

The TABLET

The world's largest disease prevention aspirin study in people aged 70 plus

About ASPREE:

ASpirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly

- Is a community based study
- Funded by the US & Australian Governments
- Will determine whether low-dose aspirin prolongs good health
- Has 15 sub-studies in Australia

Australian participants:

Total enrolled: 16,703 (2,411 in USA)

Females: 9,175

Males: 7,528

As of 23rd Sept 2016, participant age ranges from 72 - 99 yrs with an average age of 78.6 yrs.

Why study aspirin?

- Knowledge of whether healthy older people should take low-dose aspirin will only come from a study that considers all the potential benefits and risks in that age group.
- No aspirin trial has focussed on healthy older people.
- People are living longer. If life expectancy increases at the same rate observed in recent history, 50% of Australian babies born today are predicted to live to 104.
- ASPREE is investigating the common causes of disability in older people such as dementia, depression, cancers and cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke).
- ASPREE aims to discover how to maintain good quality of life within an increased lifespan.

ASPREE Genomic projects update

Thanks to the generosity of ASPREE participants, the ASPREE Healthy Ageing Biobank is the world's largest collection of high quality biospecimens for research in healthy older people.

Genetic studies on Biobank samples are contributing to a growing knowledge about the impact of genes on our health.

The first major genomic project to include samples from the ASPREE Healthy Ageing Biobank was the Medical Genome Reference Bank (outlined over-page).

ASPREE has since been collaborating with another world-leading genomic research centre on a second study called 'The Resilience Project'.

The Resilience Project

This project is a collaboration between the ASPREE Biobank and The Icahn Institute at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. The Icahn Institute has world-leading expertise and laboratory facilities to map and analyse very specific genetic information in a genome.

It has been awarded grants from the NIH (National Institutes of Health),



STOCKPHOTO

Samples in the ASPREE Biobank are helping to discover why some people remain free of disease and others do not.

which is the same government agency that funded the ASPREE Clinical Trial in Australia and the USA.

Scientists at The Icahn Institute will examine approximately 700 genes from ASPREE Biobank participants in Australia and the USA for the presence of genetic variations associated with disease. The aim is to identify and understand why healthy older people with these genetic variations remain free of disease when others do not.

Additionally, the collaboration with Mount Sinai may help reveal to ASPREE researchers any genes associated with the onset of disease, for example, cardiovascular disease, cancer and dementia.

It is expected to take several years before findings from The Resilience Project are known.

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More about Genomics

Genomics is the study of a person's entire set of genes to understand how genes function and work with one another.

Genomics can be studied using a number of technologies. These include a process called whole genome sequencing which reveals all the DNA on each gene in a given individual.

The process is comparable to reading and remembering the position of every letter in two 20,000 page books (one book represents a set of genes from your mother and one from your father).

Genomic sequencing 'reads' every letter of every word on every page in one fell swoop.

The challenge for researchers is to understand what all this information means.

Genomics & Privacy

ASPREE takes very seriously the responsibility for protecting the confidentiality and privacy of ASPREE participants whose biobanked samples are involved in medical research.

ASPREE genomic research projects:

- are tightly governed by ASPREE and Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs)
- are restricted to ethical, non-commercial, public-good research

All ASPREE Biobank samples are de-identified, meaning the donor's identity is never available to collaborating research organisations and no individual can be identified in reports of the findings.



Above: Genomic sequencing is like reading every letter in a 20,000 page book.
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The Medical Genome Reference Bank (MGRB)

The MGRB was the first major genome sequencing project to include ASPREE Biobank samples. A total of 4,000 genomes from healthy people aged 75 years from participants in the ASPREE study and the NSW Sax Institute's '45 and Up' Study will contribute to the MGRB.

Genetic information from the genomes will be used to form a reference bank or library of 'healthy genomes' of the 'welderly' (well older people). The 'healthy' reference bank can be used as a comparison by researchers to identify, more easily, genes that cause disease.

This reference bank will form the first genetic profile of this calibre of healthy older people in the world and will take many years to complete.

The MGRB and Resilience projects use only a very small portion of Biobank samples. For more information and FAQs about ASPREE genomics, visit our sub-studies page on www.aspree.org.

About the ASPREE Healthy Ageing Biobank

More than 15,000 Australian and US ASPREE participants have donated blood or saliva samples for future biomarker or genetic research. The explosion in technology, reductions in cost and new funding opportunities, has enabled ASPREE to launch genomics projects sooner than ever anticipated.

ASPREE is a unique resource for genetic research because unlike other studies:

- it has the largest collection of biospecimens from healthy older people in the world
- it contains DNA samples from **healthy** people who have consented to genetic research (most genetic studies look at the genes from people with disease)
- all samples are of very high quality, maximising research opportunities
- each sample is associated with unprecedented health and lifestyle information to help bridge the link between our health and what is happening at a genetic level

Genetic studies on ASPREE Biobank samples are for research purposes only and are not intended to be medical investigations or provide diagnostic test results.

Importance of placebo control in ASPREE

Placebos mimic the appearance of an 'active' therapy such as pills, injections, inhalants or other forms of treatment. As a randomised, double-blinded, placebo-controlled study, ASPREE is the gold standard of clinical trials.

The word 'blinded' means we do not know who is taking aspirin and who is taking a placebo (not aspirin, but an otherwise identical) tablet. Blinding helps minimise bias in the trial, providing a high degree of confidence in the study findings.*

Results from participants taking the placebo (dummy or inactive) therapy are just as important to study findings as the results from participants taking the 'active' therapy.

Why? Because the placebo arm of the trial becomes a control group; their information establishes the status quo in the absence of a therapy. Since half of ASPREE participants will be taking the placebo tablet, we will accurately determine whether aspirin has (or has not) made a difference to quality of life in healthy older people.

A small proportion of people report having a response to a placebo. This is commonly known as the placebo effect. There are reports of people feeling better after taking a placebo tablet; others may report effects such as nausea. The exact mechanism behind the placebo effect is unknown.



Above: *Being 'blinded' to study medication, encourages participants to continue with their lives as normal and ensures researchers collect data from all participants without influence or opinion.



YES! You are still very much an important part of the ASPREE study. Some people mistakenly believe that if their GP takes them off study medication for medical reasons that they are withdrawn from the trial. This is not true!

Your health information will still contribute to our understanding of health both on and off aspirin

and we very much appreciate your continued participation in the trial. If your doctor has taken you off study tablets for medical reasons, please do let us know by phoning 1800 728 745 (toll free from a landline) or email aspree@monash.edu

Please also hang onto your study tablets until we arrange for their collection.

Last 12 months of the ASPREE trial approaches

We are holding a series of updates on the progress of the ASPREE study **before** the trial concludes in late 2017. These events have proved to be very popular with participants, guests and ASPREE staff.

After study results are published (expected in mid to late 2018) we aim to share ASPREE findings with participants at another series of updates.

Many participants have asked whether the ASPREE trial will continue beyond 2017.

The ASPREE study, as we know it, is likely to finish on December 31st 2017. We do hope to extend the trial in some form beyond 2017, however this will depend on funding and on participant consent.

ASPREE News in Brief

MELBOURNE



Left: Melbourne ASPREE participant Max recently put a few more kilometres under his belt when he rode into the ASPREE National Co-ordinating Centre for his annual visit.

The 88 year old, who estimates he rides about 150 kms per week, is a member of the Whitehorse Cycling Group.

Max calculates that he has ridden more than 66,000 km on his 22 year old, steel-framed bike.

The fabulous cycling jersey was a gift from a mate.



SAPPHIRE COAST



Above: Our Melbourne team was treated to some much needed sun during their stay in Merimbula recently. In addition to conducting study visits, the team was delighted to meet participants at an ASPREE study update.

WOLLONGONG



Above: A fine looking turn out at the ASPREE study update in Wollongong earlier this year. We do love a good group photo.

Australia-wide dementia support for carers

With more than 100 different types of dementia, there is no one experience of the condition. However, there are common challenges.

Alzheimer's Australia provides education, support, information and counselling for Australians of all ages living with all forms of dementia, as well as their families and carers. These services are available at all stages of the condition - from pre-diagnosis, throughout the condition and bereavement - and have been specifically designed to meet the needs

of the whole community, regardless of age, cultural background or health condition. The National Dementia Helpline is staffed by professionals who have extensive experience working with people impacted by dementia. Staff are available to offer information and support and can be contacted on 1800 100 500, from 9am - 5pm weekdays. Educational videos and online counselling options can be viewed at www.helpwithdementia.org.au www.fightdementia.org.au and www.livingwellwithdementia.org.au

MBS/PBS forms

A huge thank you to participants who returned their MBS/PBS consent forms to us earlier this year.

More than 80% of the forms, which were enclosed with the last newsletter, were returned by post or at a study visit!

We are very grateful for such a wonderful response. Your consent has been forwarded to the Department of Health.

A good read inD-eed

Fairfax media ran an in depth feature on the [ASPREE-D](#) (depression) sub-study on July 24. To view the story, click on the link in the 'news' section on our website www.aspree.org.

What's in a name?

If you are a Margaret, Patricia or Barbara, you have one of the most popular names of all female ASPREE participants in Australia. The gents' equivalents are John, Robert and Peter.

The latest news

Visit www.aspree.org to stay up to date on the latest ASPREE news and events.

ASPREE Funding Organisations

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

ASPREE Collaborating Organisations

- Monash University
- Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania
- Australian National University
- The University of Melbourne
- The University of Adelaide
- Berman Centre for Outcomes & Clinical Research (Minnesota)

Staying in touch with you is very important

- Have there been any changes to your health? Have you moved?
- Have feedback? We love to hear positive and constructive feedback.
- Rather receive 'The Tablet' ASPREE newsletter by email?

Please let us know



CALL:
1800 728 745

Phone toll free from a landline or email aspree@monash.edu

www.aspree.org

[aspree_au](https://twitter.com/aspree_au)