



February 2026 Newsletter

Our mission is to provide a supportive and informative environment for people with lung conditions, as well as their families and carers.

Editor: Helen Cotter
lung.life1@hotmail.com

Coordinator: Marina Siemionow 0429 629 180
lung.life1@hotmail.com

Web Sites: [Canberra Lung Life Support Group | Web Site](#)
[Canberra Lung Life Support Group | Facebook](#)

NEXT MEETING: Thursday 12th March 2026
10:15 am – 12:00 noon
Weston Creek Labor Club
Teesdale Close, Stirling ACT 2611

Speaker: COTA on the recent changes in My Aged Care

February Meeting



About 15 members came to catch up with each other, with Lung Life business – and to hear Raj's talk.

- But first, Marina gave us the information about our **annual call to assist Physio students at UC**. This visit involves you going twice in consecutive weeks for an hour each week. It enables the Physio students to talk to real people about their condition and to set an exercise program suitable for that person.

It's a real help for the students to have this hands-on experience. **See below** in this newsletter for all the details. They would like as many people as possible.

- Marina then summarised our review of last year and our discussions in the January meeting. She noted the speakers we suggested; and the cafes we enjoyed going to at the end of the month lunch.
- **Next lunch: Deakin and Me**, 7 Geils Ct, Deakin, meeting at 12 noon.

And then it was over to Raj. Raj Puthenveedu, COPD Advanced Airways Diseases APN, who came with Paul Wang, Asthma and COPD Educator Nurse.

Raj talked about **breathlessness and how to manage it**.

- ✚ 2.5% of Australia's population are diagnosed with COPD – but there are thousands who have the condition but don't realise it. One in 13 Australians aged 40 years or over have some form of COPD.

Generally, it's only picked up when the condition is well developed. Raj talked about a **tipping point**. This is when you get something like flu or pneumonia and suddenly seem very breathless – that's when it becomes obvious that you have COPD. Doctors will check with a lung function test.



- ✚ Raj talked about **PPH – potentially preventable hospitalisations**. COPD is one of 5 conditions that cause the maximum number of hospitalisations (the others are: kidney infections; UTI; heart failure and diabetes).

To try to prevent hospitalisation, be aware of your good days and your bad ones; with a bad day, don't leave it – go to your doctor as soon as possible.

- ✚ He talked about how COPD restricts the flow of air in and out. The treatment is inhalers and steroids. But COPD cannot be cured – only treated to control it.
- ✚ He talked about how sometimes the lungs get inflammation which reduces the space for breathing, with prednisone often being used to treat it. But prednisone is a steroid and needs to be used as little as possible.

Raj then talked about how we can help ourselves keep as healthy as possible:

- ✚ Make sure your **inhaler techniques** are good. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists can all check on your technique.
- ✚ Have **regular exercise**. It helps keep all your muscles – including your respiratory muscles – in good shape and able to work better.
- ✚ Have a **healthy diet** – a high protein diet is very important as you age – lots of meat of any sort – as well as a variety of fruit and vegetables.
- ✚ Manage **anxiety** – learn some anxiety control methods that suit you.
- ✚ Keep your **immunity** strong – have your COVID, flu, pneumonia, shingles, and RSV injections.
- ✚ Take **energy saving measures** – using aids is beneficial as they reduce the breathlessness – eg a walker; or a shower seat etc;
- ✚ Have a **COPD action plan**.

Finally, Raj talked about how to manage when you become breathless: quick, gasping breaths don't let the air in; try for **long, slow exhalations, especially with pursed lips as described on page 4**. Also, lean against something – a chair or wall – or sit – while you get your breath back.

If you want to discuss any issue further, call 042 346 394 or email: DRSM@act.gov.au. Ask for COPD respiratory nurse.

Assisting Physio Students

We have been asked again to help with Physio students at UC. It gives them practice on real people. And you get to talk about your condition; then have a suitable set of exercises to try out the next week. See below for the details.



UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA

Do you have a lung disease?

Would you like to help local physiotherapy students understand it better?

Do you have an hour per week for two consecutive weeks to spare?

The University of Canberra is looking for community volunteers with a chronic lung disease to participate in teaching sessions for physiotherapy students.

- **Week 1** involves an assessment (including a 6 Minute Walk Test and a questionnaire)
- **Week 2** will be an exercise session (like a Pulmonary Rehab class)

There are six different sessions available

Thursday 12th March and Thursday 19th March

1. 10am-11am
2. 12pm-1pm
3. 3pm-4pm

Friday 13th March and Friday 20th March

1. 10am-11am
2. 12pm-1pm
3. 2.30pm-3.30pm

All sessions are run at the University of Canberra Bruce campus. Parking is free.

If you are interested in volunteering for one or more sessions, or have any questions, please contact Richie Talbot at the University of Canberra
Richie.Talbot@canberra.edu.au or 62012161

Please volunteer to take part in at least one of these sessions.



January Lunch Southern Cross Club

It's Time

It's time to renew your membership for Lung Life. This is a voluntary payment but it helps with Lung Life costs for materials, expo and other events.

Membership Payment

Membership fee is \$20.00 pa which can be paid as a direct transfer into our Beyond Bank account. See details below or pay in cash to the treasurer at any meeting.

BSB No: 325 185

Account Name: Community Account

Account number: 04043535

Reference: please write your name in full.

Stay Protected: Is your COVID-19 booster up to date?

From Lung Foundation Australia e-newsletter December 2025 via Brian Chauncy

COVID-19 booster

Recent COVID-19 booster vaccination found to be highly effective for preventing COVID-19 deaths in Australians aged 65+.¹



The general recommendation is a free booster every 6 months from age 75; every 12 months from age 65 or from age 18 if immunocompromised.

While COVID-19 deaths in Australia have decreased, the virus is still having a serious impact. In 2025 alone, almost 2,000 people have died from COVID-19, more than from influenza. People living with lung disease are at greater risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19. That's why staying up to date with your COVID-19 boosters is so important.

For people living with COPD, the six infections it deals with are COVID-19, influenza, pneumococcal disease, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), shingles, and whooping cough (pertussis).

Pertussis: recommended from age 65 if last pertussis containing vaccine was 10+ years ago.

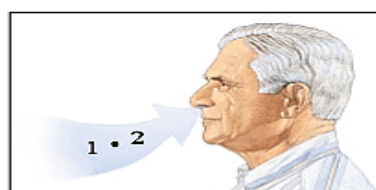
COVID-19 booster: the general recommendation is a free booster every 6 months from age 75; every 12 months from age 65 or from age 18 if immunocompromised.

Influenza vaccination: the general recommendation is an annual vaccine that is free for people with COPD.

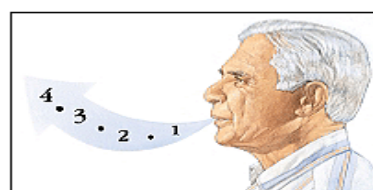
Pneumococcal disease vaccination: People with COPD vaccinated against pneumococcal disease are less likely to experience pneumonia. The general recommendation is 1 dose of a vaccine (PCV), followed later by 2 doses of a different vaccine (PPV).

Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccination: the general recommendation is a single vaccine dose from age 60 but can be received from age 50 by people with COPD. RSV vaccination is not currently free for older Australians; however, we hope it may become so soon.

Shingles vaccination: the general recommendation is two vaccine doses (2-6 months apart) from age 50 or from age 18 for people with risk conditions.



Inhale: Relax your neck and shoulder muscles. Inhale slowly through your nose for 2 counts.



Exhale: Pucker your lips as if you are going to blow out a candle. Exhale slowly and gently through your lips for 4 or more counts.

Pursed lips breathing that Raj suggested for breathlessness

Life Support Assistance

If you are dependent on life support equipment, you can register with your electricity company to receive life support protection – and you're entitled to a rebate on your bill. You'll need to contact your electricity provider in order to register.

Once registered, the provider will give you 4 days warning of any planned interruptions to your electricity supply. You are responsible for a back-up plan for these events – and for any unplanned outages.

You need to fill out a form, have it signed by your medical practitioner and then submit it to your provider.

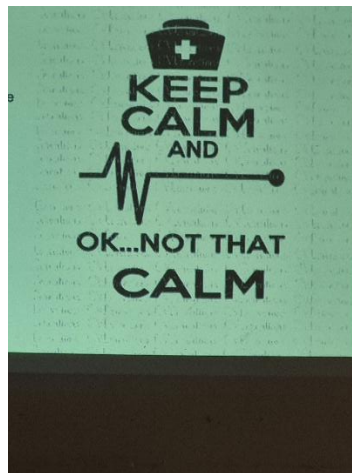
Here's the form: [Register - ACT](#)[Register - NSW](#)

Approved life support equipment*

- Intermittent peritoneal dialysis machine.
- Oxygen concentrator.
- Kidney dialysis machine.
- Chronic positive airways pressure respirator.
- Crigler Najjar syndrome phototherapy equipment.
- Ventilator for life support.
- Any other equipment a registered medical practitioner certifies is required for life support.

* As advised in the National Energy Retail Rules.

If you would like more details, contact your electricity energy provider.



Ageing – by a 74 year old doctor

Here's what an ageing doctor does to live better and live longer. Do you do similar things?

***Dr. Rosanne Leipzig** is Professor and Vice Chair, Emerita of the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City. She is the author of "Honest Aging: An Insider's to the Second Half of Life."*

For over 40 years, I've worked as a geriatrician. In geriatric medicine, we use a framework called the "[5 Ms](#)": what matters most, [mind](#), mobility, medications and [multicomplexity](#).

That last one is especially key and takes into account how our health and well-being are impacted by what is happening with us not just medically, but financially, socially and emotionally, too.

I always tell my patients aging is about transition. How you navigate these [life changes](#) and the [attitude](#) you have about them are the biggest indicators of whether you'll have an enjoyable, engaged and meaningful later life.

This is what I do every day to [feel better](#) and [live longer](#).

1. I move my body: I start my day with a "salute to the sun," a yoga stretching routine that wakes me up and gets my blood pumping. Lately, I've been working with a trainer and going to the gym a few times a week. Amazingly, after only a few months I feel stronger, have better focus and balance, and get more restful sleep.

2. I stretch my mind: Every morning, I do word games to wake up my brain. By doing this simple activity, my brain feels more alert and I'm better able to recall words, especially those I don't use regularly.

3. I get out in nature: I spend time outdoors daily, especially when it's sunny. Being in the sun improves my mood and [my sleep](#). Even if I struggle to get up and go, I make sure to at least spend some time on the deck or terrace, or at the nearby park.

4. I am involved in my community: For years, I have sung in my synagogue chorus and taken part in a range of volunteer work. I mentor medical students, help out at memory care programs for folks with dementia, and advocate for causes close to my heart like access to health care, immigration and fair housing.

Through these activities, I've continued to make [meaningful friendships](#) with people of all ages.

5. I use aids to improve my quality of life: I started wearing hearing aids when I was in my 60s, and it made a remarkable difference. Not only did I hear better, but I also had more energy, since it was easier to understand what people were saying. Don't be afraid to make small changes to boost your quality of life.

6. I strive for interdependence, not independence: As we age, being too dependent on others can feel like a loss of agency. Interdependence means keeping your eye on what you really want to do and allowing others to help you do those things, whether it's using hearing aids, or a cane, or getting assistance that allows you to stay in your home.

7. I actively resist ageism: Unfortunately, we live in an incredibly ageist world where older adults are often stereotyped and treated as if we were senile, incompetent, rigid or not there. Don't let people get away with this. Stand up for yourself and others.

8. I take joy in incremental progress: Some of my patients who couldn't imagine life without tennis are now pickleball fiends. My best advice for living longer and feeling happier is, when you are met with change, get creative about how you adapt to it. Compete against yourself and take joy in the progress and improvements you make. You never know what is possible.

