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Welcome to the first edition of **HIMALAYA** – the newsletter of the ASCEND study! Thank you very much for your interest and participation in the ASCEND study so far. We hope this newsletter will educate and entertain you, and tell you

more about the study that you are playing such a vital role in. Please let us know what you think of **HIMALAYA**, and whether there are any issues you would like to see discussed in future editions.

## WE HAVE REACHED 2,000 PARTICIPANTS!

By the time you read this, the 2,000<sup>th</sup> participant will have entered the study. As you probably remember, we plan to recruit 10,000 people in total into ASCEND – so we are one-fifth of the way there! The picture shows this in comparison to climbing Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain at 8848 metres high. Base Camp is at 5,300 metres, and one-fifth of the way up the mountain from there is Camp One, at 5,900 metres. A good start, but still some way to go!



### Why does ASCEND need so many participants?

The more participants that a study has, the more reliable are the answers that it gives. Although we might be able to show that aspirin is or isn't beneficial in people with diabetes with fewer participants in the study, the answer would be less reliable and therefore other doctors might not trust it. That would mean that

other people might not get the correct treatment. Therefore, we want to recruit 10,000 people so that the answer we get is reliable and can be applied to the millions of people who have diabetes in the world. The results of ASCEND could literally save tens of thousands of lives, so it is crucial that we get it right!

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP ASCEND

Clinical studies like ASCEND depend on people like you being willing to take part. We would really appreciate your help in helping us find the next 8,000 people to take part in ASCEND. We will therefore be sending out some leaflets with your next Follow-up questionnaire (which we send you every



six months), on which you can give us the details of someone you know who might be able to take part. If you know anyone with diabetes who is over 40 years old, please ask them if they would be interested in taking part, and check that they would be happy for you to send us their details. Please reassure them that we would only use them for ASCEND.

### Where can people find out more?

They can  visit the ASCEND website at [www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/ascend](http://www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/ascend); or



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

## WHO ARE THE CLINICAL TRIAL SERVICE UNIT?

You have probably read on many of the documents that we send you that ASCEND is coordinated by the “Clinical Trial Service Unit of the University of Oxford”. CTSU has a long history of clinical studies such as ASCEND, and the results from some of these have changed medical practice around the world. The ASCEND team – pictured here- is headed up by Jane Armitage. In later editions of **HIMALAYA** we will highlight what different members of the team do with their day!



## HOW DO I GET THE TABLETS OUT OF THE PACKS?!

Lucy Fletcher, one of our study administrators, shows you how!



Push the oils capsule out by pushing on the end in the middle of the blister

Tear back the card and remove the oils capsule

Tear back the card further to reveal the white aspirin/placebo pill

Push out the white aspirin/placebo pill.



## WHO SHOULD TAKE FISH OILS?

You may have recently heard that NICE (the National Institute for Clinical Excellence) has recommended that people who have recently had a heart attack and do not eat sufficient amounts of oily fish (2-4 portions per week) should be given omega-3 fatty acid supplements. Two large studies have investigated this, and both found a small but significant benefit for those people taking omega-3 fish oils. The

fish oils used in these studies are the same as those used in ASCEND. However, all the people in these trials had had a heart attack, and were therefore at much higher risk of further problems than people who just have diabetes. They therefore do not help us decide whether or not everyone with diabetes should be taking omega-3 fish oils, which is what the ASCEND study aims to find out.

## WHAT IF MY MEDICATION CHANGES?

You will notice that on every follow-up form that we send you (which we will do every six months after you enter the study) has a section where we ask you about your other current medication, and in particular other drugs used to thin your blood, such as aspirin, warfarin, clopidogrel (Plavix) and dipyridamole (Persantin). If a doctor does start you on one of these, please call a study doctor (on Freefone 0800 585323) to discuss it. You will re-

main part of the ASCEND study, but we may need to ask you to stop one of the study treatments. If a doctor is thinking about starting aspirin, please make sure they know that you are taking part in ASCEND, and let them know that they can also use the Freefone line to find out more about it.



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Freefone 0800 585323



[www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/ascend](http://www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/ascend)