MEDIA RELEASE: Embargoed to 6am AEST Thurs, 25 Aug

Testing begins in Australia’s largest study of diabetes, obesity and lifestyle

Study to screen more than 8000 Australians to develop a snapshot of the nation’s health

Health screening begins in Victoria this week, marking a major milestone in Australia’s largest longitudinal study which is enabling researchers to track how many people have developed diabetes, obesity, kidney and heart disease.

Mordialloc in Victoria will play host to the first test site for participants in the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle (AusDiab) Study, with health research teams to travel the country over the next year to test more than 8300 people.

The landmark study, led by Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, will show researchers how many people have developed disease and how many have stayed healthy over the past 12 years.

Participants in AusDiab, who have been involved in the study since 1999, will undergo a range of tests examining blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels. They will also be asked to respond to questionnaires about diet, nutrition and physical exercise.

A field team of more than 80 health professionals will assist with the testing over the next year, with staff travelling more than 50,000km and visiting 43 venues across the country to secure a snapshot of the nation’s health. By the end of the study, their travels will equate to crossing the Nullarbor 25 times and along the way, they will collect 240 litres of blood.

This study has already had a major impact on health care planning in Australia, alerting governments to the scale and impact of diabetes and obesity, with the results translated into national programs for diabetes screening and prevention.

Last year, the AusDiab research team was awarded $2.5 million by Australia’s National Health and Medical Research Council to conduct a third round of this study, which is one of the largest studies of its kind in the world.

Principal Investigator and pioneer of the AusDiab Study, Professor Paul Zimmet said the testing of thousands of Australians over the coming year “would enable researchers to compare the measurements from the start of the study in 1999 and develop powerful tools to predict who stays healthy and who is at risk of diseases like diabetes”.

“These tools add to our understanding of the causes of disease and make it possible for doctors to pick out those people whose health may be heading in the wrong direction, and to put measures in place to minimise the risk,” Professor Zimmet said.

In this latest round of testing, geocoding will be employed for the first time, enabling researchers to measure participant’s access to lifestyle-related amenities, including their proximity to walking tracks, parks, bicycle paths and food outlets to see if this impacts their health status.
With an ageing population, researchers will also examine the physical capacity of the AusDiab participants to help determine what impact common mobility impairments such as frailty might have on communities, highlighting key areas for health care planning in the future.

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Interview Opportunity: 11am at Mordialloc Bowls Club, 38 McDonald Street, Mordialloc

Testing of participant: Tim, 60, from Mentone is the managing director of a medium-sized business. He has been participating in the AusDiab Study since it started in 1999. As part of his testing, Tim will have a range of measurements taken including blood pressure, a blood test, height and weight.

Interview with principal investigator and pioneer of the AusDiab Study, Professor Paul Zimmet from Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute.

Results of the first two AusDiab studies

The first AusDiab study conducted in 1999/2000 showed:
- One million Australians had diabetes and two million had pre-diabetes (in which glucose metabolism is impaired but not to the level to cause diabetes)
- Almost 30 per cent of adult Australians have elevated blood pressure or were on treatment for this condition
- One in six Australians participated in no physical activity
- More than 60 per cent of adults were either overweight or obese

The second AusDiab study conducted in 2004/2005 showed:
- Every day in Australia, approximately 275 adults develop diabetes
- The average increase in waist circumference in Australians over five years was 2.1cm
- Every year, 3 per cent of adults developed high blood pressure

Dates and numbers of testing around Australia

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>24 August – 4 October, 2011</td>
<td>1166</td>
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<td>South Australia</td>
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<td>Tasmania</td>
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