
WELCOME

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Australasian Sleep Trials Network. The Network is an inclusive consortium which aims to enable sleep researchers in our region to conduct multicentre clinical trials that will have major international impact on sleep health. It was established in 2005 to develop both an infrastructure to support Australasian multicentre trials, and the processes for making this infrastructure available to researchers.

The Network will provide resources to enable researchers to develop and implement competitive, high quality trials. It is also establishing twice-yearly Open Forums where researchers can develop sleep research projects, get help with funding approaches, and obtain credentialling and infrastructure support from the Network.

This newsletter will brief you on how we are developing the Network to increase the number and the impact of Australasian sleep health clinical trials. Your involvement is welcome, and, along with Chief Investigators Doug McEvoy, Rob Pierce, Naomi Rogers, Lyle Palmer and Guy Marks, I invite you to participate in this venture. Please feel free to contact any of the Chief Investigators, attend the Open Forums and ensure you and your colleagues are added to the mailing list for future editions of this newsletter.

I look forward to working with the sleep research community to make this venture a success.

Ron Grunstein
Chief Investigator

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BACKGROUND

NHMRC Funding

A group of Australian sleep health researchers, with extensive experience of multicentre trials, conceived the idea of a wide network which would support large scale, high quality, national and international studies. They noted the potential of the 'flourishing research niche' in sleep health in the Australian region, the existing informal collaborative networks, and the record of success of Australian sleep health biotechnology.

Led by Chief Investigators Ron Grunstein, Doug McEvoy, Lyle Palmer, Naomi Rogers, Rob Pierce and Guy Marks, the group was awarded a \$1,040,000 Enabling Grant by the NHMRC. This funding will support the first five years of the ASTN.

'There is increased recognition that sleep health problems are a major cause of illness in the community. These include disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea, insomnia, restless legs syndrome and health problems related to shift work' said Ron Grunstein. *'It is proposed to form a consolidated network of sleep investigation groups to undertake larger scale clinical trials aimed at deciding what are the best treatments for different sleep disorders. The enabling grant will provide resources that will make Australian involvement in international studies more competitive and achieve higher publication quality for the research work.'*

Aims

The Australasian Sleep Trials Network was formed to enable large-scale multicentre clinical trials of international significance to be conducted in the Australasian region. The Network will provide researchers with expertise, common infrastructure and resources, and will be a focus for the establishment of multicentre clinical trials in sleep health.

The scope of the Network covers the full range of sleep disorders, including insomnia, circadian disturbances and neurological disorders as well as sleep breathing disorders.

Infrastructure

The Network will provide infrastructure support, particularly in statistics, trial design, health economics, outcome standardisation and recruitment. Research projects can also be linked to expertise in the banking of biological samples, genomics, data management and outcomes assessment for sleep disorders.

NETWORK EXECUTIVE GROUP

Development of the Network is managed by an executive group which includes the Chief Investigators: Professor Ron Grunstein, Professor Doug McEvoy, Professor Lyle Palmer, Associate Professor Naomi Rogers, Professor Rob Pierce and Associate Professor Guy Marks.

Professor Ron Grunstein heads a large multidisciplinary sleep research group at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research in Sydney. He has a national and international leadership reputation in sleep research and a strong track record of both investigator driven and industry-sponsored research. He has a particular research interest in the links between sleep apnea, obesity and cardiovascular disease, and in outcomes measurement in sleep disorders. In 2007 he will co-chair the World Congress of Sleep Research Societies in Cairns, Queensland.



Professor Doug McEvoy is one of Australia's leading sleep researchers. He leads a strong and growing research team at the Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health, which has had continuous NHMRC funding since 1994. He has particularly strong experience in clinical sleep research and multicentre trials. His interests range from respiratory/sleep physiology to trials of new diagnostic, treatment and management methods for sleep apnea, to sleep deprivation/alcohol interactions and driving.

Professor Lyle Palmer is an internationally recognised expert in the genetics of complex respiratory diseases and plays a leadership role in both the international genetic epidemiology and respiratory research communities. His particular interests are methodological research in statistical genetics and bioinformatics and applied research in the genetic epidemiology of diseases including respiratory disease and sleep apnea. Lyle has led genetic and pharmacogenetic research on large epidemiological cohorts in the USA. He now heads the Laboratory for Genetic Epidemiology at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research.



Associate Professor Naomi Rogers is an internationally recognised expert in chronobiology, sleep loss and melatonin with involvement in national and international sleep and circadian research bodies. She leads the research program in chronobiology and sleep deprivation at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research. Naomi has expertise in clinical trials evaluating countermeasures for fatigue and sleepiness, and potential pharmacological treatments for insomnia, with a track record of US federal and pharmaceutical funding.

Professor Rob Pierce heads the largest sleep research group in Victoria at the Institute for Breathing and Sleep, and has developed strong national and international collaborative links. He has conducted key trials in the management of mild sleep apnea with CPAP and dental devices, the impact of sleep disorders on road safety and nocturnal oxygen therapy. Other pharmaceutical and medical trials cover a broad range of diagnostic testing and therapy. Rob has worked with industry to develop new diagnostic technology and therapies for sleep disorders, and with government agencies in translating research findings into industry health screening programs.



Associate Professor Guy Marks is a clinical epidemiologist with expertise in respiratory epidemiology. He heads the Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring, and the epidemiology group at the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research. He is experienced in working with research groups to develop clinical trial protocols for sleep disorder interventions.

NETWORK ASSOCIATES

The following researchers are associate investigators on the Enabling Grant:

Dr Maree Barnes

Prof Peter Cistulli

A/Prof Richard Clark

Prof David Dinges

Prof Geoffrey Donnan

Dr James Douglas

Prof Adrian Esterman

Prof Tom Gordon

Prof Jane Hall

A/Prof David Hare

Prof Jan Hedner

Dr David Hillman

Dr Mark Howard

Dr Craig Hukins

A/Prof Joseph Hung

Prof Leon Lack

Prof Stephen McMahon

Dr Nigel McArdle

Dr Arduino Mangoni

Dr Sutapa Mukherjee

A/Prof Matthew Naughton

A/Prof Bruce Neal

Dr Alister Neill

Prof Allan Pack

Prof Susan Redline

Prof Thomas Roth

Prof John Simes

Dr Peter Solin

Prof John Trinder

A/Prof John Wheatley

Prof David White

Prof Mark Woodward

We hope that an increasing number of researchers will become part of the Network by attending meetings and by planning and conducting trials through the Network, as principal investigators or as collaborators.

EXECUTIVE GROUP PLANNING

The Chief Investigators met in Sydney in April 2006 for a 2-day planning session. People with special expertise who contributed valuable ideas for developing the Network included: Drs Vlado Perkovic and Joanne Andrews (George Institute for International Health); Dr Andrew Thornton (Royal Adelaide Hospital); Mr Peter Rochford (Austin Hospital); Dr John Myburgh (ANZICS Clinical Trials Group); A/Prof John Beilby (PathWest); Dr Sutapa Mukherjee (WA Sleep Disorders Research Institute); A/Prof Shawn Aaron and Mr George Dungan (Woolcock Institute). Developments begun at the Sydney meeting include:

Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society model

Processes used by the Network to boost investigator-led sleep health research, and to make the Network's support and research infrastructure widely available, will be based on the successful model of the ANZICS Clinical Trials Group. The model includes: biannual meetings where researchers obtain peer input for research ideas, identify collaborators and participate in educational sessions; provision of biostatistical, methodological and health economic consultation; and processes for the approval of studies to be conducted using network resources.

PSG alignment

Planning was begun for a project to promote inter-laboratory consistency for polysomnographic measurements.

Other infrastructure

A network-wide approach to recruitment will be developed, beginning with an investigation into options. Consultancy services in biostatistics and health economics will be established for the Network.

FIRST NETWORK OPEN FORUM

The first Open Forum will be held on Wednesday 4 October 2006 as part of the ASA & ASTA 19th Annual Scientific Meetings in Perth. People attending the Open Forum will hear expert presentations which will build their skills in research-related fields such as trial design, biostatistics, health economics and writing for publication. They will also hear colleagues speak on research studies currently being developed, and have the opportunity to contribute to study development or to express interest in becoming a collaborator. The Open Forum will also inform researchers about other infrastructure and links which will be offered by the Network, including expertise in biostatistics and health economics, and facilities for recruitment, data management, genomic work and outcome measurement.

Researchers will be able to enrol in the Open Forum using the ASA conference registration form. To receive further information, speak to one of the Chief Investigators or contact the National Project Officer, Melanie Harris (melanie.harris@rgh.sa.gov.au) to receive updates as they are produced.

CONTACT THE AUSTRALASIAN SLEEP TRIALS NETWORK

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