

TAHS News

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The TAHS - 40 Years On & Still Going Strong

Welcome to our 40th anniversary newsletter! The Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study (TAHS; formerly called the Tasmanian Asthma Study), has now been running for 40 years. You and your family were part of the TAHS when it started in 1968. Your involvement for all of these years has helped to make the TAHS one of the world's largest and longest running studies on respiratory health in the world. In this special edition we look at the proud history of the TAHS study, recent progress and highlight our fascinating findings.

The TAHS began in 1968, when all Tasmanian school children born in 1961 were enrolled in a medical research study looking at

asthma. The children were 7 years old at the time the initial surveys were filled in by their parents. Parents also filled in surveys on themselves and other children in the family. All up, over 45,000 people were part of this ground breaking medical research.

The TAHS has helped to improve our understanding of asthma, how it develops and what makes it continue over the years. We have highlighted in this newsletter some of the findings so far, but there is much more to come and the TAHS is now more than ever making a huge contribution to the understanding of lung health.

Brothers & Sisters Follow-up Study - Have they been contacted?

The most recent follow-up study of the TAHS has been to contact all the brothers and sisters who were part of the original study back in 1968. We are now sending all brothers and sisters a questionnaire in the mail.

This study will show us the reasons why one brother or sister (sibling) may develop asthma but other children in a family may not develop this disease. Studying siblings is a special way to look at lung diseases and has not been done anywhere else in the world.

The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete. We will also be inviting them to attend one of our lung testing laboratories to have a breathing test to look at the health of their lungs and a skin test for allergies.



Research on Siblings is an important way to understand risk factors for disease.

All of your brothers or sisters should have been contacted by the TAHS research team. If you know of any who have not been contacted by the TAHS team please contact us (Free Call) on 1800-110-711.

If you know of a sibling that has not yet replied to the TAHS research team, please let them know the importance of this medical research. Their participation in this follow-up study is completely voluntary and they can withdraw at any time.



If they have not been contacted...



TAHS Contact Number 1800-110-711 (Free Call)

Tasmanian Longitudinal Health Study



“Some of the



more

common

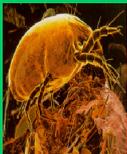
causes of



allergies in

our everyday

environment”



Top to bottom: Cats, pollen, mould spores, dust mites and rats.

Putting TAHS on the Map - Our Recent Achievements

The TAHS has contributed important information to the understanding of asthma, hayfever and other allergic diseases. TAHS follow-up studies are also able to contribute to the understanding of other chronic lung diseases now and into the future. In wide support of TAHS re-

search, we have received lots of media interest including, a recent double page spread in the Sunday Mercury and a live interview on the TODAY show. Below is a summary of some of the most recent findings of the TAHS.

Hayfever in Childhood Can Lead to Asthma

People with allergies to cats, pollen and dust mites often also have asthma. We have studied the effect of allergies on the risk of asthma. We have found that allergies in childhood such as hayfever, baby eczema and food allergies, were all important risk factors for the development of asthma in later life.

A lot of people get hayfever over their lifetime, so protecting against hayfever and treating hayfever in childhood may be an important way to stop asthma developing.

Which factors lead to the development of

hayfever in childhood are also important. We have found the more brothers and sisters you are exposed to in early life, the lower the risk of developing hayfever. Having infections in early life such as the measles, also reduces the risk of developing hayfever.



Why brothers and sisters are so important in reducing hayfever risk is

unclear, so more research is needed.

Childhood Infections Linked with Asthma

Childhood infections such as measles, whooping cough, pneumonia and other infections are reported in early life but how they contribute to the development of asthma over a life time is unclear.

We studied the effect of childhood infections on the risk of asthma and found childhood pneumonia was an important factor in the development of asthma that continued from childhood into middle-age. This suggests that childhood pneumonia is

linked with the development of severe asthma that can remain a problem for life.

Childhood measles and whooping cough were also important in the development of asthma. This highlights the need to immunise infants against these diseases.



Childhood Immunisation & Asthma

Recently there has been an increase in people not immunising their children in early life, for fear that immunisation may lead to the development of asthma. We had information on common childhood immunisations and looked at the association between immunisations received in early-life, the development of asthma and other allergic diseases. We found that childhood immunisations for Diphtheria, Tetanus,

Pertussis, Polio and Small Pox were not associated with asthma or other allergic diseases at anytime from childhood right up until middle-age.

Parents should not be deterred from immunising their children and the potential consequences of not immunising against these diseases can have long lasting effects into adult life.

TAHS Contact Number 1800-110-711 (Free Call)