**BACKGROUND**

OPUS is a Centre for Research Excellence in Total Joint Replacement, a musculoskeletal research group dedicated to improving the outcomes of patients with severe osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis affects 9% of the Australian population and those diagnosed with the condition are more likely to experience poorer health and severe pain. Total joint replacement is cost-effective but should only be performed when all other options have been exhausted. Worryingly, the number of TJRs performed are on the rise as well as the reports of unsatisfactory results following surgery (up to 30% of recipients).

To improve outcomes for those with osteoarthritis, the Centre focuses on various aspects of the osteoarthritis journey: from diagnosing the problem to making the right treatment decisions appropriate for each patient and overhauling the surgery and recovery process.

The Centre incorporates different research methods and expertise at each part of the journey, but they all need to be anchored together to form a cohesive, improved model of osteoarthritis care through consumer input. OPUS is recruiting interested participants to become contributing consumer members who will provide advice, feedback and work with researchers to ensure the research conducted aligns with community needs.

**WHY APPLY?**

As a Research Buddy at Tier 3, the applicant will be embedded in a research project and will be able to provide advice on project design and implementation. The role of the consumer will be to:

* Challenge the research using a different perspective
* Represent the community sentiment on the Executive Committee
* Provide constructive feedback:
  + Improve transparency
  + Remove jargon
  + Improve patient information, communication methods with patients/community, patient interactions with research
* Improve awareness and understanding of osteoarthritis research

To ensure consumers are able to contribute to the research as a partner, training and support will be provided.

**WHAT’S INVOLVED?**

Applicants will be required to attend an Orientation day, attend meetings, connect via regular electronic communication with OPUS and provide documentation review (such as surveys, guidelines, grant applications). Participants will also be invited to attend events and activities throughout the year to connect with consumer peers and interact with researchers and students. This is an ongoing role with the Centre until the Centre deems appropriate or the applicant agrees to opt out of the program. Video and teleconferencing is available for most meetings and other activities arranged throughout the year.

**WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

We are looking for enthusiastic members of the public who are interested in contributing to osteoarthritis research and improving the outcomes of patients with late stage osteoarthritis. We invite applications from everyone with no age restriction from metro, rural and regional areas of Victoria.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

1. Interest in osteoarthritis research
2. Available to participate in annual face-to-face meetings
3. Able to set aside time outside of work hours to read through preparatory material
4. Able to review documentation outside of work hours and provide constructive feedback
5. Possess confident communication skills
6. Able to contribute through electronic communication (comfortable with email, browsing through websites)

**HOW DO I APPLY?**

Send an expression of interest by including the below documents to: [opus@opus-tjr.org.au](mailto:opus@opus-tjr.org.au) with *‘Consumer Research Buddy EOI’* in the subject line.

* One page cover letter outlining your interest in achieving better health outcomes for those with osteoarthritis.
* Letter of endorsement from your employer (if employed)
* Current CV
* Respond to each selection criteria within 2 pages maximum

Please note that should your application be selected, you may be requested to undergo police checks.

**MORE INFORMATION**

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