

Improving whiplash diagnosis

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A team of researchers from ANU, the University of Aarhus in Denmark and Canberra Hospital want to know whether new technology can help identify whiplash injuries in the neck that could lead to better treatment of chronic neck pain and disability.

ANU anatomist and the study's lead investigator, Dr Alexandra Webb, says participants in the study will have their neck scanned using a 3 Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner, which provides more

detail and clarity than the more common 1.5 Tesla MRI scanner.

"There has been substantial speculation regarding the source of neck pain and disability following whiplash, largely stemming from the elusiveness of structural damage in the neck," Dr Webb says.

"However, recent advances in imaging technology have facilitated improvements in the identification of structural changes affecting the neck's joints and muscles."

Whiplash is a term commonly used to describe an injury from when a person's head rapidly moves backwards and forwards as a result of a car crash. Injuries from whiplash can vary with symptoms including neck pain, stiffness and headaches that gradually disappear. In some cases, patient recovery can be slower with continued neck pain and reduced function.

A 2013 report found the number of [car crash](#) casualties in the ACT who received medical treatment almost tripled from 238 in 2003 to 670 in 2012. According to the NSW Motor Accidents Authority, [whiplash injury](#) is the most frequently recorded injury amongst third-party personal injury claimants in New South Wales, making up approximately 45 per cent of all claims.

The associated costs of whiplash, including medical care and lost work productivity are substantial, with the NSW Motor Accidents Authority reporting 50,000 [whiplash](#) claims made in NSW from 1989-1998 at a cost of about \$1.5 billion.

Dr Webb is looking for people between the ages of 18-29 years, who have sustained a neck injury as a result of a motor vehicle accident.

"We are interested in acute patients who have suffered a neck [injury](#) in

the past few weeks, but also those chronic patients with [neck pain](#) that has lasted between 12 weeks and three years," Dr Webb says.

Provided by Australian National University

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