

The newsletter of the ASCEND Study

Spring 2012 – Number 10

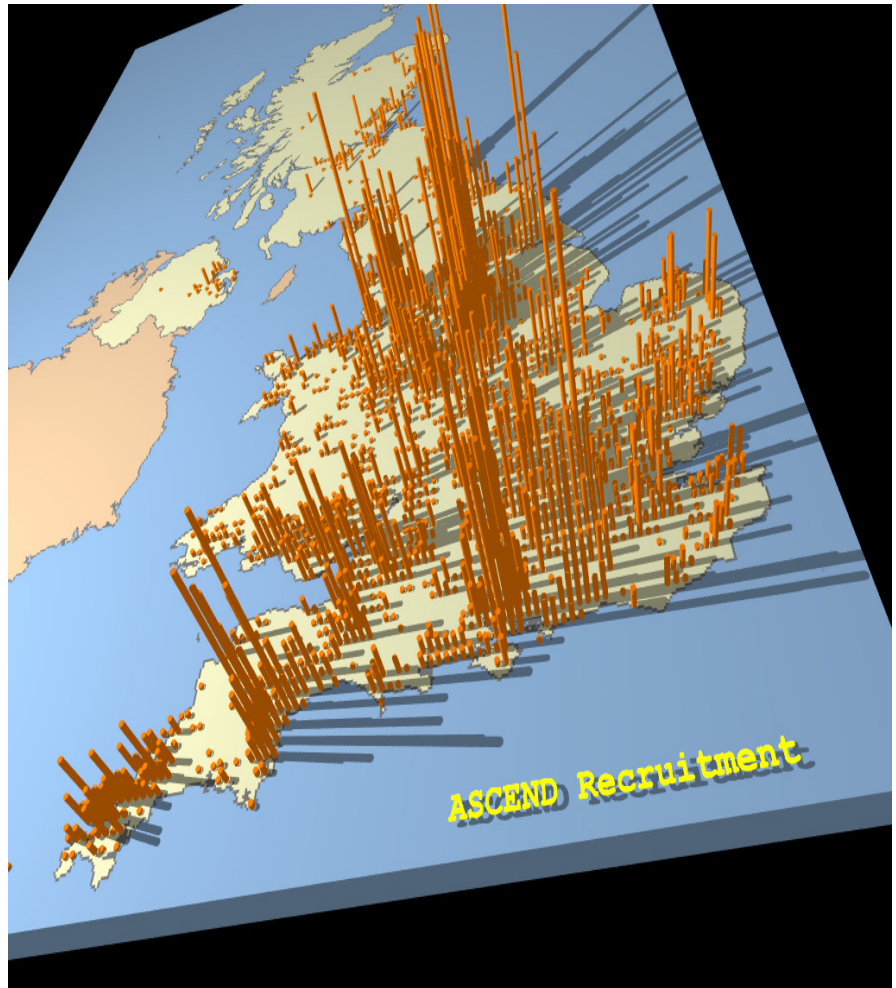


Welcome to the tenth edition of **HIMALAYA** – the newsletter of the ASCEND study. Thank you very much for your interest and participation in this study so far. If you have not received **HIMALAYA** before, we hope this newsletter will educate and entertain you, and tell you more about the study in which you are playing such a vital role. If you have, then read on and find out what we have been up to since the last issue.

Annapurna I, the picture on the left, is a Sanskrit name which literally means "full of food" (feminine form), but is normally translated as "Goddess of the Harvests". Annapurna I at 8,091 m (26,545 ft) is tenth among Earth's fourteen eight-thousanders.

Who else is taking part?

You may remember that, with all your help, ASCEND completed the recruitment of 15,480 people with diabetes mellitus. People from all over the UK are participating in ASCEND and the picture on the right shows where they live with the higher columns showing where there are more participants. We collect data on everyone who participates and here are some of the characteristics of everyone taking part:



- 63% are men and 37% are women;
- 94% of people have type 2 diabetes;
- the average age is 63 years.

Our goal is to provide reliable answers to some very important medical questions for millions of people around the world with diabetes. For ASCEND to deliver all that it can, we need as many of you as possible to take your study treatments. We also need you to complete your questionnaires. In this way we know how you are getting along. This is true even if you are no longer taking the study treatments – as the more complete a picture we have, the more reliable our results will be. With your help, we are confident that the ASCEND study can provide valuable information that will improve the care of patients with diabetes world wide.

Where can people find out more?

They can:



visit the ASCEND website: www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/ascend



call a member of the study team: (Freefone) 0800 585323

The ASCEND Team



The Himalaya newsletter is a good opportunity to introduce you to the individuals that make the ASCEND trial possible. At the heart of this effort are our team of experienced administrators: Lorraine Cobb, Steve Sutherland, Sue Bateman and Susan Fathers, who cheerfully send, receive, and manage the mountains of paperwork necessary to invite, screen and monitor you during the trial. Together they help to ensure that any inconvenience of being involved in the research process is kept to a minimum. In the picture on left, they are preparing sample kits to send out. ASCEND would rapidly grind to a halt without all their daily input. The team can also boast a talent for baking cakes—making them extremely popular with everyone else within the department!

Recent news about Aspirin

Some scientists have recently disputed the benefits of the common practice of taking a small dose of aspirin to reduce the risks of heart attack or stroke for people who are otherwise healthy. They say the benefits may not outweigh the risks. Meanwhile, other studies suggest that aspirin can reduce cancer risk. This is exciting work, but further research is needed. ASCEND is an important health trial at the cutting edge of research. One of its goals is to find out whether regular doses of aspirin can reduce heart disease and strokes in people with diabetes who do not have vascular disease. It is known that aspirin

reduces the incidence of heart attacks and strokes in people who already have vascular disease. We also know that people with diabetes are at risk of a heart attack or stroke. But the exact role that aspirin might play in helping diabetics, who do not have vascular problems, to reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke is still unclear. The rationale for using aspirin is sensible enough. The treatment reduces the stickiness of the blood platelet cells and thus helps boost the blood flow to the heart and brain. ASCEND addresses this vital question – but we need you to keep taking your medication to help us answer it.

Follow-up methods

The ASCEND team is trying its best to ensure you have the best follow-up during your participation in the trial. Currently, as you know, we send follow-up questionnaires out to you roughly every six months, asking questions about your continued health. An internet-based follow-up programme is in development. By securely logging on to the ASCEND website, you will be able to answer these questions in confidence. We hope many participants will find this easier and quicker than using the current paper system. Watch out for more details. However, if you would rather continue using the paper forms, this will not be a problem.

Blood and urine sample collection

You might remember, at the beginning of your participation in the trial, you may have kindly provided us with optional blood and urine sample for analysis. During the follow-up phase of the study a worthwhile, but optional, part of this research study is to repeat those tests in about 10% of randomly selected participants. For those who receive such a request, we hope very much that you will be willing to help again. The results from these samples will add more value to the study.



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ASCEND is coordinated by the *Clinical Trial Service Unit* of the *University of Oxford*



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