. Coming round from the anaesthetic, Matt could feel virtually nothing.

"Nothing. I was paralysed from the chest downwards."

Officially, he was a C5-6 dislocation, but six weeks later, an xray revealed that Matt's neck needed strengthening. And after that operation, something quite remarkable happened.

"After I woke up, I could move a toe, and the finger of my right hand. This was the beginning of recovery, I knew it straight away and it was very exciting."

As a result of the surgery, the structure of his neck had shifted just fractionally -- and yet hugely significantly -- however things

weren't going to be all plain sailing. As nerves began to reconnect, Matt experienced nothing short of agony.

"It was extremely painful having that second operation, and afterwards. A good time and a bad. I was being rolled every four hours, and the pain was quite extraordinary."

But it was all part of re-educating his brain and body and by March, more movement had returned in his toes, along with a limited amount of foot flexion.

By May, Matt was ready to progress from the Otago spinal unit where he had met another patient who helped him come into contact with the concepts of neurophysiology, and two people who would truly change his life – Olly Coffey and Jane Matthews from NeuroPhysics Therapy Global.

He started with Olly on the 4th of June, and was eager to show him the movement he'd achieved post accident.

"In fact, it wasn't a heck of a lot but it started us off and I could tell that this rehab with the team was going to be crucial to recovery."

ACC were able to fund 3 hours of physio a week, but Matt wanted more. He and Olly began working together for two hours a day.

"I've never worked so hard. These were long and intense sessions. I got more flexion and some leg movement, I was so

happy, we were seeing real progress."

But it wasn't just work on Matt's legs. Despite his absolute blind faith that he would eventually walk back into his position as assistant principal at the Australian International School in Singapore, that he would stand tall for kids Zara and Monty, Matt's mind and body both needed a lot more work, and that's where the concepts of NeuroPhysics really kicked in.

Matt is willing to admit some of the subsequent weeks seemed slow, but great progress continued to be made. He went from being only able to balance while sitting, to standing, walking unaided with a walker and more recently with just crutches. During the of hours of NeuroPhysics sessions they've now worked

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"I've never worked so hard. These were long and intense sessions. I got more flexion and some leg movement, I was so happy, we were seeing real progress."

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Matt Hall

through together, Olly and Jane insist on making the time to do things right.

“They’ve never said ‘you are going to walk again.’ I say I am. I have to close my eyes, stay slow, constantly mindful. While I’m doing exercises on other parts of my body. I’m also always thinking of my legs and the effect on them.”

“We’re mind and body centered. Being in that relaxed and yet very focused state. When I’m in a two hour session with Olly, afterwards I’m more mentally exhausted than physically. I’m completely learning everything again about how to walk – like a toddler.

“That’s the time frame, and there’s no quick fix. The power of the mind is huge in recovery. The skeletal strength is one thing – the other is building the neurological connections with the body.”

Matt’s made his own impression on Olly and Jane. Here’s what Olly tells us:

“On our first meeting, Matt proudly showed me how he could move his right foot. While I acknowledged this exciting milestone, I brought Matt’s attention to how much effort he was using to perform this movement and how this was affecting his entire system. I asked him to practice the same task while being

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“We’re mind and body centered. Being in that relaxed and yet very focused state. When I’m in a two hour session with Olly, afterwards I’m more mentally exhausted than physically...”

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mindful of his postural tone, his breathing and aiming to stay calm and more composed as he lifted his foot. When I saw him a week later, he performed the same movement with complete control and ease. From day one, Matt was willing to listen to advice and spend time on refining simple skills. Interestingly, I gave Matt this same advice when he stood for the first time and when he took his first step.”

Olly also has an insider’s insight into NeuroPhysics Therapy.

“It focuses on the human system as a whole. We identify and correct dysfunctional psychophysical behaviour during exercise to positively affect how the entire brain body system functions. In simple terms, we teach our patients to gain a better awareness of how their mind and body functions during exercise (controlled stressor); and ultimately we teach patients to gain control over these patterns of behaviour.



NEUROPHYSICS  
THERAPY

**CALL NOW** and quote ‘CATWALK’ to book a  
Complimentary Consultation  
with one of our NeuroPhysics Therapists

*\*Offer only available in New Zealand*

Ph. 09 361 3516 | [www.neurophysicstherapy.global](http://www.neurophysicstherapy.global)

Auckland | Mount Maunganui Clinics  
[greylynn@neurophysicstherapy.global](mailto:greylynn@neurophysicstherapy.global)

 NeuroPhysics Therapy Clinic - Grey Lynn



“In Matt’s case for example, we quickly identified that his posture would close into a ‘protective position’ during each exercise, which would in turn affect his breathing. This had a significant flow on effect for his entire system. Rather than becoming focused on these ‘downstream effects’, we taught Matt how to control his posture during each exercise in order to positively influence his entire system. These types of behavioural patterns are consistent during normal activities of daily living. When Matt stood for the first time for example, he was able to focus on his posture, instead of worrying about the complex nature of what standing represents.”

During sessions with acupuncturist Sonia three times a week, Matt heard about CatWalk and wrote to Catriona, sharing his story and videos of his recovery. She rang, and the relationship built to the point where Matt was able to attend the Trust’s recent information sharing event in Auckland.

The latest plan for Matt is to return to Singapore on January 31 2018 – just over a year after the accident. In the meantime, he will carry on the six hour a day, six day a week rehab sessions, walking with the walker, walking with the crutches and building to whole days without being in the chair.

“I’m building my independence to get rid of the equipment, I want to go back to Singapore – hopefully with nothing more than crutches -- get back to work, and Zara and Monty. I want to be there for them.

“There has to be a strength of mind and a sense that you won’t accept anything less.”

Matt Hall has that, and more. And once he’s pushed his own recovery through, he wants to help spread the word through the sector here.

That will start with ACC. Despite his sincere appreciation of the funding they’ve provided, Matt looks at the benefits of NeuroPhysics and wants to take it further, saying it will have huge savings in the long run.

“I’d like them to look at funding this sort of recovery programme for at least the first two years.

“ACC have been amazing but I’ve pushed them to the limit.”

At the end of our conversation, I’m left feeling that the sky’s the limit for Matt Hall.

Matt’s journey to date and further progress can be viewed through his video’s on the ‘updates’ section of his ‘Give a Little’ page.



*Matt Hall exercising at NeuroPhysics Therapy*

# Making waves with MAKING STRIDES

Gold Coast specialist SCI recovery centre Making Strides ([makingstrides.com.au](http://makingstrides.com.au)) tells it straight on its website.



*Sessions can be pretty intense at times, but once you start to notice the changes within yourself because of it, there becomes this addiction to push yourself more and more to see what more of your true potential you can uncover. If I had it my way, I would be at Making Strides every day.*  
Nadia Mackle, New Zealand

“We’re a vibrant specialist spinal cord injury recovery centre committed to providing effective and efficient exercise based therapy to help our clients reach their full recovery potential, as well as achieve and maintain optimal health and fitness.”

But after delving a little deeper, and discovering the passion which drives this unique facility, you realise the online summary paints a small part of a much bigger picture. Making Strides is a truly unique facility that’s now readily accessible to and being embraced by both New Zealanders and Australians.

Founded four years ago by a committed trio (Aussies Kristee Shepherd and Jim Barrett, and with American Genny Kroll-Rosen), Making Strides represents a unique combination of clinical advice, science based therapy and a buzz of genuine enthusiasm and belief.

And again and again, that belief comes through loud and clear during a 30 minute conversation with Kristee, who readily admits that her timeline to post injury rehab is different to most. It wasn’t til eight years post accident that she finally felt ready to go further, and in the process discovered the genesis for Making Strides.

“My own journey ... well, I was 17 and it was a very vulnerable age. There was a long period of transition time for me. The accident for me was like a death, both the grieving and the physical pain. Instead of accepting what had happened, I had to be brave enough to not accept what had happened. Initially I wasn’t brave enough, but then I found it.”

“It” was her first visit to Project Walk in the United States, then headquartered in San Diego.

On her first trip there, Kristee made significant physical gains, but also forged an emotional and spiritual bond with other young women and the way they were grappling with similar problems.

“I’d previously had lots of offers from

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**“We’ll make sure a 70 year old feels as comfortable as a teenager.”**

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family and friends to help with stem cell treatment and the like but I wasn’t impressed by ‘medical tourism.’ I wasn’t going to be interested in that sort of treatment unless it was credible, and I wasn’t going to be paying big dollars unless I was confident about getting results in return.

“But with Project Walk, I liked the idea that it wasn’t all about a cure. It was about maximising my potential for recovery, for me.”

Genny wasn’t one of Kristee’s personal trainers in California but they got on well socially and subsequent visits only confirmed Kristee’s enthusiasm for the Project Walk philosophy. After meeting up with Genny (ironically at Brisbane

Hospital while recovering from a broken leg), everything came together.

Genny, who’d been on a private visit Down Under, went back to the States, packed up her life and returned to Australia to train Kristee as part of a group from the Brisbane area.

Setting up in a local warehouse, Kristee invested her own money in the fledgling Making Strides. Quickly, the team outgrew their initial space and moved to a bigger facility two doors down. They haven’t looked back.

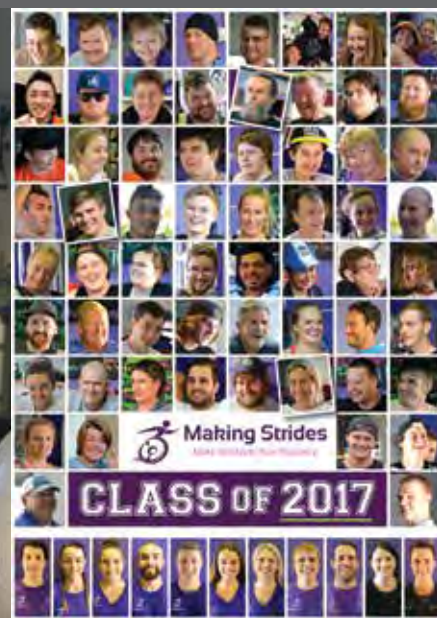
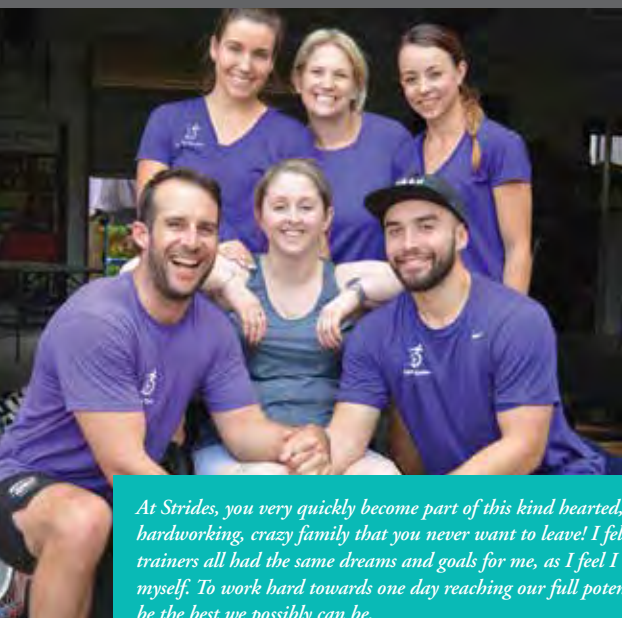
“We haven’t needed to grow the business, I like to say it grows itself! Word of mouth, the need for this kind of rehab – it made me realise how unserved the market had been.”

New Zealanders who might have been unable to travel to the States for a Project Walk type experience because of cost have also been quick to embrace Making Strides.

Christchurch teenager Billy was one of their first clients at age 17. Referred by Burwood, he’s now completed multiple sessions at Burleigh Heads.

Kristee sees a tremendous opportunity to build on this sort of Trans Tasman collaboration - she believes we should be looking to develop more reciprocal health care. With people only having to travel over the ditch, we could all save so much time, money and energy.

Making Strides is equipped with all the standard gym equipment, but has also been extended to suit the specific needs of clients, with highly specialised bike,



*At Strides, you very quickly become part of this kind hearted, vibrant, hardworking, crazy family that you never want to leave! I felt the trainers all had the same dreams and goals for me, as I feel I had for myself. To work hard towards one day reaching our full potential, and to be the best we possibly can be.*  
Nadia Mackle, New Zealand

rehab treadmills and a bodyweight support harness for those re-learning to walk and others who currently have no ability to walk. With the harness, they're able to walk assisted on the treadmill.

Through its agency with Rewalk Robotics in Israel, Making Strides is also able to present amazing opportunities for clients who want to try out the concept of exoskeletons and the technological advancements they represent.

In terms of clinical practice, the team's qualified trainers work using the principles of neuroplasticity, reigniting the pathways of nerves and conductivity. Accredited exercise physiologists and human movement specialists, all with university degrees, are trained in prescribing exercise therapy for SCI specific to each person. The exercise physiologists have completed four years of tertiary education specialising in exercise therapy for a range of populations including neurological conditions.

Additionally, its trainers engage in ongoing professional development to maintain their accreditation and undergo weekly in-service training to remain up to date with the latest technique.

Making Strides maintains relationships with multiple universities including; Griffith University, University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, University of Sunshine Coast and Southern Cross University, and hosts or mentors over 2000 hours of student clinical placements each year

Having turned four years old in October,

Making Strides continues to go from strength to strength, with 179 clients on its books and averaging approximately 70 active clients each year.

In keeping with established SCI statistics and Australia's lifestyles, many of those are young males in the 16 – 25 age bracket

**“But with Project Walk, I liked the idea that it wasn't all about a cure. It was about maximising my potential for recovery, for me.”**

often with adventurous backgrounds such as surfing, or motorbike accidents. Their shared journeys create particularly strong ties that bind.

But there's a range. Making Strides has hosted children as young as 11 and adults in their 70s.

“We'll make sure a 70 year old feels as comfortable as a teenager.”

When I try to summarise the opening lines of this article, and articulate my feeling

of a unique combination of research, resilience and resurgence, Kristee is silent for a moment.

“That's seriously the best feedback ever. We aim for fun, play around, barbecues and vibrancy. Age doesn't exclude anyone, you have fun being here, but at the same time we're not mucking around. This is a serious job and we take it seriously.

“We understand the trust of our clients. They are investing in us 110%.”

Her highest praise comes for the staff. “I don't know how we ever found the staff we have. They're paid for their hours in the gym, but there are so many more hours outside that. Their commitment to their clients wellbeing and happiness is next level.”

Kristee wraps up by describing Making Strides fourth birthday at Surfer's Paradise recently.

“From time to time, we do witness the experience that friends, although they care, they're not coming around so much anymore, or they're not able to. That's when our trainers go above and beyond to become the friends and family they need

“At the party, we had one older gentleman who had a particularly great time. He said we needed to do it again. Every week! He and his wife hadn't been out purely for fun in years. Of course, they'd been out in public with family, but not just for spontaneous fun.

“That in the context of what we're doing makes it all worthwhile. It was the best night ever.”

# Chancellor's DINNER



Deputy chairman David Pretorius attended the Chancellor's Dinner at the Auckland University where CatWalk was inducted into the Sir George Fowlds Society of the Chancellor's Circle

[www.giving.auckland.ac.nz/en/our-community/the-chancellor\\_s-circle](http://www.giving.auckland.ac.nz/en/our-community/the-chancellor_s-circle)



This recognition is for our ongoing support of the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility and the research being undertaken to find a cure for spinal cord injury.



*Vikki Maclean, Gracie Taylor, Louise Nicholson and Kate Lambie*

## Attitude AWARDS

Each year, AttitudeLive presents the Attitude Awards.

The event was held in Auckland on 9th November. CatWalk Trustee Emeritus Professor Louise Nicholson was a finalist in the "Making a Difference" category for her long-serving contribution to the field of neuroscience and in particular the research into finding a cure for spinal cord injury.

Louise was instrumental in the establishment of the Centre for Brain Research and Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility at the Auckland University. On her retirement recently, Louise and husband John donated \$1 million to support PhD students working to find a cure for spinal cord injuries.

Supporting Louise on the night was CatWalk Trustee Vikki Maclean and CatWalk Ambassadors Gracie Taylor and Kate Lambie. All agreed it was an amazing night with some outstanding people honoured in their areas of interest and expertise.

The Making a Difference category was won by Wendy Duff who supports families of children living with autism.

The Attitude Awards celebrate the outstanding achievements of New Zealanders living with a disability. We hold these awards with a very clear purpose - to continue to support the drive for inclusion and acceptance of people who live with disability.

<https://attitudelive.com>



# Gobi Desert ADVENTURE

Georgina Lloyd competed in the inaugural Gobi Desert Cup Challenge and chose to support CatWalk, raising \$780 for spinal cord injury research.

## Here is a short review from Georgina:

**S**o I arrived home tonight after my Mongolian adventure. I am glad to say I have returned home healthy and well, just sporting the odd uncomfortable blister in particular 'seat' areas.

Although there were incredible moments and fantastic memories, there were also some extremely difficult and testing times. However it is such testing conditions that form part of the wonder of Mongolia in how it can send you from one extreme to the other very quickly.

Although some rotten luck and unexpected mishaps on a couple of days meant I personally didn't race as well as I would've liked, the awesome team that I was a part of managed to come away with the 2nd place in the teams challenge, with one of our team members being the overall race winner.

To the herders, camp staff and crew, thank you for all your hard work to make this come together.

To all those who assisted me with gear a massive thank you as it was greatly appreciated.

To all those who have followed my journey, thank you for your support and kind words.

Last, but definitely not least, thank you to the amazing ponies Honest, Trouper, Ghost, Runt, Vape, Appy & Fabio (& camel) that carried me the distance. All remarkable in their own ways (some more favoured than others though). :)

We often do not realise just how fortunate we are and the testing qualities of Mongolia reminded me that at times all you can do is make the most with what you have. A familiar endurance saying is 'to complete is to win' and I now realise that that proverb goes far beyond just being a race mantra.

My final 2 days of riding was not about trying to win, but really just about enjoying the ride and that is when I truly felt I did win. :)

I expect that the memories created from the experience and the visions of the Mongolian beauty will be etched with me forever.

*Thank you Georgina!*







# Team CATWALK

## Running so others

### CAN WALK

Deb Haworth

On November 1st a team of 27 athletes and 8 supporters gathered at Auckland International Airport clad in especially printed Icebreaker hoodies that announced they were Team Catwalk, headed to the 2017 New York Marathon and they were “running so others can walk”.

Most of them barely knew each other, but by the time they returned just a few days later, they were a cohesive team joined by great experiences and memories that will last their lifetimes. One of the team, Phil Gobbie, later said being part of the Catwalk team became a celebration in itself. The whole experience was greatly enhanced by choosing to partake in an endeavour with goals bigger than individual targets.

Collectively, they raised \$175,000.00 in support of CatWalk’s research funding, and in adopting the campaign catch cry they contributed to the future wellbeing of all those suffering from spinal cord injury.

On race day, the welcoming and enthusiastic atmosphere in all five boroughs of New York City was immense. The diversity of the crowds, the encouraging shouts of “You got this”, the hilarious hand held signs, the flags of countless nations, the shouts, the laughs, the clapping and back slapping, meant for some it was finished before they felt they’d had a chance to absorb it all. (I’ve suggested they do it again with us next year)

Dan Buckingham (in a track wheelchair), Rob Hawkins, Tristan Dean, Carl D’Rose, Chris Burrows, Andrew Calder, and Danita Frittelli finished their runs in sub four-hour times, and to me they looked like they’d enjoyed a gentle Sunday stroll around the park. I was later assured they all felt the effects of what I imagine must have been quite a brisk sprint.

In the next hour Brendon Catchpole surged through the finish line, with Ian Gordon, Denis O’Shea and Connor Clemett close behind. Julie Hazelhurst followed, despite





wrecking her knee after only three miles into the marathon, and Simon Rowles and Mike Jenkins came in together a short while later.

Many of our team members were persuaded to run in the striking 'CatSuits' that had been sponsored by Insurance Lending Group (ILG). The suits generated much attention and extra awareness of the CatWalk cause and our sincere thanks go to Greg and Karen Frittelli for their generous support.

Keli Dean and Shannon Hale clocked in just past the five-hour mark, followed by Laverne Robilliard who doggedly ran the whole race in a severely dehydrated state after contracting a food bug a day earlier. Phil Gobbie was in next having added an extra seven kilometres to his race distance as he socialised from one side to the other side of the spectator-lined streets, stopping for photos, chatting to children and high-fiving supporters. Thereafter Catherine Green, Simon Bevin, Greg Frittelli and AJ Hazelhurst, all harbouring debilitating injuries, reached the end, and were wrapped in their bright blue ponchos and their precious medals placed proudly around their necks.

Finally, after more than seven hours on the road, our four 'walking wounded' arrived in the dark. Liz Blackwell, inspired to join the team only three months prior to the race, almost immediately developed plantar fasciitis which limited her pre race training to near zero. In spite of excruciating discomfort, she determinedly walked the marathon alongside by her great friend and colleague Ant Carter who had undergone radical surgery to his knee just four weeks earlier. Ant had been advised to withdraw but he decided if individuals with spinal cord injuries could

do this race, so could he. After 7hrs 24mins they trudged through the finish line together.

Just a few weeks prior to the race, team captain Dave Pretorius developed a debilitating stress fracture in his right leg and he too was advised to withdraw. Ironically, his sister, Lisa, suffered the exact same injury in her opposite leg, so they both arrived in New York with crutches! They forwent their dreams of personal best times and resolved to simply start the marathon as a supportive gesture to the team. However, the street-side New York City atmosphere and spectator encouragement spurred them on through the entire 42.2km on crutches, and some 7hr41 later they

triumphantly lurched to completion. Dave said afterward that completing his 3rd New York marathon in the dark opened his eyes to the 'strugglers' who resolutely completed the course in various states of physical disability and disrepair. The blind, the amputees, the injured war vets, the mentally and physically disabled, and the slow-moving wheelchair users were the truly inspiring athletes of the day.



The heroics of our own athletes are, to a person, noteworthy, but in the background, providing invaluable back up, laughter and hugs were our eight wonderful supporters who, on race day, ran themselves ragged moving from one viewing spot to the next to chivy and cheer our runners on. I suspected their task is as tough as the single-minded pursuit demanded of the competitors. Without Karen Pretorius, Jill Cooper, Karen and Garrick Frittelli, Sharon Carter, Tracey D'Rose, Shannon Hale and Jenny Calder, our campaign canvas would have lost a special dimension and it was a great having the team machine kept moving by this vibrant crew.

As soon as all team members had safely completed their



runs, the attention turned to the post-race after-party, where the day's cherished experiences were solidified over several beverages into precious memories to be shared forever between this 'CatWalk family'.

I expecting to face a montage of broken and battered bodies the next day but instead found team members striding off to visit the sights and shops of the city. Four of our top team fundraisers clamboured into a taxi to enjoy a scenic helicopter flight donated by Marathon Tours. (And our most successful fundraiser, Brendon Catchpole, will be taking his family on a luxury walking tour in Tasmania courtesy of Scott Malcolm, Brent Godfrey and the Tasmanian Walking Company.)

Even when our time in New York was up, spirits remained high and the laughter and banter continued on the long journey home and beyond.

Recruits for the 2018 marathon are being collected and Captain Dave already has an impressive list of candidates. Any one of Team CatWalk '17 will tell you this is worthwhile undertaking,

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The experience is, quite simply, **AWESOME.**

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“It is over too quickly, and before I really know it, I realise I found my way home.”

*Photo Credit Keryn Lowry, New York*

## DAN'S Race

That's the catch phrase of a team of 27 athletes and 8 supporters who travelled to New York to participate in the New York Marathon as part of a major fundraising drive on behalf of the CatWalk Spinal Cord Injury Research Trust.

One member of the team was Dan Buckingham who wheeled his way to the finish line in 2:23:46.

Buckingham says it was fantastic being a part of something bigger than simply satisfying his own athletic ambitions, and raising funds for CatWalk to help other sufferers of spinal cord injury made his experience more meaningful.

Buckingham says, “New York makes me feel alive. Everything about it should be confronting – the smells, the noise, the intensity of the people. Instead, it's invigorating. I love how with the chaos of everything going on at any given moment, somehow it all works out.

It is a city that seems well planned for industrious function, with its grid of streets and avenues and wide footpaths, yet it also feels like it's borne out of barely contained constant innovation. It's been hacked, moulded and corralled into a beautiful existence.

My nine-to-five life and all associated with it, so front-of-mind in Auckland, immediately seems distant and trivial in contrast to New York City. This city lives

up to its cliché's. After a late-night dinner on Friday, we're stuck in gridlocked traffic in the early hours of the morning. This city is beyond never sleeping – it is completely wired. After only three days immersed in the flow of this complex beast, I find a sense of familiarity and assume the comfort of being a local. Already I view slow-moving wonder-struck tourists with some disdain.

Then Sunday morning arrives, and it's time to venture beyond the island of Manhattan. At 4.30am a bus pulls us away from the centre of our new little universe, and we're dropped at the end of a remote bridge. It's like another test . . . if I truly love this city, I'll find my way home.

With the boom of the starting gun at 8.30am, the energy of the city draws me forward. Up and over the bridge that had looked so daunting from the bus, the downhill slope seems further than the uphill drag, the reward long-lasting after a brief burst of work. Exhilarated, I leave the motorway and delve into streets below.

Pushing a marathon in a track chair

doesn't offer much a view other than a few metres of approaching tarseal. I bob my head up every few strokes of the push rim to ensure I'm still on track, but minimise this as it makes for an inefficient cadence.

I learn a story along 42kms of pavement. It tells of a harsh environment; every inch of these roads are well travelled. The concrete is beaten and cracked. It has been built upon, adjusted and mended along the way. There are countless potholes, some covered and some not, and manholes leading to an unknown world, inaccessible and unimaginable to us surface dwellers.

However, the experience goes well beyond the visual. It is the auditory senses that are overwhelmed, and it is the noise of the people that carries me through.

“You're looking good”, is the early catchcry from locals gathered along the streets. They're excited for you to be there, welcoming and warm in the brash way only New Yorkers seem to pull off with ease. They reach out; offer praise; seek high-fives; proffer advice and motivation all at the same time. They make me feel



“New York  
makes me feel  
**ALIVE...**”

like a legend, in the land where everyone believes they have a right to be a star.

My name is on my Icebreaker running vest, but it's hidden because I'm bent and folded into my chair, so I'm known to the onlookers as '244'. It's the number pinned to the back of my chair. Heavily accented cries of 'you've got this two forty-four!' constantly follow me as I race by. A cacophony of bands performing, spectators screaming, bells ringing, and cops containing, continuously assault my ears in the most endearing way.

There are differing stretches along the way. I find out later an eerily quiet part of Brooklyn is the Jewish Quarter, where Hasidic Jews line the road and support in silence. From my viewpoint, and focused on keeping my shoulders turning over I don't take in the visual cues, and find myself thinking maybe 244 isn't looking that good anymore?

The only other sanctuary from sound is on the Queensboro Bridge. It's inaccessible to spectators and the long, consistent grind up and then over offers a period of reflective refuge before re-entering the mayhem on the streets of Manhattan.

'Welcome to the Bronx' is the catch cry used to spur athletes for the short sojourn through this borough, and then it's across another bridge back into Manhattan.

After long stretches ticking off kilometres along straight avenues, I finally break into winding roads in the grounds of Central Park. I channel Rod Dixon's great 1983 victory as he made up 40 seconds by

following a racing line and cutting off all the corners, as the then leader followed the curves of the line painted in the middle of the road. I too feel inspired to cut the corners, the pain of the previous miles set aside to reach the finish line as soon as possible. The course is



undulating, so I need extra force through the push rim on the wheel and pull up as I come out of the stroke to get through the rises. It also means I catch a break riding the wave of the downhills, weaving tight to the fence and crowd beyond.

Strangers encourage and count down the distance for me. "One mile to go"; "Stop looking back there's no one there"; "You got this two forty-four".

The finish line looms, and I dare reflect. I entered this marathon hoping to cover the five boroughs in less than 2.5 hours. I prepped well and I've felt good the entire way. The crowd and competitors spur me on, and I feel faster than in training. The uphills have felt relentless and tough, but it seems there's been more downhill than up. I have flown at times; arms tucked in like a cyclist in a time trial, grabbing maximum gravitational pull on the downward slopes. As I edge up one final hill, cruelly stationed at the end of the event, I'm not sure if I've reached my goal.

I cross the line and allow my arms and hands to finally rest from the constant propelling of my chair. I press little digital read out button in front of me that has fed me performance information throughout the race. It reads 2 hours, 23 minutes and 46 seconds. Top speed 42km/hr, average speed 17km/hour. I have surpassed my target.

And then all too soon I'm warmly wrapped in a blue poncho, adorned with my medal, helped, hugged, congratulated and fed hot chocolate before being moved swiftly along. I've been made to feel like a rock star but my turn in the spotlights ends and there are tens of thousands more stars to follow, each with their own unique experience to share.

It is over too quickly, and before I really know it, I realise I found my way home."

# Research UPDATES

The Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility continues to make significant progress in a number of research areas to develop cures for spinal cord injury. We have a busy summer ahead with 6 summer students joining us to work on new or ongoing projects.

## Blocking chronic inflammation

Based on our work showing the protective effects of using our connexin channel blocking peptide to prevent inflammation early after injury, we now believe that using a similar approach to block ongoing inflammation will reduce neuropathic pain and create an environment that allows repair to occur. With funding from the Catwalk Trust, a project is underway to test an existing drug (Tonabersat) that we have identified as a channel blocker. This drug has the advantage that it has been used in several phase two clinical trials, including long term prophylactic use for migraine prevention and is proposed as a treatment for epilepsy. We have developed an improved dosing profile and already have data for central nervous system (CNS) treatments.

## Gene therapy

This project, carried out by PhD student Jarred Griffin has been evaluating the use of gene therapy to deliver a protein that breaks down scar tissue after injury and allows regrowth and reconnection of nerve cells and has shown some really exciting results. We know that this treatment reduces the size of the injury, reduces the amount of scarring and allows nerve cells to regrow and reconnect. We have also carried out experiments where we have used the gene therapy in conjunction with exercise rehabilitation. This rehabilitation strengthens the nerve connections to the limbs and in our experiments we have seen an even greater improvement in walking and coordination. These experiments show

that combining different approaches will be the way to finding a cure and our future plans are to combine a number of the approaches we have been developing to provide the greatest benefit possible.

## Protecting blood vessels

Following spinal cord injury, blood vessels are damaged and this leads to the injury becoming worse. Work by three students in the lab, Connor Clemett, Laverne Robilliard and Andrea Gu has made some important advances in understanding how blood vessels are affected by injury and how we can protect them. Andrea and Laverne's project's have discovered some interesting findings about how the blood vessels change with injury, which will help us design ways to regrow them after injury. Connor's project tested compounds to strengthen the blood vessels and has made some really exciting findings about how we can protect blood vessels against the damage that occurs.

A number of new projects are also progressing well

### 1) Use of multielectrode arrays for guidance of nerve cells

A collaboration has been established with the School of Pharmacy, University of Auckland and the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, Germany to test the use of multielectrode arrays to measure electrical changes that occur with injury and use electric currents to guide the growth of nerve cells across an injured cord. We have designed and tested a microelectrode array and can measure

electrical signals in the cord. This is an important first step in being able to stimulate the cord after injury to regrow nerve cells. This technology has real potential as nerve cells could be guided to reconnect across the damaged cord, reforming connections and allowing for functional recovery.

### 2) Targeted drug delivery

A project is underway in collaboration with researchers from the School of Pharmacy and Department of Physiology at the University of Auckland to test ways of targeting drugs directly to the site of a spinal cord injury. This is done using small packages (called liposomes) that can be targeted directly to specific cells at the injury site, including nerve cells and scar cells. This approach has an advantage over injecting drugs directly into the blood as it means that the drug will not be broken down in the blood stream and the optimum dose can be delivered directly to the injury. It also means that the amount of drug that is needed can be reduced, which will mean that unwanted side-effects are less likely. Side effects are a major issue with some drugs being currently tested and this approach could allow smaller doses to be used, avoiding this problem. A student, Julia Newland, is testing the best time to deliver these liposomes to the injured cord. Over the summer we will test targeting drugs to scar forming cells with the next step being to test these drugs in our model of spinal cord injury.

*Simon O'Carroll  
(on behalf of the Spinal Cord Injury Research  
Facility team)*

# Talk the WALK

We were pleased to welcome 50 guests to the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility at Auckland University on 17th October for our annual Talk the Walk gathering.



Patrons, ambassadors, supporters and board members were welcomed by CatWalk deputy chairman David Pretorius followed by Founder Catriona Williams.

Dr Simon O'Carroll then presented a research update on the projects currently underway in the laboratory. Guests were given a tour of the laboratory, guided by the researchers, and

given the opportunity to see first-hand how the projects are undertaken.

This annual meeting is a valuable time to bring together those that are supporting the research and those that are undertaking the research as they all strive for the common goal of finding a cure for spinal cord injury.



# Brain Bee Challenge



The International Brain Bee Challenge is a competition that encourages high school students to take an interest in the human brain and neuroscience.

Currently, 53 countries coordinate the Brain Bee Programme, a number which increases every year since its inception ten years ago. The New Zealand Brain Bee Challenge was launched in 2007.

The CatWalk Trust support this competition along with the Freemasons Foundation, and Brain Research New Zealand (BRNZ). The Centre for Brain Research (CBR) at the University of Auckland's Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS), has been hosting the North Island Brain Bee since 2010.

Year 11 students complete a first quiz at school and finalists are invited to attend to the Brain Bee Challenge Second Stage at FMHS.

On the day of the Challenge, the students and their teachers

were encouraged to explore the intricate network of labs, lecture rooms and learning centres that make-up the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences. They also learnt about the most important organ of the human body; the brain, and how it controls and interacts with the rest of the body.

This year a total of 169 students from 27 North Island schools participated in both the Individual and Teams competitions. The students also had a chance to take part in other activities including visits to the neuroscience laboratories of the Centre for Brain Research and the Anatomy Learning Centre, watching an MRI machine in action (to give one example) and had the opportunity to engage in a 'meet the scientists' session.

The final of the individual competition was thrilling, with Jemima Po from Diocesan School for Girls winning in a closely fought and entertaining final round. Second place went to Pragalath Neethirajan from Westlake Boys, with Elise Bailey from St Cuthberts College and Sophie Hindley from Westlake Girls High School coming in third and fourth, respectively.

The team's result was: first place to Diocesan School, second place to Westlake Girls High School, third place to Elim Christian College and fourth place to Sacred Heart Girls College, Hamilton.

## TEAM'S RESULT

**1 Place**  
Diocesan School

**3 Place**  
Elim Christian College

**2 Place**  
Westlake Girls High School

**4 Place**  
Sacred Heart Girls College, Hamilton.

“the most important organ of the human body; the brain....”



# #Howwillyouwearit

## #howwillyouwearit?# Story

Unbeknown to Rachel Martin, Waikoa, the #howwillyouwearit# Amateur Series Competition was born after her first series win at the Larsen's Gisborne Jumping Show.

The jubilant Rachel found a new use for her winning sash during the evening celebrations and the challenge was thrown out to other Amateur Series competitors with photos posted on a special Facebook page.

Rosettes and ribbons were creatively arranged and the Amateur Series Competition took on a whole new meaning.

With good mates Trudi Mitchell light bulb moment, the competition developed into a special feature at the Series Finals Awards night with sponsored prizes for a range of different categories. Before the laughter had settled a calendar concept was created to support a charity close to every equestrian. During the first 'calendar meeting' with Sue Wilson, advertisements were snapped up and reluctant models gave the okay to share their moment of #howwillyouwearit# with you.

Thanks to all the sponsors from the awards night, calendar advertisers and models for making this journey so much fun - and another way we can support CatWalk.



# Thank you

To the Amateur Series Group for their support of spinal cord injury research!

## #Calendar2018

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# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

## for the Year Ended 31 March 2017

I am once again delighted to present the Chairman's Report for CatWalk for the year ended 31 March 2017. From a financial standpoint, in 2017 the Trust generated a net profit before research grants of \$297,531 on revenue of \$711,068 as a result once again of the generous contributions from our donors.

The Trust continued its strong support of the Spinal Cord Injury Research Facility ("SCIRF") based at the Centre for Brain Research at the University of Auckland contributing \$175,248 towards the facility's research program into spinal cord injury ("SCI") in the following areas:

### Existing Projects

- Connexin project (chronic injury) – evidence indicates that connexin channels are involved in ongoing inflammation after injury leading to neuropathic pain and an environment in the spinal cord that does not allow for survival, regrowth or reconnection of nerve cells. Going forward the team plans to test an existing channel blocker drug (Tonabersat) to reduce or prevent such inflammation. This drug has been used in several phase two trials making it highly likely that a move to clinical trials could happen more quickly.
- Gene therapy – evaluating the use of gene therapy to deliver a protein that breaks down scar tissue after injury and allows for regrowth and reconnection of nerve cells to test delivery of a scar busting protein; and
- Antioxidants – measuring the level of antioxidants in the spinal cord after injury to determine of the extent of damage to the spinal cord. This is significant as it will be very useful in developing treatments and advancing clinical trials for SCI.

### New Projects

- Protecting blood vessels – following an SCI, blood vessels in the spinal cord are damaged and become leaky which allows

blood to get into the spinal cord and this makes the size of the injury larger. Developing ways to protect the blood vessels and stop the leakiness are potential targets that will reduce the size of the injury;

- Use of multielectrode arrays for guidance of nerve cells – a collaboration has been established with Dr Darren Svirakis (School of Pharmacy, University of Auckland) and Dr Maria Asplund (Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, Germany) to test the use of multielectrode arrays to guide the growth of nerve cells across an injured spinal cord; and
- Liposomes for drug delivery – another collaboration has been formed with Dr Zimei Wu (School of Pharmacy, University of Auckland) and Dr Justin Dean (Department of Physiology, University of Auckland) to test ways of packaging drugs for delivery directly to the site of an SCI.

These treatments target a number of different processes that are important in repairing the spinal cord after injury. It is now widely held that modulating all of these processes will be required to get the greatest benefit for people with an SCI, therefore research focus will move to combining these approaches.

In a year without a major black tie event, the Trust embraced the technological era with a digital brand awareness and fundraising campaign. 'One in a Million' was a 31 day digital campaign in July 2016 which involved releasing one unique 30 second video per day via social media. Each upload showcased a well-known personality who asked supporters to join them in supporting CatWalk by texting "WALK" to 2448 for an instant \$3.00 donation. The campaign raised \$29,000 but more importantly over 500,000 individuals were reached via social



media, and TVNZ's SevenSharp story on Ambassador Jamie Astwood was streamed into over 250,000 NZ households.

In November 2016, for the seventh year in a row a team of seven runners, led by CatWalk Deputy Chairman David Pretorius, represented CatWalk in the New York City Marathon. This determined group raised over \$83,000 for SCI research.

Other notable happenings during the year included:

- We continued our partnership with Mitavite, an equine nutrition company, under which Mitavite donates \$1.00 to CatWalk for every bag of Munga® feed sold which raised approximately \$10,000;
- A new partner, Magnum Industries, which manufactures and supplies walkers, stables and hardware for the equine and agricultural industries, donated \$15,000 and committed to the same contribution for a three year period;
- New Zealand Agriseeds created 200 bags of a specialist horse pasture seed mix exclusively for sale by CatWalk. All proceeds from the sale of each \$200.00 bag was donated to CatWalk;
- We received continued support from the Infinity Foundation in the form of grants totalling \$40,000 as a contribution towards wages and salaries;
- We continued our partnership with Crowe Horwath which provides significant support in the form of pro bono accounting services supplied by Belinda Van Den Bos; and
- We received three significant donations from generous donors. Dorothy Cutts, Geoff Dalbeth and Trish Brown; and Pip McCarroll.

The Trust had a number of changes at the governance level in early 2017. In January, CatWalk's founder, Catriona Williams, resigned from her role as a Trustee to allow more time for physical training. Catriona remains strongly committed to CatWalk's vision and will continue to provide ongoing advice and support to the Board of Trustees. In March, founding Trustee, Pip McCarroll also stepped down from the Board of Trustees after 12 years. Pip's counsel and guidance will be missed.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our Board of Trustees for their continued support and commitment to CatWalk. I would also like to thank all of our donors and sponsors for their support this year. Thank you also to the CatWalk team, Meg, Chris and Donna, for their continued hard work and commitment over the past year.

Finally, I would like to thank our Patrons and Ambassadors for their continued strong support for, and dedication to, CatWalk and to finding a cure for SCI.

Thank you

Scott Malcolm  
Chairman, CatWalk Board of Trustees

# Thank You

We have many people and groups who kindly raise funds for spinal cord injury.

- The Taupo Hunt held a fundraising auction in July with the proceeds of \$1090 donated to CatWalk.
  - The Thompson Family Foundation of New York continue to generously support. In November, a further donation of USD 10,000 was received.
- Out thank to Amanda Riegel and family for their tremendous support to find a cure for SCI.

# Grants

We constantly research and apply for Grants that can assist towards the costs of running the charity.

Thank you to the Infinity Foundation who have granted \$17,000 so far in the 2017 year. This funding goes towards the wage costs of the office staff. The Trust House Foundation granted \$2,700 which assists with the costs of the monthly lease of the office in Masterton.



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# CATWALK

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