



# Newsletter

November 2023

[www.rotoruasenior.net](http://www.rotoruasenior.net)

Member of NZ Federation of SeniorNet Societies

Postal address: PO Box 2090, Rotorua 3040 Phone: 022 6879299 Email: [rotorua@seniornet.nz](mailto:rotorua@seniornet.nz)

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**Editor contact**  
[rotorua@seniornet.nz](mailto:rotorua@seniornet.nz)

**Website**  
[www.rotoruasenior.net](http://www.rotoruasenior.net)

## From the Chairman

Hello, members

A few days ago, my wife and I received an e-mail to say that, in desperation, our niece in Australia is taking her 19 year old son overseas for treatment for a very severe case of Long Covid after he contracted Covid over a year ago. He is now virtually comatose and is unable to even climb stairs. They are going to the Apheresis Centre in Cyprus. The cost of treatment is enormous, added to by the need to fly business class to allow him to lie down.

We were immediately a little suspicious and did some online research. We visited the Centre's website at <https://apheresiscenter.eu>. It has some of the warning signs of an attempt to cash in on people's desperation about this new and serious condition. A few questions that arise are:

- ☐ Why is it in Cyprus and nowhere else?
- ☐ How well qualified are the medical staff?
- ☐ Is there authoritative research to back up their claims?
- ☐ Are the quoted testimonials genuine?

Some rigorous research on Google and AI was helpful. This revealed that, although there is some research into the use of Apheresis to treat Long Covid, it is as yet unproven and is not a generally accepted treatment. We also uncovered some negative reactions from former patients. Our suspicions may be unfounded, but there seems to be enough doubt to question the wisdom of subjecting this unfortunate young man to the trauma of travel and at least six weeks of unproven treatment. The enormous cost to the parents is also an obvious concern. However, as so often in circumstances like this, there is desperation to try anything that may help.

All I can advise in situations like this is to put emotion aside and to rigorously and objectively use all available online resources before making major decisions.

Regards  
Keith Garratt  
Chair

## **Next members' forum**

### **Monday 13 November 2023**

Our monthly members' forums are at Parksyde Centre, Tarewa Place, on the second Monday of each month at 2 pm, with interesting talks followed by afternoon tea. Visitors are welcome.

## **Talking Tech on Tuesdays**

### **7 and 21 November 2023**

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From Bert, Activities Co-ordinator

Due to two weeks of illness and a couple of weeks traveling, I have not been able to participate in any SeniorNet activity during October. My inspiration for the content of my contribution to our newsletter usually arises from whatever sessions I have attended during the month.

This morning I managed to attend our Thursday session at Age Concern. My first contact arrived, a senior lady with a subject that I know something about which I felt could be an interesting subject.

Recently a couple of TV programs have raised the subject of batteries in general and lithium batteries in particular. The programs were quite alarmist and the lady in question was very concerned to the point where she had removed the battery from her laptop and was operating on mains power only. I needed to reassure her.

As always I have found it helps to start at the beginning with a little history and a few definitions. An Italian physicist and chemist invented the electric battery in 1800. His name was Alessandro Volta, hence the measurement of electrical pressure is called a Volt or the difference in electrical potential between the positive and negative terminals of a battery. The higher the voltage, the greater the amount of current that will flow. The first commercial use of the wet cell battery was in the telegraph which was the first use of international electronic communication. The wet cell battery also provided the power to start the motors of the newly invented automobile. In the 1880s the now very familiar dry cell battery which is used to power torches, radios and other small appliances was invented. A couple of things which may clarify the subject: The term 'battery' is used to describe a number of cells joined together. A 12-volt battery consists of Six 2-volt wet cells and, a 9-volt dry battery consists of six 1.5-volt cells.

We are now in the 21st century and things have moved on quite a bit. Batteries are now used for powering cars rather than starting them. This has been made possible by the use of the lithium battery which was invented in 1912 but did not become commercially available until 1970. Lithium batteries have since become widely used in a variety of applications, including cell phones, laptops, and electric vehicles such as cars, bikes and scooters. They are relatively lightweight, portable and very efficient. They do have a downside in that they are expensive. The element lithium is not abundant. The batteries can ignite under certain conditions and are almost impossible to extinguish until the chemicals are consumed.

This brings me back to the present where a Senior lady is sitting beside me worrying about all of the battery powered devices in her home. I have not seen the TV programs that were mentioned earlier but I have found that most programs dealing with scientific content are made by people with very little scientific knowledge. The emphasis is mostly on the dramatic part of the story which will ensure the greatest audience.

There are several recommended procedures regarding the storage and charging of lithium batteries. These apply whether dealing with motor vehicles, household appliances or mobile phones. Lithium batteries do not like heat. Electric automobiles are best stored in a garage and charged with an appropriate battery charger. Chargers have improved greatly and are now controlled by a computer which can turn the charger on at the correct charge rate at a point where the power supply is at a time of low demand. This is when power is the least expensive. The computer turns off the charging power when the battery is adequately charged. (Not necessarily 100%).

There have been instances of lithium batteries which have caught fire mainly with devices that are prone to shock loads such as scooters and electric bicycles. However, these are not commonplace events.

A good thing to remember about all battery powered devices is that they need to “cycle”, i.e. they need to be charged and discharged regularly and when they are fully charged remove them from the charger. This applies to mobile phones and home appliances.

A great deal of research is constantly taking place in battery storage and alternatives to lithium batteries are being developed. Electric vehicles and climate change are driving this as the automobile industry phases out the internal combustion engine.

Always remember when you buy a new device **read the operating instructions thoroughly**, especially in the case of devices with batteries.

Bert

## **FYI/FYE** (For Your Information/From Your Editor)

Bert's piece this month is both relevant and informative. It also shows one of the great things about computers and, especially, the internet. Most of us grew up with research skills involving libraries and large volumes of learned works, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. Now, most of that knowledge is at our fingertips, or even accessible vocally. (I just hope these things never learn to read minds – I'd be in BIG trouble!)

While it's a wonderful thing to have all this information available, it can also result in both overload and laziness. I have, personally, encountered teenagers with real anxiety because they have become obsessed with negative material on the internet, as well as those who firmly believe that thinking is no longer necessary. Bring on the self-driving, 'thinking' cars! Not to mention the household appliances that run themselves, do the shopping for us ...! But where does that leave the human race?

An example: I recently helped at a sausage sizzle, where a teenager came along with a \$10 note and asked for four sausages. Just to test, I asked him how much four sausages (\$2.50 each) would cost. No idea and couldn't work it out, either! Not a 'thick' kid, but he didn't have his phone or a calculator handy! Is this the future of mankind?

I also recall, when a new school opened in Flat Bush, Auckland, a few years ago, the first lead students were interviewed on (I think) Seven Sharp. The school is open plan and equipped with computer pods in the break-out area. The students expressed their sorrow for the generations who had to learn without these advantages. About eight years ago, I spent a few days relieving at that school and was appalled! The class I 'babysat' couldn't listen, follow instructions or understand (at year 8 – form 2) basic manners. The ultimate was, after three days, one boy handed in a group assignment. He was working diligently while his group were all pretending to work on the computers (playing games!) and admitted to me that the whole assignment was his work, with no input from the rest of the group. I left the teacher a note to this affect. Personally, the non-participants would have been disciplined and the markbook would show 'incomplete' by that assignment, but these young people seemed to think that would be 'mean' and 'unfair'!

While there are still many wonderful people 'out there', entitlement and selfishness seem to be on the rise. Keep telling the grandkids all those old stories, people!

## Senior Hangouts Update      Alan Armstrong, Hangouts Team

If you're registered for Senior Hangouts, you will now be receiving a "What's on?" email every Friday direct from the Hangouts Team. If you aren't and want to register, Gene Rigney can register you. If you don't want to receive the email, it contains an "Unsubscribe" link, or you can delete it. It's also on the Hangouts website <https://www.seniorhangouts.nz>

During our holiday close-down some Senior Hangouts activities such as Groups and Forums will continue and there's always our growing Library of past recordings, but you must be registered to use them. (Registration is members-only.) If you want to brush up on basic skills, SeniorNet Manawatu has been running a series on topics like using Google Apps, filling in on-line Forms and similar everyday needs, and here's a freebie to get a taste:

"Use YouTube Like a Pro" [https://youtu.be/tW\\_qSWBsW4U](https://youtu.be/tW_qSWBsW4U)

Why not register and get set up now so you have something to do over the holidays?

You can play videos any time you like. For live sessions you need a device with a camera and microphone with the free Zoom App installed, and any of our tutors can help you set those up. If you have difficulty logging in, email me at [alan@seniorhangouts.nz](mailto:alan@seniorhangouts.nz) or ring me at 021 171 0946 and I should be able to help.

### Committee and Tutor Contact Details

Chair/Webmaster	Keith Garratt	07 357 2020
Vice Chairman/Treasurer	John Somerville	021 181 5193
Secretary	Peter McKellar	07 347 1154 or 027 2216275
Committee member	Rob Grant	07 345 4222
Committee members/tutors:	Ngaire Tucker	0272907347
	Gene Rigney	027 5724363
	Bert Harris	343 7232
	Eric Cameron	027 4410567
	Alan Scicluna	0273893505
	Felix Hohener	021 737694
	Alan Armstrong	07 349 6344/021 171 0946

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