



Welcome to the Christmas 2011 Newsletter for the TAHS

Welcome to the 2011 newsletter for TAHS. With the festive season approaching we wish you a happy and safe holiday season and thank you for your continued involvement in the Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study (TAHS). Just to refresh your memory in 1968 the TAHS enrolled 8,500 7-year-old Tasmanian school children in a medical research study looking at asthma. The parents of these children filled in surveys on themselves and all their children. All up over 45,000 people were part of the TAHS in 1968 including you and your family. Since then most of you have been invited for further follow-up up at least once. This newsletter highlights some of the study findings and provides some information about this research.

Current Projects

TAHS Parents Study

We have been following up parents of the TAHS study and they have been completing a short questionnaire for us. The study is still going so if you believe that they haven't completed a questionnaire please give us a call, so we can confirm their details.



BHR Study – Nearly finished

Some people from the TAHS have been part of the BHR study which is nearly complete. This study will help us understand factors that are related to sensitivity of the lungs. We are finalising testing in Queensland, Victoria, NSW and Tasmania.

What's new for TAHS?... A HUGE new study.

The last few years have seen us contacting parents, brothers and sisters from the TAHS cohort for follow-up. Now we have just been funded by the Australian government to start a HUGE follow-up of all the original TAHS participants who were born in 1961. Since there was over 8500 this is a big study.

We plan to invite everyone into one of our clinical testing sites for follow-up so we will be in touch over the next few years to book an appointment. To help us get this started we would appreciate if you could up-date your details with us if you have moved recently. You can call us on 1800-110-711 (Free Call) or go to our website (www.tahs.com.au) and up-date your details.





Smoking and asthma increase the risk of lung disease



We have recently started to look at the lung function data collected from all our generous TAHS participants.

We are looking at risk factors for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and have found that childhood-onset asthma and active smoking contribute substantially to having COPD in middle-age. We also found a strong interaction between smoking and asthma which is another compelling reason to give up smoking.

What makes asthma lessen with time?

An important issue for people with allergic diseases such as asthma is will this go away? We have used the TAHS study to look at what factors may be related to remission of asthma. Unfortunately we found few things that were related to losing asthma. However we did find that being exposed to smoking in the home, having eczema and hay fever increase the risk of asthma continuing into middle age.

Genes and Eczema

Do you genes influence you getting eczema? One gene called Filaggrin can increase the risk of eczema. We have looked at this gene in the TAHS and people with the gene are more likely to have eczema. However not everyone who has the gene will get eczema so we looked to see if other lifestyle factors can change your risk of getting eczema. We found that living on a farm decreased the risk of developing eczema if you have the filaggrin gene. It has been shown that living on a farm or in



a rural area may help stop people getting allergies. Our study was the first to show that this protective effect was true even if you are genetically at risk of developing allergies.

Childhood allergies are related to allergic asthma in adult life

The progression of childhood allergies such as eczema into hay fever and then into asthma is of major concern.

Data from the TAHS

was recently used to look at whether childhood eczema develops into allergic asthma. Allergic asthma is asthma that is triggered by allergies to pollen, dust or cats for example. We found that 29.7% of allergic asthma that develops in childhood and remains into adult life could be due to having childhood eczema and hay fever. This may suggest that if we treat these childhood allergies we may help prevent asthma remaining into adult life.

