



AUSDIAB

AUSTRALIAN  
DIABETES,  
OBESITY &  
LIFESTYLE STUDY

Issue #8

# THE AUSDIAB STUDY

# 2012

FIELD TESTING: TRAVELLING THE COUNTRY TO TEST THE HEALTH OF AUSTRALIANS

## FIELD TESTING THE HEALTH OF AUSTRALIANS

How field teams travelled more than 50,000km visiting 46 locations to collect the health data of more than 4000 Australians in the name of health research and planning

Setting up an appointment with a health professional can be difficult enough at times. So imagine the challenges in organising appointments, venues, equipment and staff to conduct health tests with more than 4000 AusDiab participants at 46 locations across 50,000km of this country.

You might also be surprised to learn that AusDiab Project Manager, Shirley Murray manages all this with just a handful of staff and importantly, the good will of participants.

“It’s a military-like operation that requires enormous planning to ensure test venues are available, casual staff are on hand to assist with testing, the necessary equipment arrives at each venue and the co-ordinators are supported as they travel the country to conduct the day-to-day testing.”

But even with all the best planning, there is sometimes no accounting for things like the weather – with one of the teams getting stranded in Queensland due to floods while another team had to negotiate lightning strikes to access a more remote South Australian site by small plane.

But mostly, it was smooth sailing, with testing beginning in Mordialloc in Victoria in August 2011 and finishing in Blackmans Bay in Tasmania and Driver in the Northern Territory in June 2012.

The field staff are now well-acquainted with the scout halls, bowling, league and rugby clubs, church halls and universities throughout various parts of the country that were used as testing venues, providing Baker IDI staff with the privilege of meeting some of the local people in these communities.

In addition to the tests done in previous AusDiab surveys, there were some additional health tests included in this latest round of the study.

The introduction of new health tests included the ‘Get Up and Go’ mobility test and the ‘EZSCAN’ test to measure chloride levels in the sweat as a possible new indicator of diabetes. Some participants would also have been asked about access to walking paths and bicycle tracks to explore issues around accessibility, urban environments and links to health. Many participants also kindly agreed to participate in 24-hour ambulatory monitoring, enabling vital data around blood pressure and activity levels to be recorded.

With testing now complete, it will be some months before all the data can be collated. When it is, it will provide a powerful insight into the health of the nation, enabling researchers to track how many people have developed diabetes, heart disease, obesity and kidney disease over the past 12 years. This insight will help to develop powerful tools to predict who stays healthy and who is at risk of diseases like diabetes, and to put in place measures to minimise the risk of disease.

*The AusDiab team would like to thank all participants for contributing to one of the most important health studies in Australia today.*



### Features

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## NURSE AND LOGISTICS EXPERT BY DAY, TOURIST BY NIGHT

Imagine a job where you could travel the country for almost a year and meet a range of interesting people every day. Nicole Kempster was one of several people who did just that when she took on a role of field co-ordinator for the AusDiab Study.

As a Clinical Nurse Specialist, diabetes educator and midwife, Nicole Kempster (pictured below) was used to dealing with dramas, including those in the birthing suite.

But she took on a whole new set of challenges, when she agreed to pack her bags and hit the road to take on a role of field co-ordinator for the AusDiab Study last year.



Travelling the country and meeting “some great Australians with amazing stories” have been some of the highlights for Nicole but she said there were also a lot of logistical challenges. These included meeting a tight testing schedule across multiple states, managing casual staff in different locations, battling the elements – including floods in Gympie and the tail end of a cyclone in Cairns - to ensure participant testing proceeded smoothly.

**“As well as putting my clinical skills to good use in looking after the cognitive station (which participants would know as the brain teasers) and the diabetes complications screening station, I also had to be a counsellor, HR specialist, travel guide and organisational expert,” Nicole said.**

With two permanent staff, she has travelled across Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, setting up testing sites in church halls, scout and guide halls, bowling and rugby clubs.

As well as lots of hard work, she said they also managed to squeeze in quite a few tourist attractions on their days off including Magnetic Island, Rottneet Island and the loggerhead turtles at Bundaberg – while one of the girls even learnt to surf and dive.

“I think we saw every big attraction there it to see – the big Pineapple, the Big Mango, the Big Avocado and many more,” she said.

Another team was headed up by PhD student, Rebecca Nolan, who was pleased to be able to immerse herself in her fields of interest – diabetes and exercise, which will hopefully provide fantastic first-hand experience to further her career in diabetes research.

Both Rebecca and Nicole said the experience had provided an incredible insight into how people across the country live. In Western Australia, for example, Nicole found a large number of participants travelled to work by boat, helicopter and plane because so many of them have fly in/ fly out jobs associated with the mines. Rebecca was hugely impressed by the intense pride in their local history held by many participants in the smaller towns.

“It really emphasises the diverse and interesting lives that Australians lead,” Rebecca said.

### SCIENCE AND HEALTH NEWS

To keep up with the latest health and science news when it comes to diabetes and heart disease, including updates about the AusDiab Study, follow Baker IDI on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube



# FROM SCARBOROUGH TO CAIRNS TO MILLICENT AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN

From the beach-side suburb of Scarborough in the West to the tropics in Queensland's Far North to the rural South Australian town of Millicent and the picturesque setting of Ulverstone on the north-west coast of Tasmania, two AusDiab field teams have traversed the nation during the past year to visit a record of 46 locations to collect the health data of more than 4000 Australians.

In this latest study, an additional four sites – Busselton, Townsville, Bundaberg and Bryon Bay – were included in the study to accommodate population movements in these areas.

As with any trek around a country the size of Australia, there are bound to be some challenges.

**The team flying to South Australia's fishing capital, Port Lincoln, experienced a technical malfunction with their 30-seater plane before boarding another plane in rough weather to make the journey from Adelaide.**

The AusDiab team in Western Australia was forced to negotiate major road closures and safety zones to meet their testing commitments, which coincided with the visit by the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Perth last October.

But it hasn't only been field staff who have had to negotiate challenges and travel vast distances to reach their destination. Some participants have also gone above and beyond to ensure they could again take part in this important study.

While testing venues were established as close as possible to participants, there were always exceptions.

AusDiab Field Co-ordinator Rebecca Nolan said one participant, for example, had journeyed from Kangaroo Island via ferry and car to make the full-day round trip journey of 400km to Glenelg in South Australia.

"This demonstrates enormous commitment and the importance that people place on this study," Rebecca said.



The RSL hall at Port Lincoln, adorned with war memorabilia, was one of the most memorable testing sites.

## FACTS AND FIGURES THE AUSDIAB STUDY

The Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (AusDiab) is a national survey on diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and related conditions.

From 1999 to 2000, the first survey was undertaken and 11,247 men and women aged 25 years or older volunteered their time to participate in the study, said AusDiab Project Manager, Shirley Murray.

"Another full survey was repeated from 2004 to 2005, and over the past 12 years, participants like you, have continued to provide additional information about their health status by completing postal and telephone questionnaires," Shirley said.

"All this information has helped to improve our understanding of how diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease and kidney disease impact on the health of Australians.

**“Many have asked, ‘Why conduct a third survey?’ It is important to collect health information from the same group of participants over several years of follow-up as this helps us to track changes in health status.”**



# A HANDS-ON APPROACH PROVIDES DIETITIAN WITH VALUABLE INSIGHT

As a dietitian, Cameron Johnson (pictured right) is particularly focussed on the areas of diabetes prevention and management, as well as weight management.

During consultations, he has often talked with patients about the results of the AusDiab studies, which have identified risk factors for diabetes and heart disease such as weight gain and inactivity and what this means for people in terms of their health, diet and lifestyle.

On hearing that the third round of AusDiab was to commence, Cameron was very eager to participate. He sought leave from Baker IDI and volunteered as a casual field staff member for the Western Australia study, enabling him to be involved first-hand in the data collection.

He said the role gave him the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the methodology and logistics behind this landmark study. "As a team of 9 staff, to collect this data, we spent almost 10 weeks travelling to different parts of Western Australia, collecting blood and urine samples, as well as weighing, measuring and asking many questions of participants," he said.

It now means Cameron can share this valuable experience and the insights he gained with his patients.



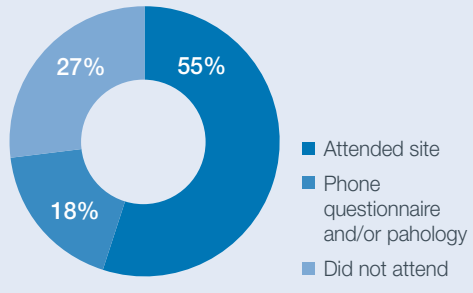
## ABOUT

This knowledge, Shirley said, would help to develop a better picture of the impact of changes in the health of all Australians. She said while information from a single survey could help to answer questions like 'How many people have diabetes?' and 'Among people with high blood pressure what other health problems do they also have?', it cannot tell us whether the number of new cases of diabetes is increasing or decreasing, or whether the high blood pressure caused the other health problems experienced by the individual.

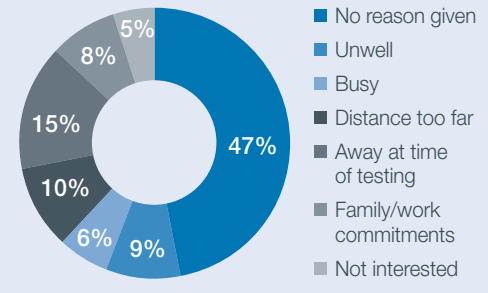
**“It is important to follow people over several years to see what the health consequences are of having risk factors like high blood pressure or high blood sugar,” Shirley said.**

### HOW MANY ATTENDED THE THIRD ROUND OF TESTING?

**AusDiab 3 participation**



**Reason for non-attendance**



Shirley said the team was very appreciative of those participants who were available for the third round of field testing but also recognised that for many it was impossible.

Where possible, Shirley said reasons for non-attendance were collected.

Even with two teams out in the field collecting the data, Shirley said it took just on 12 months for the field work to be completed. "There were only five days at each site and so it was not unexpected that a number of participants were absent at that particular time. "This time, we also found that a large number of people were overseas."

For many, Shirley said, the distance to the site was problematic. "On the organisational side, we did try and book venues within close proximity to where the original AusDiab venue was located," she said. "This did not always work out as planned, for example, at Scarborough and Trigg in Western Australia, the preferred venues were undergoing refurbishment and were not available."

With a participation rate of more than 70 per cent, Shirley said the team was very pleased that people had once again recognised the importance of this landmark test.

# A NEW TEST TO HELP BETTER UNDERSTAND MOBILITY

WITH AN AGEING POPULATION, KEEPING AUSTRALIANS INDEPENDENTLY MOBILE WILL BE A KEY FOCUS IN THE FUTURE

A new assessment to examine the mobility and physical capacity of AusDiab participants has been introduced in the latest round of testing.

AusDiab participants were asked to undertake a timed 'Get Up and Go' test, which incorporates a number of tasks such as standing from a seated position, walking, turning, stopping and sitting down – all of which are important tasks needed for a person to be independently mobile.

**The tests aim to contribute to a growing body of research examining mobility and physical functioning in people of various ages and health conditions to gain an understanding of how mobility problems might impact individuals and communities, and to highlight key areas for health care planning in the future.**

Lead investigator of the AusDiab Study, Associate Professor Jonathan Shaw, said with Australia facing an ageing population, understanding more about the cause and effect of mobility problems, how they interact with disease and the importance of lifestyle factors such as diet and physical activity was very important.

“For example, are people with diabetes more likely to have impaired physical functioning or are people with declining mobility likely to be more susceptible to disease?” Associate Professor Shaw said.

“We don't know the answer to these questions and studies like this help us to better understand the underlying disease process. This sort of information might make a difference in how people are managed by health professionals in the future.

**“Physical functioning is a core element of quality of life so if you don't have good physical functioning, you have reduced quality of life. Our ultimate aim is to keep people physically active and metabolically functional for as long as possible.”**

Researchers want to understand more about the cause and effect of mobility problems, including the importance of lifestyle factors such as diet and physical activity



## RELIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Would you like to find out more about health topics such as cholesterol, blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, weight and your health, and the wise use of medicines? Or perhaps you would like some guidance around healthy snacks, recommended recipe books or facts about fibre or dietary fats? Baker IDI has a range of brochures and fact sheets on its website which can be easily downloaded. Simply visit Baker IDI's website ([www.bakeridi.edu.au](http://www.bakeridi.edu.au)) and click on education services, followed by resources and fact sheets.



# A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE

## Eggplant parmigiana with fennel salad



THIS CAN BE EATEN HOT OR AT ROOM TEMPERATURE

Eggplants (aubergines) get a bad wrap from many people, but this versatile vegetable (well, technically a fruit because it is seeded) is a really handy ingredient to have at the ready. It can be served many ways – roasted, chargrilled, stewed, baked or sauteed – and can bulk out many a meal without negatively affecting your daily nutritional intake. Eggplants are the star of this recipe.

**Serves:** 4

**Prep time:** 20 minutes, plus marinating time

**Cooking time:** 45 minutes

**1 serve =**

2½ units dairy  
4 units vegetables  
2 units fats

- 3 small eggplants (aubergines), sliced
- olive oil spray
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ¼–½ teaspoon dried chilli flakes
- 700 g salt-reduced tomato passata
- ¼ teaspoon Splenda or other powdered sweetener
- 160 g low-fat ricotta
- ½ cup (15 g) basil leaves, torn
- ½ cup (40 g) grated parmesan

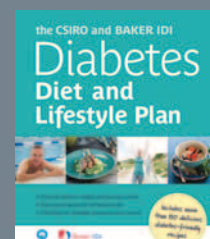
### Fennel salad

- 4 cups (300 g) salad leaves
- 1 small bulb fennel, thinly sliced
- balsamic vinegar, to serve

- 1** Preheat the oven to 180°C. Heat a grill plate or heavy-based frying pan over medium heat.
- 2** Spray the eggplant slices with olive oil and grill in batches for 2 minutes on each side or until well coloured.
- 3** Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the onion and garlic for 5 minutes or until soft. Add the chilli, passata and sweetener and simmer for 5 minutes.
- 4** Arrange half the eggplant slices in the base of a 20 × 30 cm baking dish and sprinkle with half the ricotta and basil. Pour over half of the tomato sauce and repeat with the remaining eggplant, ricotta, basil and tomato sauce. Sprinkle with the parmesan and bake for 30 minutes. Leave to sit for 10 minutes before slicing to allow the juices to be absorbed.
- 5** Meanwhile, make the fennel salad. Combine the salad leaves and fennel in a bowl and drizzle with balsamic vinegar. Serve with the eggplant parmigiana.

This recipe comes from the book *the CSIRO and Baker IDI Diabetes Diet and Lifestyle Plan* by CSIRO and Baker IDI and photography by Alan Benson, published by Penguin, rrp \$35.00. Whether you have diabetes or not, this bestselling book aims to provide guidance on diet and lifestyle, including what to eat, how to get fit and lose weight, easy-to-follow menus and activity plans, as well as tips for grocery shopping and eating out.

The book is available from books stores and major retailers. You can also purchase a copy via Baker IDI's online store at <http://www.bakeridi.edu.au/shop/>



Did you know?

YOU CAN FIND A RANGE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUSDIAB STUDY, INCLUDING KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 1999-2000 AND 2004-2005 SURVEYS, AS WELL AS PAST NEWSLETTERS, ON THE BAKER IDI WEBSITE AT <http://www.bakeridi.edu.au/ausdiab/>



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