

Australia's largest clinical trial to test benefits of aspirin

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Researchers at Monash University and the United States-based Berman Center for Outcomes & Clinical Research will lead an international clinical trial to test whether taking aspirin contributes to good health in the elderly.

The trial, ASPIrin in Reducing Events in the Elderly (ASPREE), has been awarded US\$50 million from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, the peak health funding body in the United States. This support follows earlier funding of \$3.5 million from the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia.

The study will recruit 12,500 healthy men and women aged 70 years and over in Australia and 6,500 in the US. Half will take daily low-dose aspirin and half a placebo tablet over a period of five years.

Head of the Monash School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Professor John McNeil, who is the study's principal investigator in Australia, said the health and wellbeing of older Australians was at the centre of the study.

"We want to look at the potential of aspirin to improve the health of older Australians, something that is increasingly important as the population ages. This age group has not previously been studied in sufficient numbers to inform health guidelines," Professor McNeil said.

"Doctors know that aspirin should help to prevent heart attacks and some

forms of stroke. Research indicates that aspirin may also prevent mental decline and some forms of cancer. However, aspirin is also known to have side effects, such as increased bleeding, that may offset its benefits."

Professor McNeil said the study follows increasing international debate about the role of aspirin for prevention of disease in healthy individuals. ASPREE will determine if daily consumption of aspirin will help older Australians remain physically active and productively involved with their families and wider communities, as well as have better cognitive and cardiovascular function.

"ASPREE is the largest prevention trial to be undertaken in Australia," Professor McNeil said. "Its outcome will determine whether health practitioners in Australia and internationally should routinely recommend low-dose aspirin for their older patients.

Professor Mark Nelson, Chair of the Discipline of General Practice, University of Tasmania and a member of the core research group said, "The study is a partnership between researchers, general practitioners and the community. The involvement of general practitioners in Australia is crucial to the success of the study. We will work closely with GPs, initially across Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT and later in other states, to invite the many suitable volunteers who will be needed for the study."

ASPREE study executive officer Dr Robyn Woods commented, "Because of the power provided by the number and the targeted age range of participants, the results of this trial will offer us more insight than any other study into the benefits of [aspirin](#) for older people."

Professor Richard Grimm is the US project leader at The Berman Center which is a part of the Minneapolis Medical Research Foundation.

Source: Monash University

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