

The newsletter of the ASCEND Study

Spring 2016 – Number 14

Welcome to the Fourteenth edition of **HIMALAYA** – the newsletter of the ASCEND study. We would like to say a big **THANK YOU** for all your help so far. The results from ASCEND will make a big difference to people with diabetes around the world and we really appreciate your support.



Shishapangma, first climbed in 1964, is in Tibet, 5 km from the border with Nepal.

New NICE guidelines about diabetes

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides guidance for doctors in the UK. In December 2015 it released updated guidelines about the treatment of people with type 2 diabetes (the commonest form of diabetes).

This guideline recommended that people with diabetes, who are not already known to have heart or circulatory problems, should not be offered aspirin to reduce their risks of suffering a heart attack or stroke (unless they have another reason to take aspirin).

What does this mean for ASCEND participants?

This recommendation from NICE will not affect the ASCEND study. We agree with this latest guidance since it is not known whether the benefits of aspirin in helping to prevent heart attacks and strokes outweigh the increased risk of bleeding for people with diabetes who do not have heart or circulatory problems. This is exactly what the ASCEND study aims to find out and since ASCEND started there have been no new results which have answered this question.

New ASCEND “quality of life” form

As you know ASCEND aims to find out whether aspirin and/or omega-3 fatty acids (fish oils) can safely reduce the risk of cardiovascular events (such as heart attacks and strokes) among people who have diabetes, but who did not have known cardiovascular disease when they started the study. In addition, we would like to find out whether these treatments improve quality of life for individuals with diabetes. This can be assessed using a standard set of questions called the ‘EQ-5D questionnaire’.

Therefore, over the next 6 months, we will be sending ASCEND participants an extra form (called the “quality of life form”) which asks standard questions about how your health affects your daily life. On the last page of the form there are also questions about your weight, your current medication and some questions about your diabetes. This information will help us better understand any effects of aspirin and/or omega-3 fatty acids.

ASCEND superstars

★ Since 2014, Neville, 89 from Gwynedd, has completed his ASCEND follow-up form online. This saves postage and avoids the need for the study administrators to process so many forms. Thank you.

★ In October 2015 Professor Jane Armitage, ASCEND Chief Investigator, ran 10k with her family to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. Here she is after the race with her 3 children and a friend.

★ Since 2014, Sandra, ASCEND administrative assistant, raised nearly £800 for the Island Farm Donkey Sanctuary, Oxfordshire. A fantastic achievement.



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

In July 2015 we said goodbye to Lorraine Cobb who retired after 14 years of working at the Clinical Trial Service Unit. Lorraine worked as an ASCEND administrator since the study started in 2006 and will be very much missed. Here she is in the ASCEND office (far right).

We would like to welcome Arun Karnad (bottom right) and Dr Emma Waters (bottom left) to the ASCEND team. Arun joined the team as a senior administrator in August 2015, having moved from Guy's and St. Thomas' hospital in London where he worked on a number of clinical trials involving various cancer treatments.

Emma, a public health doctor, previously worked in Cambridge for organisations including Public Health England and the NHS Sustainable Development Unit. Since joining ASCEND in March 2015, she provides medical advice to ASCEND participants and helps to coordinate the study.



What happens to my data?

This section will give you a bit more information about how your data is stored and processed by ASCEND.

How is information about me collected?

Information about people taking part in ASCEND comes mainly from the questionnaires you complete on a regular basis. In addition, we may ask for information from your GP or your hospital records about serious illnesses such as heart attacks, cancers or severe bleeding episodes. Information about the causes of any death of a participant is also received from central registries. All this information is incorporated into the study database and will be used to work out whether or not the treatments are having effects.

Is information about me collected by ASCEND secure?

All information is stored securely by Oxford University and is kept confidential. Access to the computer database is by unique combinations of usernames and passwords and only authorised study personnel can access information about participants. The building is secure with authorised swipe card access only. No individuals will be identified in any study reports.

What if I am no longer completing follow-up forms?

For the results of ASCEND to be as reliable as possible, the study team need to try to find out what has happened to everyone who initially agreed to enter the

long-term part of the trial. This is the case even if those people are no longer taking any study treatments or have not been in contact with the study lately. If you do not wish to be contacted or do not wish to have information about you collected or recorded, then you should inform the study team using the contact details below. You do not need to give a reason and this will not affect your usual medical care in any way.

What will happen after the study finishes?

Information will continue to be gathered about you from NHS central registries beyond the end of the study treatment period so that any long term effects of taking aspirin or fish oils can be discovered. Anonymised information about study participants, which would not identify you, may be shared in the future with other approved medical researchers. Sharing of information with other researchers helps ensure that research is open to scrutiny and that best use is made of the information collected. Researchers at Oxford University will remain responsible for the security and validity of the information held.

How do I find out more about this?

You can contact the study team using the contact details below at any time if you have any questions about this or any other aspect of the study.



Freefone 0800 585323

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



ascend@ctsu.ox.ac.uk



www.ctsu.ox.ac.uk/ascend