

THE TABLET

'Australia's largest primary prevention aspirin study'



Principal Investigator in Australia, Prof John McNeil shares his vision for the ASPREE study

A message from the Lead Investigator

I consider myself fortunate to lead the Australian arm of the world's largest primary prevention aspirin study in healthy older people. I work with a dedicated and skilled research team that has the support of GP co-investigators. The generosity shown by more than 9000 ASPREE participants from around Australia is humbling. ASPREE will for the first time, determine whether the potential benefits of aspirin outweigh the risks, such as bleeding, in healthy older people. It will tell us if daily low dose aspirin can help prevent or delay the onset of common age-related disease, such as heart attacks, stroke, dementia and certain cancers. There have been many mixed research findings on the potential of aspirin, but none so far, address the health of seniors.

Results from the ASPREE study and associated sub-studies will provide important guidelines for GPs about the wellbeing of people aged 70 yrs plus. Over the next 30 years the number of older Australians will increase rapidly. Keeping older people fit and healthy, free of disability and living in the community is not only a vision that I hold deeply, but one of the health system's most important challenges. The significance of this goal is truly reflected in the USD \$50 million NIA (National Institute on Aging) grant that funds this world-first project. The future treatment of many older people around the globe will depend on the results of ASPREE and I am extremely grateful to the large numbers of participants who are assisting in answering this important question.

ASPREE SNAPSHOT (Nov 2012)

Total (Aust) ASPREE participants:
9000

- **Females** in ASPREE: 5081
- **Males** in ASPREE: 4076
- **GP Co-Investigators:** 1902

Age of ASPREE participants:

- **Average:** 74.8 years
- **Oldest:** 95 years

Popular ASPREE Postcodes:

- **3149** (Mount Waverley, Pinewood, Syndal) - 122 participants
- **3280** (Warrnambool, Dennington) - 122 participants
- **3150** (Brandon Park, Glen Waverley, Wheelers Hill) - 120 participants
- **2611** (ACT region) - 103 participants
- **7310** (North West Tasmania) - 94 participants

Increasing awareness of ASPREE

We have enclosed an ASPREE study information brochure with this newsletter in the hope that you, our participants, might help spread the word about this very important study. After all, who better to know what is involved in being in the study!

Our recruitment target has increased from 12,500 to 16,000 Australians (by the end of 2013).

Much to our delight we are over the half way mark, however we know there are many, many older people who have not considered being a part of research, or who simply do not know about ASPREE. If you know someone suitable - a friend, family member, neighbour or colleague - feel free to give them this brochure and suggest they speak to their GP about being in the trial.



Fortunately, ASPREE is not a demanding study and it offers enormous benefit to the wellbeing of future generations. Plus, we hear on the grapevine, that participants really like the additional health assessments and are proud to be a part of history!

REGIONAL VICTORIA

ASPREE Crossing Borders

Local ASPREE participants, ASPREE investigators and representatives from community organisations and local government helped launch the new ASPREE Clinical Trial Centre in Albury-Wodonga last August. ASPREE’s Executive Officer, Associate Professor Robyn Woods and Dr Peter Vine, Head of Rural School UNSW, spoke of the importance of including rural and regional people in medical research.

Local ASPREE participant, Helen Glachan cut the ribbon to officially open the site (pictured with ASPREE Co-ordinator Sally Mueller). Helen is widely known in the community for her role in the CWA, Show Society and other community groups, and was one of the many wonderful spokes-people on hand at the event. Nurses Sally Mueller and Gillian O’Brien, who make up the Albury-Wodonga ASPREE team, are meeting



Local ASPREE participant Helen Glachan officially launches the trial on the Border

lots of enthusiastic and interesting participants in their travels. The team has their work cut out for them, with the new site encompassing a large area from Albury-Wodonga, reaching into Wangaratta, Beechworth, Mt Beauty, Yackandandah, Jindera, Holbrook, Corryong, Wagga Wagga and Walwa (so far)!

Melbourne Hits 4000

The ASPREE team recently enrolled the 4000th participant from the greater Melbourne region. Melbourne staff travel to all corners of the Victorian capital, undertaking visits spanning from Werribee in the West to Woori Yallock in the East, Hurstbridge in the North, to Hastings in the South. (Sometimes our Melbourne team will help out regional sites as well.) By the end of December next year, the study aims to have around 8000 ASPREE participants from the Melbourne area.

Watch this space...

ASPREE has opened a new Clinical Trial Centre in Wollongong, on the balmy NSW south coast. Supported by The Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, ASPREE is visiting local GPs and finding ways to increase awareness of the trial. The study will employ and train local research staff from the area.

Town Support for Study

One town in western Victoria has thrown its full weight behind the ASPREE study. The Portland and Heywood district has approximately 85 study participants, many of whom got together in September for a feature article in the Portland Observer.

Every GP clinic in the region has supported ASPREE and participant numbers grow daily — what an effort!

Bendigo Seniors Week

Over 200 people visited the ASPREE stand at the Victorian Seniors Festival hub in Bendigo last October. Bendigo study Co-ordinator Greg Ralph, who offered free blood pressure measurements, enjoyed catching up with ASPREE participants and meeting new faces at the event. He found that the festival was a great way to engage the local community.

MELBOURNE

New Study Goes Mobile



Study participants in the Melbourne and surrounding regions may soon notice a new ASPREE vehicle in their neighbourhood .

A recent grant from the NHMRC has funded a new Clinical Trial Van (pictured above) which is fully equipped with a retinal camera. Research staff will take digital photographs of the macula, an area at the back of the eye which is responsible

for clear, central vision. The images are taken as part of a new sub-study to determine the effect of aspirin on macular degeneration.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a major cause of visual impairment in advanced countries and is responsible for nearly half of all legal blindness in Australia. The sub-study is open to all newly randomised ASPREE participants and is free of charge.

ADELAIDE

ASPREE Launches in Adelaide

Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Hon Mark Butler MP, officially launched the Adelaide ASPREE Clinical Trial centre in September.

Chief Investigator of ASPREE in SA, Professor Nigel Stocks, joined Professor John McNeil to welcome the minister, who praised the trial for its 'holistic' look at the health for older Australians.

The entire ASPREE team was delighted to see the launch aired on Adelaide Prime and Win News that evening.

Research staff aim to enrol over 1,000 healthy South Australians by December 2013.

To hear a great radio interview by Professor Nigel Stocks, visit the homepage of the ASPREE website at www.aspree.org

ACT

Celebration well attended

A morning tea marked the 500th participant from the ACT and regional NSW, to be randomised into the ASPREE study. The event was held at the Australian National University and guests included ACT ASPREE Investigator, A/Prof Walter Abhayaratna and Prof Nicholas Glasgow, Dean of Medicine and Health Sciences at the ANU. ASPREE and its sub-studies have had a tremendous response in the Canberra region, and it is expected that over 1000 participants from the area will be enrolled in ASPREE by the end of recruitment in 2013.



ASPREE participants and former Navy colleagues John, Michael and Michael (left to right) catch up unexpectedly at the ACT morning tea earlier this year.

TASMANIA

The smallest state in Australia, Tasmania is leading the charge with the highest number of ASPREE participants per capita!

Burnie Staff recently highlighted Devonport's support for the study - boasting 11 GP Co-investigators and over 100 ASPREE participants from the region. Local Probus President Mervyn Tippett recently introduced ASPREE Study Co-ordinators Shirley Cleland, Audrey Heggarty and Winifred van der Ploeg to the 60 plus members at a local Probus meeting. ASPREE joined the attendees for

morning tea before giving a presentation on aspirin and the trial. Staff were pleased to catch up with existing ASPREE participants, and a number of other members who showed a great amount of interest in joining the study.

So far, the ASPREE team has presented to well over 200 community groups around Australia.

If your group would like a presentation, or to hear an update on the study, please email aspree@monash.edu or contact us on 1800 728 745.

ASPREE Hits the Big Time

We are pleased to announce that channel Nine/WIN and Seven/Prime television networks have picked up an ASPREE community service announcement (CSA) featuring award-winning researcher and Australian of the year (2000) Sir Gus Nossal. In the video, Sir Gus calls on older Australians to be part of the country's largest GP-based disease prevention study to determine if aspirin can help keep older people healthier for longer. The announcement will be on rotation on the small screen in both regional and metropolitan areas over the coming year, so let us know if you see the

familiar logo! You may have already heard a similar announcement on the radio over the past few months. A big thank you especially to Gus Nossal and to metropolitan and regional radio and TV stations for airing the community service announcements. To hear and see the CSAs, as well as other informative articles and study news, visit the ASPREE website – www.aspree.org



Coming to a screen near you—Australian of the Year (2000) Sir Gus Nossal in the ASPREE television community service announcement

SUB-STUDY UPDATES

Healthy Ageing BioBank Reaches New Milestone

The ASPREE Healthy Ageing BioBank study recently reached a significant milestone - banking its 6000th blood sample.

Congratulations and thank you to all study participants and the hard-working Biobank team!

Many participants may remember taking part in this important sub-study early on their ASPREE journey.

It is hoped that up to 10,000 blood and urine samples stored in the Biobank will help future researchers identify predictors (and possible cures!) of diseases that affect the quality of life of older people.

This is a world-first initiative to 'bank' biospecimens from healthy older Australians and is tipped to become the biggest and one of the most important resources for age-related health research in the next 25 plus years. A fully equipped mobile laboratory or ASPREE 'Biobus', which is fitted out to process and store samples for several days, has enabled participants in regional areas to be a part of the Biobank.

This year the Biobank team has ventured to Tasmania, the ACT, regional NSW and extensively throughout Victoria.



The Healthy Ageing BioBank team stores blood and urine samples in tiny cryovials (tubes) at -170°C

SNORE-ASA Sub-study Making Progress



Sleep apnoea is very common in older adults and often people with the disorder are unaware that they have it.

The SNORE-ASA sub-study will determine whether sleep apnoea in older age affects brain function and if so, whether aspirin can help prevent a decline in thinking and memory.

Around 400 ASPREE participants have had a free sleep apnoea analysis as part of SNORE-ASA (*Study of Neurocognitive Outcomes, Radiological and Retinal Effects of Aspirin in Sleep Apnoea*). Sleep apnoea refers to breathing problems that may occur during sleep which reduce airflow into the lungs.

Participants wear a device the size of a mobile phone on their chest overnight in their own bed. The SNORE-ASA study is now being offered to all newly randomised ASPREE participants in Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT.

Great ALSOP Response

The first two ALSOP (*ASPREE Longitudinal Study of Older Persons*) questionnaires—the medical and social surveys—have been distributed to many ASPREE participants throughout 2012. The response rate to these surveys has been outstanding; with almost 90% of recipients kindly returning the forms completed.

ALSOP will help researchers to understand where and how to improve health care and services for older Australians. There is no obligation for ASPREE participants to be involved in ALSOP, although we hope that most will appreciate the value of this information and be willing to contribute their own important answers.

Participants who haven't yet received the ALSOP 'medical' questionnaire will be mailed a copy in the coming months.

ASPREE Funding Organisations

- National Institute on Aging (NIA/NIH in the USA)
- National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia (NHMRC)
- CSIRO
- Victorian Cancer Agency (VCA)

ASPREE Collaborating Organisations

- Monash University
- Menzies Research Institute (TAS)
- Australian National University
- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Adelaide
- RMIT
- University of Minnesota (USA)

Stay up to date on ASPREE study at the www.aspree.org

Online now:

- A summary of aspirin research by Professor Andrew Tonkin
- ASPREE Community Service Announcements
- Stories to Tell
- ASPREE investigator radio interviews
- Television footage of ASPREE events and much more
- Plus we are on twitter! [@aspree_au](https://twitter.com/aspree_au)

Rather receive 'The Tablet' ASPREE newsletter by email? Send your name and email address to aspree@monash.edu or call **1800 728 745**

This newsletter is produced by the ASPREE National Coordinating Centre, Melbourne.