

ASPERT

Bulletin | OCTOBER 2025



AOTEAROA AUSTRALIA PANCREATIC ENZYME REPLACEMENT THERAPY RESEARCH GROUP

FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

AMANDA LANDERS



Tēna koutou katoa,

The past few months have been an incredibly productive and rewarding time for ASPERT.

We have submitted several major grant applications and are eagerly awaiting outcomes—early feedback from reviewers has been very positive, which speaks volumes about the strength and relevance of our work. We remain hopeful for continued funding success.

Our team has also been increasingly recognised on national and international stages. Two ASPERT members were invited to speak at the Pancreas Summit 2025 in Melbourne—an excellent opportunity to share ASPERT’s vision and connect with global leaders in pancreatic disease. Helen Brown delivered a thought-provoking session on dietitian prescribing and how the Australian community might progress in this area, while Amanda Landers gave a comprehensive overview of both past and current ASPERT projects.

Our recent visit to Australia also allowed us to meet with key collaborators for the upcoming PEI-SS study, which is due to launch in the coming weeks. We’re excited about the strong partnerships being developed with our colleagues, particularly with the Jreissati Pancreatic Cancer Care Centre, whose support has been invaluable.

Closer to home, Amanda was also invited to present our research findings at a local HPB surgical AGM, further raising ASPERT’s profile. Meanwhile, two highly motivated summer medical students will join our team, each working on exciting ASPERT-related research projects.

Momentum is truly building—we look forward to sharing more progress soon and launching the PEI-SS study with the energy and collaboration that defines ASPERT.

Ngā mihi nui, Amanda

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NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST UNIVERSITY



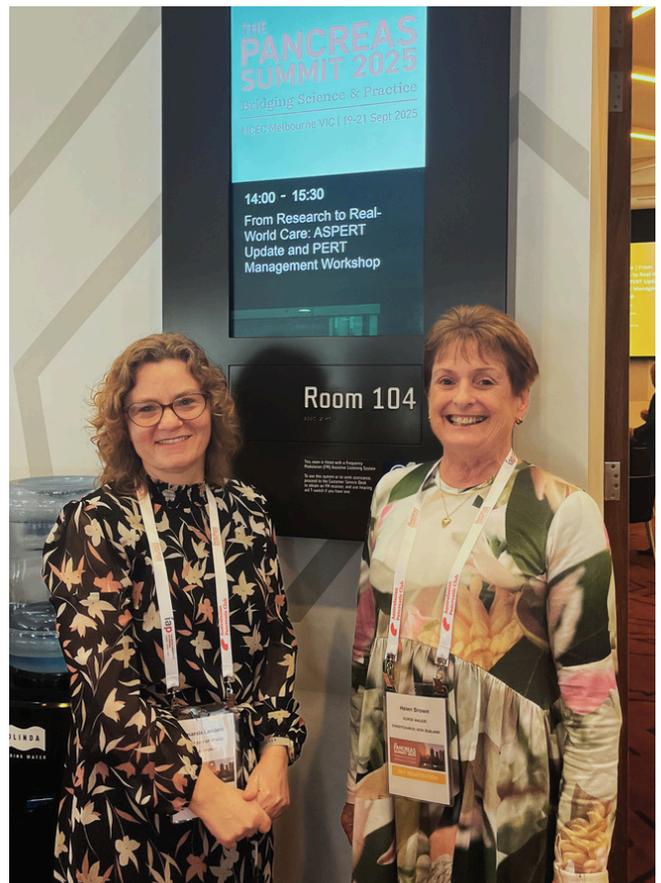
SHOWCASING ASPERT AT PANCREAS SUMMIT 2025

AMANDA LANDERS

ASPERT foundational members Helen Brown and Dr Amanda Landers were invited to speak at the Pancreas Summit 2025 in Melbourne, as part of the dedicated dietitian stream.

Helen gave a case presentation on dietitian prescribing, with a particular focus on CREON (PERT). She shared practical insights into how she uses CREON in clinical practice and discussed the current challenges dietitians face when prescribing this essential therapy.

Dr Landers provided a comprehensive overview of ASPERT's work to date, including updates on our ongoing research projects and the upcoming launch of the PEI-SS study.



Amanda and Helen were also part of a practical workshop led by Australian dietitian Lauren Atkins of OnCore Nutrition, where participants explored how CREON capsules dissolve in stomach-like conditions.



Using vinegar and baking soda to simulate gastric acid, the interactive experiment sparked great discussion and curiosity among attendees (see above for a glimpse of the action!).

2025 PATIENT-REPORTED PERT STUDY: NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION

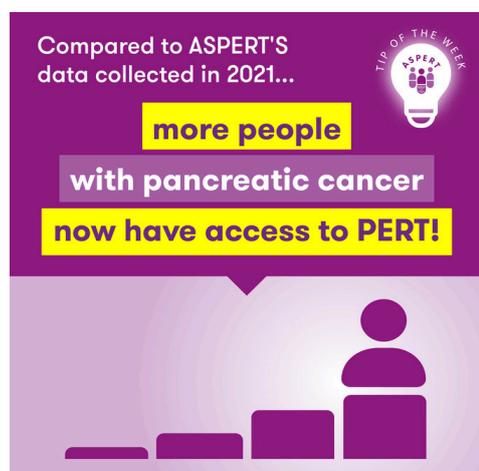
KATIE MARRINER

Preliminary analysis of data from the 2025 patient-reported PERT survey shows pancreatic cancer patients on PERT are seeing significant improvement in symptoms and quality of life. However, more can be done to inform patients about PERT, both through written resources and explanations from health workers.

The 2025 survey follows a similar ASPERT study carried out in 2021, [with the results published last year.](#)

More than 400 people across Australia and New Zealand responded to the 2025 survey. This survey was open from late 2024 to mid-2025, and provided online at pancreasstudy.com.

A positive finding from the data is that awareness of PERT increased in both countries.



above: ASPERT social media graphic

Participants from both countries also reported improvement in all symptoms measured after using PERT – bloating, abdominal pain, reflux, wind, nausea, diarrhoea, and floating bowel motions.

Several areas in which clinicians may be able to better explain PERT and support correct usage were identified in the data.

Information given to patients around the number of PERT capsules to take and when to take them was inconsistent across both countries, suggesting that more can be done to ensure prescribers are aware of guidelines and best practice.

Participants were also unlikely to be given written information about PERT or directed to PERT resources online when it was first prescribed.

The data also highlighted the potential to encourage dispensing pharmacists to explain PERT to patients.

Next steps for this study include analysing qualitative responses from participants around advice they would give to other pancreatic patients about starting PERT, drafting an article for publication, and using the data to inform the proposed implementation RCT (Randomised Controlled Trial).

Given we now have data from patients from 2021 and 2025 which:

- supports PERT use for symptom management and improvements in quality of life
- suggests few barriers to accessing the treatment

...now is the time for action!

PEI-SS STUDY - COUNTDOWN TO LAUNCH

ALLISON LOVE

ASPERT is excited to announce the upcoming launch of its latest study: the test of a new scoring method to identify Pancreatic Exocrine Insufficiency (PEI).

Because symptoms of PEI often overlap with other gastrointestinal conditions, or side effects from cancer treatments, PERT (Pancreatic Exocrine Replacement Therapy) is often under-prescribed.

The PEI-SS method we are testing (the SS stands for Symptom Score) is simply a series of questions that patients will answer. Ideally, patients' answers will identify whether he or she has true PEI (as opposed to other GI conditions).

To qualify for this study, participants must have pancreatic cancer. Participants will then answer the questions of the PEI-SS method and take a faecal elastase test (which, while not foolproof, will generally indicate the presence or absence of PEI).

Comparing participant results between their PEI-SS answers, and their faecal elastase tests, will determine how effectively the PEI-SS method identifies true PEI.

Better, faster diagnosis of PEI has the potential to help a lot of people, and improve PERT access for the people who need it.

This study has been developed in collaboration with American researcher Dana Lewis and is due to launch in Aotearoa New Zealand in November 2025.

ASPERT is also pleased to have the support of the Jreissati Pancreatic Centre (Melbourne). Staff at Jreissati will be recruiting study participants from their centre and are able to test for faecal elastase on-site.

The study is planned to launch in Australia in early 2026.

If you can think of anyone who might be willing to participate in this study (or anyone who might be willing to help us inform patients with pancreatic cancer of the study opportunity, in NZ or AU), please get in touch!

As in previous studies, we will be recruiting study participants online - look out for these ads coming to social media accounts near you.



If you see any of these study advertisements online, please share them with your network!

We will be working hard to reach people who qualify - every single study participant is greatly appreciated.

For questions about this study, please contact Study Coordinator Fiona Robertson at aspert_toolstudy@otago.ac.nz.

TEAM NEWS

FIONA
ROBERTSON



In May 2025 we welcomed Fiona Robertson to the ASPERT team.

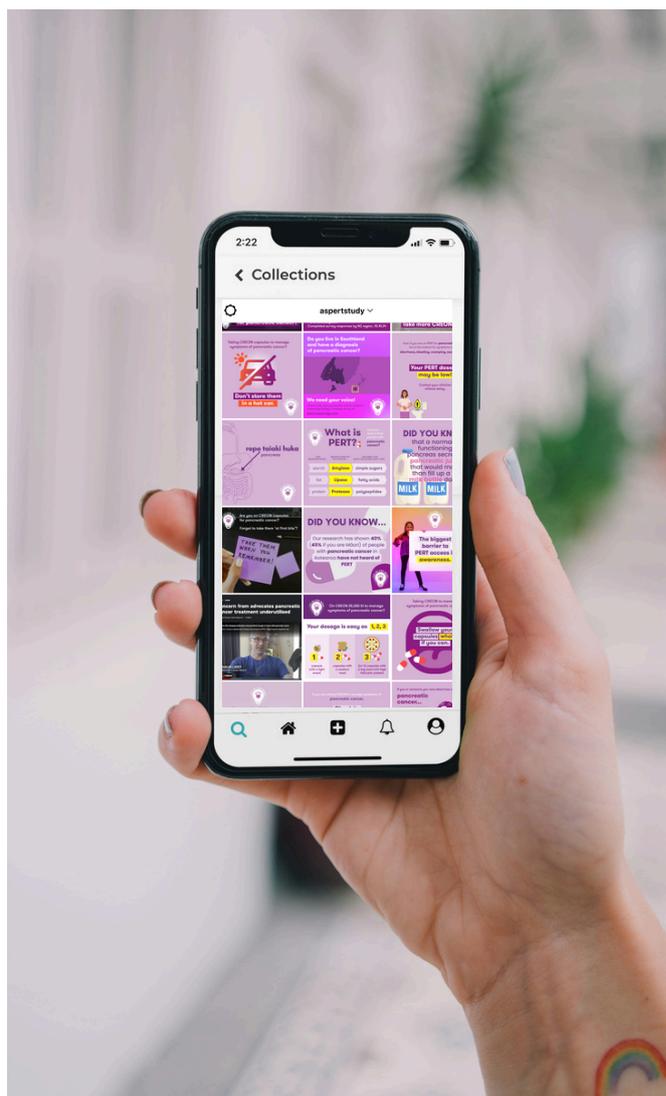
Fiona will be working as a research assistant on the PEI-SS study we are preparing to launch later this year.

This study aims to validate a new symptom screening tool for people with pancreatic cancer who experience PEI.

Fiona started her career working for six years as a research assistant in the Cancer Research Program at the Garvan Institute (Sydney).

During this time Fiona completed her Bachelor of Pharmacy and later enjoyed working as a clinical pharmacist in Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Christchurch.

Following an extended stint living in the USA, Fiona has returned to Christchurch and is very excited to join the dynamic ASPERT team.



WE'RE ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

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

FACEBOOK: [@aspertresearch](https://www.facebook.com/aspertresearch)

INSTAGRAM: [@aspertstudy](https://www.instagram.com/aspertstudy)

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

Subscribe or find out more by emailing Amanda Landers:

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