

We have recently completed two pieces of research which have given us some interesting insights. As always this research could not have been done without the help and enthusiasm of our volunteers, whom we are very grateful to.

## Passive movement gyms may improve balance but no other aspect of fitness in healthy older adults.

Passive movement gyms differ from conventional gyms as the fitness machines do the moving for you. These are targeted at the older population due to low intensity of the activity. Findings from our recent study however, suggest that this method of physical activity may not have all the benefits that the companies claim. We measured the physical fitness of new participants (average age 71 years) before and after 12 weeks of participation. Interestingly, the group showed improvements in balance but no improvements in the other fitness assessments. While healthy individuals should not be discouraged to attend passive movement gyms, as this provides a comfortable social platform and a fun mode of physical activity, caution should be taken when using this as the only form of physical activity. To improve all aspects of fitness, activities such as walking or swimming should be included to improve the heart and lung function, as well as activities that build strength in the muscles and increase flexibility to keep joints mobile.



## Carrying shopping bags poses no additional fall risk to healthy older females as assessed by balance and walking ability

Food shopping is an important aspect of maintaining independence and social interaction in older age. It was thought, however, that carrying the shopping home may pose higher fall risk as carriage of shopping bags as this poses an additional challenge to our balance systems which, unfortunately with older age may already be a bit wobbly. We therefore decided to investigate this and invited 10 healthy older adults (average age 71 years) into the Human Performance Laboratory at the University to do a series of balance and walking tests with and without shopping bags. Findings showed us that irrespective of carrying the bags, when we get older we have more problems with our side to side balance than our forward and back balance, (which we hope to explore further in future studies) but more importantly, it also showed us that carrying the shopping bags did not affect balance or walking patterns. This is really good news as carrying the shopping bags home does not make us more likely to become unstable, so we encourage healthy older individuals to continue to use shopping as a form of physical activity which provides both physical and social benefits.



## AARG wins prestigious awards

We are delighted to announce that we were awarded a large grant from The Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust to allow us to further the research of the group for the next three years. The money will be used to research how and why we change our gaze when we are walking and how ageing and different environments affect this. In addition, Dr. Susan Dewhurst and Mr. Theodoros Bampouras were awarded this year's University of Cumbria Vice Chancellors Award for Research Excellence. We are delighted with both awards as they recognised the work being done by AARG.



## In bocca al lupo Amy!

Miss Amy Maslivec has just started her 6 month Italian Exchange to the University of Rome, Foro Italico to work with AARG external collaborators Dr. Andrea Macaluso and Dr. Luca Laudani. This exchange is part of Amy's PhD training and we wish her all the best in the Eternal City.



## New AARG member

We would like to welcome Mr. Neil Thomas to the AARG research team as a full time PhD student. Neil was awarded the three year scholarship from the money awarded to AARG from The Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust. Congratulations and welcome to Neil!



As always, we are interested in your ideas and input in our work, so please feel free to contact us at the details below:

