Wollongong locals to participate in Australia’s largest primary prevention aspirin trial

The ASPREE (ASPirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly) study – the largest primary prevention aspirin study ever undertaken in older people – is calling on local residents from Wollongong and surrounding regions to participate in the study. The trial is hosted locally by the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI) on the University of Wollongong campus.

ASPREE is a landmark study investigating whether a daily low dose of aspirin can delay or prevent the onset of common age-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease (heart attack and stroke), dementia and some cancers, in older people. The trial will help determine if aspirin contributes to good health in the elderly and should be prescribed to all otherwise healthy people aged 70 years and over.

Professor John McNeil, Principal Investigator of ASPREE and Head of School of Public Health & Preventive Medicine at Monash University, said the launch of the ASPREE study in Wollongong is a unique opportunity for both local general practitioners and community members to be involved in large international clinical research.

‘The ASPREE study is extremely relevant for the health and wellbeing of Australia’s ageing population,” said Professor McNeil.

“Aspirin is one of the most widely used medications in the world, frequently prescribed to people who have already suffered a heart attack or some forms of stroke. The ASPREE investigators recognise that aspirin has wide ranging potential health benefits but also that it has side effects, such as increased bleeding, that may offset its benefits. The ASPREE study will be the first of its kind to determine whether the benefits of aspirin outweigh the risks.”

The ASPREE study will partner with up to 100 GPs from the region and aims to sign up around 500 local participants. The response to date has exceeded researcher’s expectations.

“We are delighted that already over 70 people from the Wollongong region are enrolled to be part of the study,” said Professor McNeil. “It’s a tremendous response.”

Residents in Wollongong and neighbouring regions, who are over 70 years of age and in good health, will be invited to take part in the study via a letter from their GP which will be sent direct to their homes.

Led by researchers at Monash University in Melbourne and the Berman Center for Outcomes & Clinical Research in the USA, the ASPREE study aims to recruit 19,000 healthy older people to participate in the study (16,500 in Australia and the rest in the USA).
Eligible study participants are randomly assigned to take a daily tablet; half will be taking 100mg of aspirin and half a placebo. Participants also undergo free annual health checks for an average of five years.

The ASPREE study will be complemented by an initiative from Australia’s Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to develop a “Biobank” of over 10,000 blood samples from healthy Australians to investigate factors that may contribute to healthy ageing.

The ASPREE study is being funded by the US National Institute on Aging, with funding support also received from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

To be involved in the study, speak to your GP, or call ASPREE directly on 1800 728 745 (toll free from a landline) or visit www.aspree.org

-ENDS-

Note to editors:

Primary prevention studies – examine methods to delay/prevent onset of disease

Secondary prevention studies –examine methods to prevent re-occurring disease/events e.g. heart attack, certain types of stroke

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