

# PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTH



FRIENDS OF DAVENPORT HOUSE

BULLETIN NO 15 – OCTOBER 2020

## HEALTH RESEARCH

*By Richard Munton*

**YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH**



FOR MORE DETAILS READ BELOW

### INTRODUCTION

A few weeks ago the Editor was contacted by Dr Thenuwara enquiring whether he and/or the Trust were interested in the **Health Research Champions Scheme**. Also, would we encourage our members to find out more about clinical **trials** of new medicines and practices arising from health research being conducted by government, charities and in the Universities.

Dr Thenuwara has for a long time been the link between Davenport House and health research, a link he would like to strengthen in the light of numerous trials currently being conducted, for example in heart disease, cancer, diabetes and asthma among many other conditions, not least Covid-19 in present circumstances.

This proposal was discussed by the FoDH trustees and we agreed to support these two linked initiatives, primarily through the medium of the Bulletin. We are all strong supporters of health research and the benefits this brings to improving life expectancy and the care and wellbeing of patients. There are two aspects to this, being involved in trials and more ambitiously becoming a Health Research Champion.

### TRIALS

As you will be aware from current attempts to find

a Covid-19 vaccine, the introduction of new medicines is very closely regulated and each new potential medicine requires extensive trialling in order to ensure the product is effective, long lasting and does not have unexpected side effects. This process usually requires several trials either drawn from a specific section of the population or a large random sample involving hundreds of people. Only then, if the trial is deemed successful, can the medicine be brought into general use.

Some trial participants are obtained via General Practices, such as Davenport House, because it is the Practice that knows which of its patients are suffering from the particular condition the research is addressing. Patients may then be approached to take part having been carefully selected by the Practice.

Those approached are not obliged to take part, and there may be good reasons to refuse, but we know some people are unaware of the existence and purpose of trials, regard the approach as an advertising scam or just put it aside when it arrives. By informing you of the involvement of Davenport House in this work through Dr Thenuwara we hope you will take any request you receive seriously. Ultimately, medical advancement depends upon patient involvement in trials.

### Benefits Of Participating In A Clinical Trial

Gain access to cutting edge treatments



Receive care from top doctors

Become a vital part of finding new treatments



Play an active role in your own healthcare – be empowered!

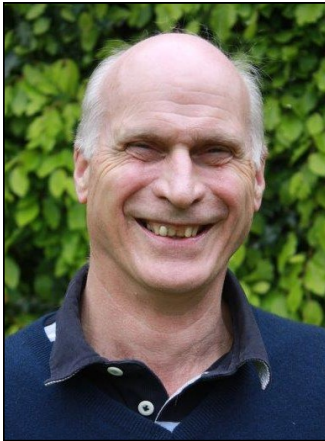
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Friends: [www.friendsdavenporthouse.org.uk](http://www.friendsdavenporthouse.org.uk) Surgery: [www.davenportssurgery.co.uk](http://www.davenportssurgery.co.uk)

Charity Number 1184307

## ASTHMA TRIAL—A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

*By Richard Munton*



About 20 years ago I was diagnosed with 'late onset asthma'. I daily inhale Flixotide to build up my long-term resistance. I am very fortunate as my condition gives me little trouble (I rarely need to use my Ventolin evohaler, for example) **except** when I get a cold. At that point an asthma attack can develop very rapidly (less

than 24 hours) and if I get a cold late on a Friday I need treatment before Monday morning! Once, I had to ring 111 to get an emergency appointment in Hemel Hempstead late on a Saturday afternoon.

Rapid development is a common experience for asthma sufferers and can lead to unscheduled visits to A&E and to hospital admission. It is, therefore, in the interests of both the NHS and sufferers to develop management plans for each patient that avoids or significantly reduces the risk of this happening. That is what the trial was about. Is there a simple, safe and effective way that sufferers can self-manage their unanticipated asthma attacks without requiring an emergency GP appointment, even if you have to see your GP subsequently?

Knowing my condition, Dr Thenuwara invited me to take part in an extensive trial involving 1,800 participants who had similar experiences to me. In simple terms, the participants were divided randomly into two groups, one group being required to continue as normal and the other to quadruple their normal inhaled corticosteroid

treatment over a fourteen day period. Participants also completed questionnaires at 6 and 12 months and attended a clinic if during this time if they experienced an asthma attack.

### **Conclusions:**

An asthma self-management plan that advises patients to temporarily quadruple their dose of inhaled corticosteroid at the point of asthma symptoms worsening does reduce clinically important asthma exacerbations. In addition, the plan is cost-effective compared with the usual-care self-management plan.

### **Future work:**

To effectively implement asthma self-management plans that advise a temporary quadrupling of inhaled steroid at asthma deterioration into routine practice.

In my case, it became clear that increasing inhaled corticosteroids was not sufficient to mitigate the effects of an attack and so I keep a supply of Prednisilone, agreed by the Surgery, to use as required as part of my management plan. For me, the trial demonstrated the need for specific backup medication, if not the one at the centre of the trial, and this has given me much greater confidence in addressing an attack avoiding the need for me to request an emergency appointment.



### **TRIAL INFORMATION**

**YOUR NHS NEEDS YOU.**  
**HELP US FIND A VACCINE FOR COVID-19.**

Join the NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry today: [nhs.uk/researchcontact](https://nhs.uk/researchcontact)

For those expressing interest in supporting the current Covid-19 vaccine trials, please register using the link below. This does not mean you are consenting for a trial, it simply records your interest in hearing about possible vaccine studies for which you may be eligible. [nhs.uk/researchcontact](https://nhs.uk/researchcontact)

In addition the website "Be part of Research" allows people to search for trials taking place in their local area for specific disease areas.

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

## A PERSONAL PLEA TO CONSIDER TAKING PART IN TRIALS

*By Dr Chas Thenuwara*



Davenport House Surgery has had a long history of involvement in research, which fits in with its ethos of teaching and learning. I have enjoyed working with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) on many exciting studies. Ranging from looking at the genetics behind why patients have a low BMI to

the effects of swine flu on pregnancy and the unborn child.

Covid-19 has highlighted why research has never been more important. Currently I am involved in how best to help deliver vaccine trials and also the PRINCIPLE Study.

The PRINCIPLE study is a national wide trial from University of Oxford trying to find COVID-19 treatments for the over 50s. If you have had COVID-19 symptoms in the last 14 days AND are over 65 or 50-64 with underlying health

conditions visit [www.principletrial.org](http://www.principletrial.org) to see if you are eligible. You are not committing to anything and the research team will decide if you are eligible. With all studies the research team work closely with the Practice to ensure patients are appropriate to participate.

All studies that the Practice are involved in go through a vigorous ethics and safety process and patients are closely monitored. The benefits of research are many. For instance -Possible access to treatments not yet on the market. Being involved in treatments and/or providing invaluable information that could benefit patients in the future. Patients are closely monitored and tested by dedicated research teams.

This bulletin is aimed at highlighting research and how to get involved. Providing useful links on current trials and giving some background to them. We hope more patients will want to get involved and have the relevant resources to make that decision.

## RESEARCH CHAMPIONS

*By Christine Menzies, National Institute for Health Research*

**NIHR** | National Institute  
for Health Research

**Research Champions** are being recruited by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). It obtains its budget of £250m per annum from the Department of Health and Social Care for carrying out health and social care research including the conduct of trials. One arm of its work is the promotion of the benefits of health research in the community and it is currently seeking to recruit a national network of champions to spread the message.

Champions do not need to have a specialist health or medical background but are committed to promoting the value of health research in the community. Following an induction programme, much of which is online, champions are expected, for example, to give talks to patient and other

civil society groups, just allocating as much time as fits in with their other commitments. Much more information about the role is available online at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/patients-carers-and-the-public/i-want-to-help-with-research/research-champions.htm>

Christine Menzies from NIHR is responsible for recruitment in our area. Clearly, given the current Covid-19 regulations, face to face meetings with groups to spread the message are not possible at present. Nonetheless, the Practice believes this to be an important role and encourages you, if you have an interest in health research and its benefits and have some spare time, to look carefully at what the role involves. To take it further, please get in touch with

Christine at [christine.menzies@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:christine.menzies@nihr.ac.uk) If you do sign up tell us about your experience. The Editor is always looking for contributions from members.

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