Hello and Goodbye!
The FRONTIER team continued to expand in 2012. Two additional neurologists: Dr Nick Cordato from Sydney and Dr Emma Devenney from Ireland, joined us. We also welcomed three new research assistants: Samantha Schubert, Natalie Gracia and Emma Flanagan. We farewelled research assistant Belinda Yew, who commenced a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology at Columbia University, USA. Our research OT Claire O’Connor has taken the role of coordinator for a Sydney University study on tailored activities to reduce behavioural symptoms in patients with dementia, but will remain with us on a part-time basis. We welcomed a number of international visitors throughout the year, including Jolanda van Keizerswaard from the Netherlands, Silvie Kloeters from Germany, Dr Christine Guo from the USA, Dr Arjune Sen from the UK, and Prof Morris Moscovitch from Canada. The new NeuRA building opens in early 2013.

Congratulations!
Congratulations to Olivier who was promoted to Associate Professor at UNSW. Muireann was awarded a Discovery Early Career Research Award from the Australian Research Council, and an ARC Cross-Program grant to investigate the role of language in past and future thinking. The MND Research Institute of Australia awarded Sharpley a Postdoctoral Fellowship and also provided a research grant to James and Michael. Marshall and Fiona won Tow Research Awards poster prizes, and Fiona also received a UNSW Faculty of Medicine Dean’s Award for Outstanding Research. Claire O’Callaghan was awarded the student prize for best oral presentation at the College of Clinical Neuropsychologists annual conference. James, Sharpley and Cristian all completed their PhDs this year. Felicity and Sicong finished their Masters degrees while Shadi completed his Honours degree. Natalie was accepted into the 2013 intake of the Medical Programme at University of Notre Dame.

Thanks
Prof John Hodges, Assoc Prof Olivier Piguet and the FRONTIER team would like to thank all the participants and their families for their continuing participation in our research projects during this past year. Your time commitment and help with our research is an integral part to our success.
Research Progress
FRONTIER has had a busy year. It celebrated its 5 year anniversary and has continued to expand. Some of our current research projects and achievements are described below.

Our work on the causes of eating disturbance in FTD continues. We have now recruited over 80 participants. Investigations have found that changes in eating preferences and eating behaviour are found in two subtypes of FTD. Importantly, the characteristics of this eating disturbance vary and are caused by different changes in the brain. We are now interested in the evolution of these changes in eating behaviour with disease progression.

During one of your visits, some of you may have been asked by Lauren to give a blood sample. These samples are used to identify changes in the levels of certain proteins and peptides in patients with FTD. Eventually, the aim of this work is to develop a blood test that will improve the diagnosis and management of FTD.

Michael's group uses brain imaging techniques to understand which brain regions can cause certain symptoms in FTD and related diseases. Recent findings of his group show that, in particular, disinhibited behaviours in FTD are associated with changes in the frontal and subcortical regions of the brain. Identification of changes in those brain regions can therefore be used to tailor disease management and intervention in FTD patients.

Muireann is making progress in her research on how people with dementia remember their pasts and imagine the future. This year, she discovered that the brain regions which store general knowledge about the world are essential for enabling us to imagine the future. Her findings are important for people with dementia as they may not be able to plan ahead or look forward to events in the near and distant future.

Sharon’s online word retraining program for patients with semantic dementia is showing that with practice, naming of objects can be improved. For some participants, these improvements have lasted up to 6 months without continued practice.

Conference Presentations and Other Activities
In 2012, findings from our research projects have been presented at a number of national and international scientific meetings. In particular, FRONTIER was very well represented at the 8th International Conference on Frontotemporal Dementias in Manchester, England. Over 30 articles reporting findings from our projects have been published in international scientific journals.

New Collaborations
FRONTIER is part of an exciting new collaborative research group, ForeFront, which will be dedicated to the study of FTD and Motor Neuron Disease (MND). It is the combination of the NH&MRC FTD and MND programme grant and the Memory programme of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders. This collaboration will group 8 Chief Investigators and their staff/students, and together will cover 5 main areas of research into FTD and MND:

- Neurological research clinics
- Cognition and neuroimaging
- Biomarkers
- Neuropathology
- Animal modeling and cellular/molecular biology