

ASPIRIN

PARTICIPANT BULLETIN

WINTER 2011

ASPREE STATS >>>

- Number of people currently involved in the ASPREE study: **2700 randomised participants (and growing), 1000 doctors, 70 staff members**
- ASPREE commenced its first annual review of participants: **March 2011**
- Number of ASPREE Clinical Trial Centres nationally: **10**

ASPIRIN FACTS >>>



Salicylate (aspirin in its natural form) is found in green vegetables and plants. The bark from willow tree was a forerunner to modern aspirin and was noted to be an expensive, bitter, foul tasting substance that caused stomach upsets.

On Top of the World

Popular ASPREE Regional Manager, Dr Sharyn Fitzgerald, successfully completed a grueling marathon in the North Pole last month. She is only the second Australian woman to have run the 42km race in challenging conditions that included a 10pm start and 4.30am finish. It was minus 28°C in the sun. We are pleased to report she returned with ten fingers, ten toes and without having bumped into polar bears. Her North Pole success raises the bar for the ASPREE team.

Staff feverishly hope they are not expected to follow in her footsteps!



Congratulations to ASPREE's Dr Sharyn Fitzgerald, who took ASPREE to the North Pole recently.

ASPREE participation is more than a number

As we surpass our 2000th randomised participant, we would like to thank the many people involved in the ASPREE trial - from doctors who can see the value of ASPREE, to our wonderful participants who are committed to bettering the health of future generations. Then there are the many community groups that kindly invite us to talk about the study.

Our participants, who come from wide and varied cultures, occupations and circumstance are contributing to the community and society at large. Their involvement will make a difference to the medical care of older people in Australia and around the world. For more information about ASPREE call **1800 728 745** or speak to your GP.

ASPREE Profiles

Geoff Ponsford sees his father, legendary test cricketer Bill Ponsford, as larger than life

literally. His daily walk often sees him pass Bill's bronzed 3.5 metre statue outside the WH Ponsford stand at the MCG.

Retired and living in Melbourne, Geoff and wife Glenis Ponsford are now able to indulge their love of Australian sports at the famous grounds where Bill made records. (He is one of only three to make four triple-centuries.)

The couple hail from Woodend where for 29 years they ran the local pharmacy, acquired another chemist in Gisborne, cared for an elderly Bill and raised three children. "Being pharmacists, we had to make up mixtures and learn to identify herbs," said Geoff. Back then penicillin was the only antibiotic available, eye drops weren't sterile, heart medications were primitive and the attitude somewhat pragmatic. "Either you got better or you didn't."

The well travelled pair found international pharmacy interesting, particularly a chemist in Moscow that in 1986 still stocked a leech depository jar. Being able to buy an over-the-counter mixture containing

opium in Zimbabwe just shy of the year 2000, was also an eye opener.

However, aspirin has always been on their prescription list and Geoff and Glenis have witnessed the evolution of the drug over the last 60 years. In days before paracetamol, the couple used to make up in large half gallon containers a pain relieving mixture called APC, which stands for aspirin, phenacetin and caffeine. (Apparently, some young pharmacists were known to decant some of the caffeine off the top of APC to put a bit of spring in their dance-steps.)

Aspirin tablets were later sold in pink strips of paper. But packaging did little to improve the taste - it was always horribly bitter.

The first time Geoff saw a script for low dose aspirin was at Kings College Hospital in London, where he worked as a hospital pharmacist. He was puzzled by the dose. "I took a double look at the script," he says.

That was the 1970's. Fast forward to early 2011 when Geoff and Glenis happily became part of the aspirin story. As enrolled participants of the ASPREE trial and Biobank study, they each have a 50% chance of being on low dose aspirin today. For the

next five years they will take a small tablet daily and undergo annual health checks with



Former pharmacists and now ASPREE participants, Geoff and Glenis Ponsford in front of renowned cricketer Bill Ponsford's statue at the MCG.

ASPREE staff to help determine if daily low dose aspirin can prolong a healthy life. ASPREE is recognised as one of the most important studies to be undertaken in Australia, especially as the population grows older.

"We are certainly interested in medical trials and scientific evaluation," says Glenis, who has long held an interest in healthy ageing. "The wider the range of measurements in the trial, the broader the information that can be used in the future."

"We do it not because we are special," adds Geoff.

"But because we approve of trials."

ASPREE Collaborating Organisations

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

ASPREE Funding Organisations

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

www.aspree.org

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