



AOTEAROA AUSTRALIA PANCREATIC ENZYME REPLACEMENT THERAPY RESEARCH GROUP

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

AMANDA LANDERS



Tēna koutou katoa,

As we wrap up the year, I am delighted to share some wonderful news and highlights from our team. We were thrilled to receive grant support to study the PEI-SS tool for diagnosing pancreatic exocrine insufficiency in the major project rounds of the Canterbury Medical Research Foundation—an exciting milestone that will accelerate our work and expand the impact of our research programme. We have launched the study and have had exceptional early engagement—18 expressions of interest in the first two weeks alone!

It has also been a busy and rewarding season for ASPERT members, who were invited to present their research at COSA (Adelaide, Australia), the Pancreas Summit (Melbourne, Australia), and the Hepatopancreatic biliary surgeons AGM (Christchurch, New Zealand). This recognition reflects the strength, visibility, and growing influence of our team across Aotearoa and Australia.

We're also celebrating the success of our PERT Quiz-Lympics campaign, which has been a fun and effective way to educate and engage people about PERT and pancreatic cancer.

Finally, we are excited to be building new collaborations with Australian research sites, opening the door to collaborative studies, broader datasets, and even stronger trans-Tasman partnerships in 2026.

Thank you all for your enthusiasm, hard work, and commitment throughout the year. Wishing you a joyful Christmas and a restorative New Year—here's to an even brighter 2026!

Ngā mihi nui,  
Amanda

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# ASPERT AT THE CLINICAL ONCOLOGY SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (COSA) CONFERENCE 2025, ADELAIDE

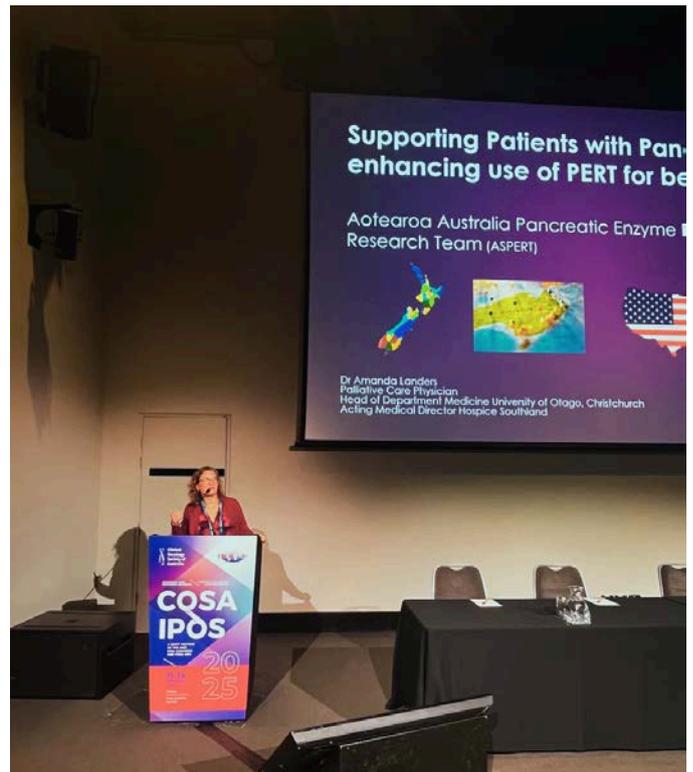
AMANDA LANDERS

At the recent Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) conference, ASPERT was invited to present our research on the current state of pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (PERT) in Australia and New Zealand. The presentation was very well received, highlighting both the progress made and the significant unmet needs across the region.

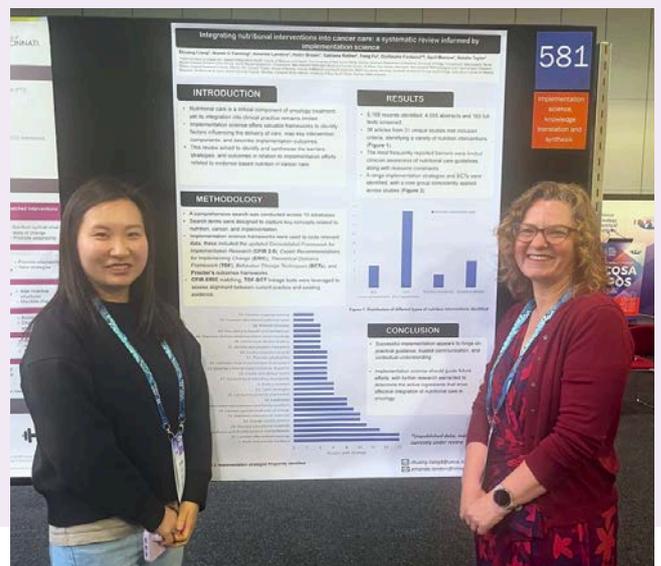
There was strong interest from the Pancare Foundation, who were keen to explore potential collaborations—particularly around the co-design of educational tools to support clinicians, patients, and whānau.

Pancare Foundation is a leading Australian charity dedicated to supporting people affected by upper-gastrointestinal cancers – including pancreatic, liver, stomach, biliary and oesophageal cancers – through patient and family support, awareness-raising, advocacy, and funding of world-class research.

These discussions mark an exciting step toward improving PERT awareness and access on both sides of the Tasman.



*Below:  
Shuang Liang and Amanda finally met in person at COSA! Our poster outlines the deficits in knowledge and limited resources that are major barriers to implementing nutritional interventions in cancer care. Evidence shows that using structured implementation strategies—such as education, audit and feedback, and the assessment of barriers and facilitators—is associated with improved implementation, service delivery, and patient outcomes. Publication coming soon!*





The ASPERT team is excited to publicly announce that we have been awarded a 2025 Canterbury Medical Research Foundation (CMRF) Major Project Grant to support the EPI/PEI-SS research study, which began this November and will run for two years.

The \$150,000 award was announced at CMRF's annual Christmas and Funding Announcement Celebration. Held at Christchurch's Te Pae convention centre, the event brought together donors, researchers, professional partners, members of the Scientific Assessment Committee, and CMRF's Board and staff. The function was hosted by CMRF Chief Executive Melissa Haberfield. ASPERT's grant was one of eight Major Project Grants awarded this year.

Dr. Landers offered a memorable moment during her acceptance speech by asking the audience to point to their pancreases.

The room's collective uncertainty demonstrated her central message: the pancreas is an unsung hero of the body, often overlooked until something goes wrong.

Dr. Landers shared how the EPI/PEI-SS study aims to detect pancreatic malfunction earlier, improve patient quality of life, and potentially increase survivability rates.

She also acknowledged the team's collaboration with American researcher Dana Lewis, whose partnership helped shape the study design.

Congratulations to everyone involved in achieving this significant recognition, and thank you to CMRF for supporting innovative medical research across Canterbury.

The ASPERT team has already begun putting this grant funding into action!

## EPI/PEI-SS STUDY - OPEN NOW!

ALLISON LOVE

ASPERT is excited to announce the launch of its latest research study: the test of a new scoring method to identify Pancreatic Exocrine Insufficiency (PEI, or EPI in the United States).

The study opened on Monday, 24 November. Thank you to everyone reading this bulletin who helped share this news!

We received our first Expression of Interest form completion at 2:30pm of the same day. Currently, we have over 20 EOIs submitted, and three people have been recruited to the study (this includes eligibility confirmation, and confirmation of patient consent).

Special thanks also to the team at Gut Cancer Foundation, who shared the study opportunity on their social media page, resulting in a visible increase of EOI forms submitted. Our study coordinator is currently busier than expected facilitating recruitment intake, and this is a good problem to have.

A patient-oriented website with more study information is coming soon, and resource packs will be mailed and emailed out to clinicians in early 2026, to coordinate with the study launch in Australia.

For questions about this study, please contact Study Coordinator Fiona Robertson at:

**ASPERT\_toolstudy@otago.ac.nz**

## SPOTLIGHT

JREISSATI PANCREATIC  
CENTRE, MELBOURNE

JREISSATI  
Pancreatic  
Centre



ASPERT is pleased to highlight a valued collaborator: the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth. (Jreissati is pronounced jreh-SAW-tee).

The Jreissati Pancreatic Centre was launched in 2021. It was made possible through a generous gift to the Epworth Medical Foundation from the family of Elias and Colleen Jreissati, following Elias' personal experience with pancreatic cancer.

The Jreissati Pancreatic Centre at Epworth is the only specialist centre in Australia exclusively dedicated to pancreatic disease, and puts 100% of its funding straight into research and clinical care.

Beginning in early 2026, staff at Jreissati will be recruiting EPI/PEI-SS study participants from their centre and are able to test for faecal elastase on-site.

You can learn more about the mission of the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre [on this webpage](#).

## RECAP: PERT QUIZ-LYMPICS

ALLISON LOVE

Our team combined pancreatic education with a bit of friendly competition in this year's social media countdown to World Pancreatic Cancer Day (20 November 2025), which we named:

The PERT 'Quiz-lympics'!

Nineteen daily challenges were posted for our social media followers, a wordfind, a crossword (play [here](#) and see if you can beat the top time of 1:52), a Wordle, a Connections puzzle, and five video questions featuring members of our terrific ASPERT team!

Huge thanks to our video contributors for the donation of their time and talents.



Congratulations to Quiz-Lympics winner David Horgan, whose number was pulled from our Big PERT Pill out of more than 200 entries. David won a \$100 gift voucher for the pcanz.org online merch shop.



## WE'RE ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

ASPERT has Facebook and Instagram profiles! Follow us to keep up to date with all things ASPERT.

FACEBOOK: [@aspertresearch](#)

INSTAGRAM: [@aspertstudy](#)

LINKEDIN: [linkedin.com/in/aspertregistry](#)

Subscribe or find out more by emailing Amanda Landers:

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W: [uts.edu.au/aspert](https://uts.edu.au/aspert)