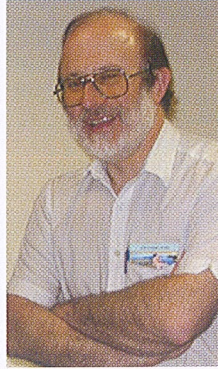


TAS News

Welcome to the second edition of TAS News. This newsletter is to update you on the current medical research for the TAS health study which involves the 8,500 people who were born in 1961 and from Tasmania- yourself included! The next year is going to be a very exciting time as this research continues into a new phase of laboratory testing. The universities of Tasmania, Melbourne and Monash, and The Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust are all working together to look more closely at lung health and allergies within this group who are now adults aged 42-43 years!



Three researchers of the TAS team (left to right):

Professor E. Haydn Walters is the head of Medicine at The Royal Hobart Hospital and Tasmanian School of Medicine, Dr Shyamali Dharmage is a senior lecturer in the department of Public Health at The University of Melbourne & Professor Michael Abramson is a respiratory physician at The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne.



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Background of the TAS study

This medical research started back in 1968 when all the 8,500 children who were born in 1961 were surveyed through the schools in Tasmania. At this time your height and weight were measured and some information about your health was collected using a survey and a breathing test. Your brothers, sisters and parents were also surveyed. Including these family members there were 45,900 participants, which makes this research the biggest of its kind in the world!

Many people may not remember this study as it was so long ago. However, since then there have been two follow-up studies on some of these participants.

In 1974, 7,130 participants who were then 13 years old completed a questionnaire. Of these children 850 also did breathing tests in a laboratory.

Another follow-up study was done in 1992 when the study participants were aged 31 years. This time 1,500 answered a questionnaire about their health. A brief description of the findings of these studies are on the back of this newsletter.

With the original 1968 study and these two follow-up studies we have information about the health of 2,100 people through different stages of their lives!

It is now 37 years since this original study and these people are now 42 or 43 years old. This is a fantastic opportunity to look at the factors that have influenced the health of these people over time.

In 2004, the TAS researchers were awarded a National Health and Medical Research Council Grant and a Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust grant to conduct this follow-up study. This research is also funded by The University of Melbourne, The Victorian Asthma Foundation, The Helen McPherson Smith Trust and the Royal Hobart Hospital Research Foundation.

The laboratory study

Over an 18 month period we plan to test 1,200 people in 3 laboratory centres in Tasmania (the Royal Hobart Hospital, and clinics in Launceston and Burnie) and at The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne.

The aims of this laboratory study are to improve our understanding of lung health problems in middle age by looking at how they develop and how they are affected by environmental factors. Risk factors that will be looked at include a history of respiratory infections, allergies, effects of air pollution and environmental exposures and family trends of illness.

If you are willing to participate in this research it involves a 20 minute phone survey and a visit to a laboratory centre for about an hour and a half. The lab visit would involve:

- a questionnaire about your exposure to dust and fumes throughout your working life
- a skin test to determine if you have any allergies to common allergens (such as cat fur, dust, moulds and pollens)
- breathing tests to look at the health of your lungs
- a blood test where we will collect 30ml of blood (which is equivalent to one and a half tablespoons).



Billy Skoric does a breathing test with a research participant at The Alfred Hospital testing centre.

Your choice to contribute to health research

Over the coming weeks we will contact you by phone to ask if you may be willing to participate in this research. If you would like to know more information or would like to discuss this research further please feel free to call:

Dr Desiree Mesaros on 1800 207 765

Please remember that this research is completely voluntary. If you have any questions or do not wish to participate please let us know with a phone call on the above number.



Study Coordinators:

Dr Desiree Mesaros and Cathryn Wharton are happy to answer any questions. Ph: 1800 207 765 or 1800 110 711

Your participation is still very important even if you don't have any breathing problems!

Please remember that even if you are healthy with no illness your participation in this study is still very important. We need as many people as possible to participate in this research so that it reflects a true picture of health in the community.

The importance and benefits of this research

By participating in the laboratory study you will learn if you have any sensitivity to common allergens such as dust, cat fur, some pollens and mould. We can also provide you with results of your lung tests and tell you how your breathing compares with other people.

Once this information has been collected on 1,200 participants an analysis will be done to find out why some people get lung illness and others don't, and what factors increase the risk of illness. We expect that this study will have international importance and will benefit the future health of Australians.

Please ensure that your contact details are up to date!

One of the most difficult tasks in conducting medical research on a group of people over a long time is keeping track of where they live. A lot of money and staff time has gone into just trying to locate participants. Our intention is to repeat this study every 10 years to see how your lungs are ageing, so we would like to keep in touch even after the current follow-up study!

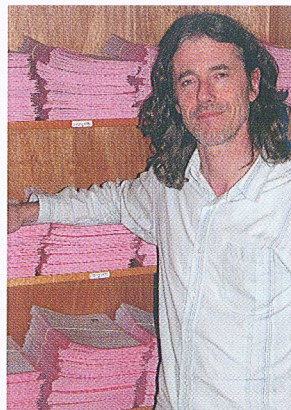
We also plan to do a large family study in the future. So if you or any of your brothers, sisters or parents have moved in recent years or move in the future, please let us know with a quick phone call on the toll free number:

Ph: 1800 110 711

The 36-year follow-up postal survey continues

In 2002, the TAS research team began locating the people involved with this research so a follow-up postal survey could be carried out. 7,000 of the 8,500 people were traced using the Federal Electoral Rolls, Tasmanian Marriage Registry, the National Death Index, the Australian Twin Registry, a mail out to family members, White Pages and many, many phone calls!

The survey was posted in November of 2003 to the 7,000 found participants, including yourself. Two extra mail outs and phone surveys were also done to improve the response rate. This process is still continuing and we are aiming for at least a 70% response.



Peter Feldman, interviewer for the TAS study, shows off some of his hard work!

Some findings from previous TAS studies

The original 1968 TAS study showed that 16% of our children had suffered from asthma or wheezy breathing. At the time of the 1992 follow-up study when participants were aged 32 years, 75% of those who had asthma as a 7 year old no longer had it, but one in 10 had developed asthma as an adult. Factors that seem to predict asthma as an adult include having a history of eczema, low lung volumes, a parent with a history of asthma, asthma during childhood and being female!

The TAS research team would like to say thank you for all your help over the years and for your contribution to this world leading medical research.