

Grace Gane Memorial Lecture 2025 is awarded to Felicity Bright: Advancing person-centred research and practice in stroke care in Aotearoa

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The Grace Gane Memorial Lecture recognises significant contributions to the profession of speech-language therapy. It takes place at the biennial NZSTA conference and was instituted in 2008 to honour Miss Grace Gane, who is regarded as one of the founders of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association.

Miss Gane was one of three students in the inaugural 1942 speech therapy class at Christchurch Teachers College. The New Zealand Speech Therapists' Journal was founded in May 1946 with Grace Gane as its first editor.



Felicity Bright

Felicity Bright is an associate professor of rehabilitation in the School of Clinical Sciences at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). She graduated from the University of Canterbury in 2001 before working as a speech-language therapist in acute and rehabilitation settings in Auckland, primarily working with people with neurological conditions. Her clinical experience has deeply informed her research, which critically examines how rehabilitation services address the needs and priorities of patients and whānau. Felicity seeks to influence not only how practitioners work, but the policies and service structures that shape practice. As a research leader within the Centre for Person Centred Research at AUT, she uses her research to advocate for more inclusive, holistic care that supports people to live enjoyable, meaningful lives.

Felicity's primary area of research is wellbeing after stroke. Her current research focuses on how wellbeing is supported (and sometimes damaged) within stroke services. Felicity's work challenges the dominant focus on physical function that is emphasised in stroke services and reveals the very real impacts of not prioritising wellbeing in stroke care, impacts that people with stroke and their whānau can live with for many years. Extending this work, Felicity now leads national and international collaborations with stroke researchers, healthcare practitioners, and people with lived experience to develop research and practice to support people's lives after stroke better. Felicity also co-leads research on communication in acute stroke care with colleagues from the University of Auckland. This work shows the close interplay between communication and wellbeing, and highlights the trauma that can arise from poor communication. A common thread across all her research is attention to how cultures of care – within professions, education, and health services – influence clinical practice and patient experience.

Felicity has a strong focus on supporting practice development through her work with practitioners, service leaders and national stroke organisations. From her wellbeing research, she has produced tangible strategies for improving care and better wellbeing support, which are now being implemented within stroke services. As a member of the National Stroke Network (NSN), Felicity advocates for the needs of people with communication and swallowing impairments, and influences stroke policy and practice. She chairs the Psychosocial Working Group of the NSN, and led the development of the Psychosocial Wellbeing Toolkit, a resource to improve clinical practice.

Through her outreach activities, she seeks to support people in embedding wellbeing and person-centred care in stroke policy and practice, aligning with her broader research goal of improving the quality of care and the cultures of care for stroke survivors and their families.

Felicity is committed to student education and has a particular interest in transdisciplinary postgraduate education that supports practitioners in integrating theory and evidence to advance their clinical practice. In addition to teaching in the postgraduate rehabilitation programme at AUT, Felicity leads the Doctor of Health Science (DHSc) programme. The DHSc supports senior clinicians and clinical leaders in conducting practice-based research that improves healthcare practice. In this role, she supports students in developing

scholarly practitioners and leaders who conduct robust research to address real-world issues and transform practice. She supervises multiple postgraduate students on topics related to communication, models of care, patient experience, and psychosocial impacts of illness and injury.

Felicity has been involved with the NZSTA for nearly 20 years. After being an Auckland area representative, Felicity joined the NZSTA executive committee from 2008–2012, holding the professional development portfolio. She has co-convened two joint NZSTA-Speech Pathology Australia conferences (Auckland 2008, Brisbane 2018). She has ably led the NZSTA programme accreditation committee over the last eight years and has successfully steered the development of our third Programme Accreditation framework.

Felicity Bright's work represents the integration of clinical expertise, research, and education to improve stroke services. Her dedication to person-centred, culturally responsive care continues to influence the academic community, clinical practice, and the lives of individuals affected by stroke and other neurological conditions in Aotearoa New Zealand. ●

Previous Grace Gane Memorial Lecture recipients and their presentations

- ★ **2008** Associate Professor Margaret Maclagan, in recognition of her over twenty-year contribution to the education of speech-language therapy students
- ★ **2010** Jo de Serriere, in recognition of her contribution to the education of speech-language therapy students
- ★ **2012** Terry Wackrow, in recognition of her contributions to the field of paediatric feeding and swallowing
- ★ **2014** Professor Maggie-Lee Huckabee – **Using Integrative research to solve clinical problems**
- ★ **2016** Ann Smail – **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) in New Zealand: working together to enhance communication: Past influences, present trends, and future possibilities**
- ★ **2019** Professor Suzanne Purdy – **Communication research in the context of te whare tapa whā model of health**
- ★ **2022** Professor Gail Gillon – **Aspiring to a literate world for all**