

# THE TABLET

AUTUMN / WINTER 2012

## ASPREE APRIL SNAPSHOT

- No. of Australians in ASPREE:  
**6087 participants**  
**1412 GP Co-investigators**  
**110 staff members**
- Female ASPREE participants  
**3399**
- Male ASPREE participants  
**2688**
- Oldest ASPREE participant **95 ys**
- Average age: **75.96 ys**

## NEW ASPREE SUB STUDY

New ASPREE participants are offered the opportunity to take part in SNORE-ASA, a sub study to help determine if aspirin can have an effect on sleep apnoea, memory and thinking. Sleep apnoea is common in older people and is thought to affect brain function (concentration and memory) and the health of small blood vessels in the brain over time.

The study involves cognitive tests and wearing a small device around the chest overnight. At the moment, SNORE-ASA is open to Victorians.

## New Look 'The Tablet'

A bigger and brighter 'The Tablet' newsletter will be published twice a year. We are pleased to include an update on the happenings from the many ASPREE regions across Australia.

If you would like to see a particular story or item in the next 'Tablet', please contact us on **1800 728 745**.

## ASPREE Grows to 6000 Plus

Congratulations to all our ASPREE participants, GP Co-investigators and the research team. We have well and truly passed the 6000<sup>th</sup> participant mark, making ASPREE the largest GP-based primary prevention study ever undertaken in Australia!

## Outstanding Participant Response to ALSOP

Last January, the first 3000 participants were sent the ALSOP 'medical' questionnaire. Almost 90% of participants kindly completed and returned the forms. We sincerely thank everyone for taking the time to share their experiences with us.

ALSOP (ASPREE Longitudinal Study of Older Persons) is a sub study of ASPREE. It consists of a series of questions to help identify factors that could potentially influence wellbeing in later years.



ASPREE and ALSOP investigators wish to thank participants for their extraordinary response to the 'medical' questionnaire.

While many issues, such as hearing loss, are often seen as a part of 'growing old', very little is known about their influence on an older person's health and lifestyle. **ALSOP will help researchers identify factors that affect an older person's ability to age well.**

There is absolutely no obligation for participants to be involved in ALSOP, although we hope they will consider sharing as much information as they are comfortable. All responses are treated in the strictest confidence.

Participants who completed the ALSOP 'medical' questionnaire earlier this year, will soon receive the 'social' questionnaire.

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

For any concerns about ALSOP, please ring **1800 728 745**.

## ASPREE Study Meds

Ideally, all ASPREE participants will take their study medications for the duration

of the trial. However, sometimes, on doctor's advice, a participant may need to cease study medications.

ASPREE is an 'intention to treat' study, which means that to help prevent bias in the study, all participants (even if they are off study medications) are included in the final analysis.

For this reason, we ask participants, who have had to cease study meds to continue to be a part of the study.



*Lesley Lyons and Christina Pretty, who hadn't seen each other for over 10 years, caught up at the Ballarat morning tea last November.*

## GEELONG

Geelong participants can look forward to catching up with each other at a celebratory morning tea in May this year.

The event will take place in the Fred Flanagan Room at Simmonds Stadium, Kardinia Park.

There is plenty of cause for celebration, as the region has recently reached its 300<sup>th</sup> randomised ASPREE participant. We look forward to sharing pictures of the milestone in the next Tablet.

## MELBOURNE

Whittlesea Mayor Stevan Kozmevski officially launched the new ASPREE study hub in the northern Melbourne suburbs in February. The clinical research facility, which is based at RMIT University's Bundoora campus, will serve the Banyule, Darebin, Diamond Valley, Moreland, Nillumbik and Whittlesea regions.

ASPREE participants, investigators and research staff enjoyed a morning tea

## TRARALGON

The ASPREE Gippsland Clinical Trial Centre, which covers most of South Eastern Victoria, is located at the Latrobe Regional Hospital in Traralgon.

Although nearly 300 participants from the region are now enrolled in ASPREE, regional support for the study has been so strong that the recruitment target has been increased to over 500 volunteers.

ASPREE Study Co ordinator, Judith Woods has led the

## BALLARAT

Ballarat ASPREE Study Co ordinators, Sussan and Theresa were delighted to welcome participants from Ararat, Horsham, Maryborough, Creswick, Lake Bolac, Beaufort and Ballarat to the region's annual morning tea. Last November, over 170 ASPREE participants attended the celebrations which also commemorated reaching the 250<sup>th</sup> participant in the region. An unexpected benefit was having people meet up with friends they had not seen in years.

ASPREE team since November 2010. They farewelled Correna Boers late last year and now have local nurse Jane Weeding and assistant Helen Bye onboard.

Judith has enjoyed giving presentations to local community groups, who she has found are highly supportive of the study. She welcomes the opportunity to give more presentations about aspirin and the ASPREE study this year.

## BENDIGO

Congratulations to Castlemaine ASPREE participant John Flaus, who recently won acclaim in an award-winning Australian short film. WA producer Julian Costanzo's quirky movie, 'Lemonade Stand' won first prize at this year's Tropfest – Australia's premier short film festival. The picture was shot over one week-end for just \$4000. Actor Tim Potter was the writer and driving force behind the film, which tells of a grandfather (Flaus) and grandson (Potter) whose lemonade stand is threatened by the local council. Flaus has had an illustrious acting career in Australia and abroad, appearing in films such as Spotswood, The Castle, The Dish and Harvie Krumpet. The 78 year old film lecturer is credited with designing Australia's first cinema studies course at La Trobe University.



to celebrate the launch, and were also able to view the new research facility.

The hub will assist the study to move further into the northern metropolitan region.

*Mayor Stevan Kozmevski (centre back) helped ASPREE participants and researchers launch the new ASPREE hub in Bundoora.*

## SHEPPARTON

ASPREE Study Co ordinators Vicki and Gwen, recently enrolled the 250<sup>th</sup> participant from the Shepparton district into the ASPREE study. One of the first ASPREE regional sites, the Shepparton team also welcomes volunteers from Benalla, Bright and Echuca regions.

They thank ASPREE participants for keeping them up to date on pending surgeries or health issues. As annual visits approach, they would like to remind participants to allow extra time for study visits.

## LAUNCESTON

Launceston ASPREE Study Co ordinator Susan McCoy, had tried just about everything else in nursing before commencing her role with ASPREE in 2010. She has been a midwife, nurse educator and pre-employment health assessor. She has worked in paediatrics, theatre, palliative care, community health, general surgical, orthopaedics, medical, plastics, day ward and endoscopy nursing.

## ACT

The Canberra team has had a great response to ASPREE and is looking forward to meeting all of the new study participants in the region.

Familiar faces are also starting to pop up with many annual visits being conducted through the year.

The area is close to enrolling its 500<sup>th</sup> participant. Staff intend to celebrate this milestone later in the year with an afternoon tea hosted by Senior ASPREE Investigator

## WARRNAMBOOL

Mark Johnstone leads the clinical trial centre in Warrnambool, which covers a large area across South Western Victoria—from Colac (East) to Portland (West), and Warrnambool (South) to Hamilton (North).

Mark is well supported by Joannie Pope, who provides administration assistance. ASPREE participants are spread across the whole region and come from varied and diverse backgrounds. Many volunteers are retired while a significant number

are still working. All however, are very active members of the local community. Recently the district reached 200 participants - half way to the original target of 400. To celebrate the first anniversary of ASPREE in South Western Victoria, Mark and Joannie look forward to catching up with participants at a morning tea on 25 May. Invitations are in the mail.

## HOBART

Hobart is the largest of the Tasmanian ASPREE sites, and to date has over 500 participants. The clinical trial centre is located at the Menzies Research Institute in Hobart, however the researchers visit an area that spans approximately one third of the state! ASPREE study Co ordinators Jan Nelson, Sharon Kelly and Helen Steane are continuing to spread the good word about ASPREE to GPs in the Hobart area.

## BURNIE



ASPREE participant George McCrae with ASPREE executive officer Dr Robyn Woods at the ASPREE North West Tasmania morning tea earlier this year. *Photo courtesy of Katrina Dodd, The Advocate*

When a colleague told her about ASPREE, she was keen to give research a go. Eighteen months later and Susan is loving her role as a study co ordinator. Locally, senior ASPREE investigator Prof Mark Nelson's support is injecting new interest from GPs and helping the study continue at a steady pace.

At present, the Launceston district has 300 participants and counting.

A/Prof Walter Abhyaratna. The ACT Centre has also completed their enrolment for the ENVIS-ion sub study, which is a fantastic achievement.

Most study visits are conducted at the Canberra Hospital, keeping the study co ordinators in the Clinical Trials Unit very busy.

Karen G, Karen D, Natasha, Janine L and Janine V enjoy meeting such lovely participants. They also welcome Emily on board.

Over 120 people, including ASPREE participants, clinical researchers, co-investigating GPs and local politicians, attended the ASPREE morning tea in Burnie last February. Held at the Burnie Rural Clinical School, the event celebrated the ASPREE study reaching 350 participants in the North West Tasmania region. Attendees at the event represented multiple areas across north west Tasmania—spanning from Smithton to Sheffield.

Guests were treated to informative presentations from ASPREE participant George McCrae (pictured above) and ASPREE investigators. The following 'meet and greet' session proved to be very popular. ASPREE Executive Officer, Dr Robyn Woods, said it was an 'impressive milestone' for the small region to have 350 participants and was confident the team would enrol its 450<sup>th</sup> participant target by 2013.

## Try as he might, it seems as though Derek Walker just cannot get away from aspirin.....

For many years Canberra-based ASPREE participant, Derek Walker worked as a chemist for Aspro-Nicholas – one of the earliest producers of aspirin.

It was actually his job with the company that brought him to Australia from England in the 1950s.

Mr Walker was born in 1927 in Barking, Essex, on the outermost fringe of London - which was then 'semi-rural'.

Following completion of secondary schooling he spent two years in the Army, before obtaining an Honours Degree in Chemistry from the University of London.

His first professional appointment was as an industrial chemist in a team that installed a new chemical process in Slough, Berkshire.

Mr Walker says that the chief responsibility of the group was to investigate methods for determining the purity of compounds formed by the pyrolysis (decomposition) of turpentine.

"Almost unbelievably, these compounds, when refined, are the very same as those found in exotic

natural oils such as attar of rose, neroli and geranium," he says.

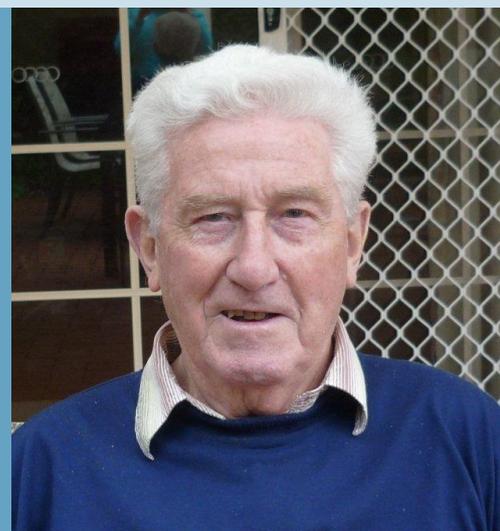
"When skilfully blended, they form the basis of the very expensive perfumes that are sold internationally."

Mr Walker's affiliation with Aspro-Nicholas came some time later, when he was invited as part of a group of chemists to develop methods for determining the purity of drug substances.

"The history of this aspirin and the way in which it was promoted and sold globally by an organisation (Aspro-Nicholas) that started in the back kitchen of a Melbourne pharmacy, is fascinating," he says.

A decision was made by Aspro-Nicholas to close down the British side of the organisation and to concentrate on formulating new products from existing drugs. The company sold its research laboratories in England - where Mr Walker was working at the time - and transferred its development operations to Melbourne.

"Although well into middle age at the



*ASPREE participant and former Chemist, Derek Walker at his home in Canberra*

time, the experience of moving to a new country I found to be both refreshing and challenging," says Mr Walker.

"Fortunately our young daughter soon settled in to a new school and found new friends, whilst still retaining most of her old ones."

Knowing of his history with the Aspro-Nicholas organisation, Mr Walker's GP gave him some information regarding the ASPREE study in 2010 – and he was happy to get involved.

Aside from his continued interest in chemistry and medication, Mr Walker is kept busy tending to his garden, travelling back to Europe to visit friends and family, researching on the internet and 'two lively and energetic grandchildren'.

### 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
- University of Minnesota (USA)

Visit [www.aspree.org](http://www.aspree.org) for aspirin news and information about the ASPREE study

If you know of clubs or groups that would be interested in hearing our presentation about aspirin and ASPREE, or you would like to receive information brochures about the study please ring **1800 728 745**

If you would prefer to receive 'The Tablet' ASPREE newsletter by email, please send your name and email address to [aspree@monash.edu](mailto:aspree@monash.edu) or ring **1800 728 745**

This newsletter is produced by the ASPREE National Coordinating Centre.

