

AVERT Newsletter

No. 5. July 2007



HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2007 (so far)

Getting the AVERT message out

Members of the AVERT team have presented or will present the results of AVERT at a number of conferences this year. It is important to get our results out into the scientific community as well as to get the trial known in the community.

American Stroke Association San Francisco USA
European Stroke Conference Glasgow UK
World Physiotherapy Congress Vancouver Canada
Nurses Forum, Warrigal AUS
Smart Strokes Sydney AUS
Austin Research Week Melbourne AUS
Clinical Research Excellence Melbourne AUS
Australian Physiotherapy Conference Cairns AUS
Stroke Society of Australia Perth AUS

Scientific recognition

We recently had accepted our Trial Protocol for publication at The Lancet, on the Protocol Reviews web site.

<http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/misc/protocol/protocolreviews>

The Lancet is a highly respected medical journal, and this is recognition of the quality and importance of our trial. One of the protocol reviewers said "This is a very important trial, the result of which could have a major impact on routine clinical practice in stroke medicine."

Media

One of our aims this year has been to support and promote the hospitals involved in AVERT to get some local media about the study. We have all of the media coverage available on our web site

<http://www.nsri.org.au/avert.htm>

Julie Luker, Physiotherapist and Main AVERT Investigator was a part of a positive AVERT segment about the work of the Stroke Unit, Flinders Medical Centre. A story with patient, Jean Armstrong was promoted on local news and on Sky Health News in January. Here are some edited highlights.

Reporter. "A new program could dramatically improve the survival rate of stroke victims. Strokes are the single biggest cause of disability for people over the age of 65. 94 year old Jean Armstrong suffered a stroke a few weeks ago. Her recovery has been nothing short of remarkable. Jean is one of the first to be involved in a new tailored rehabilitation program for stroke patients. Researchers say forcing an immediate return to physical activity can mean the difference between life and death.

Jean Armstrong. "Well I can move all my fingers now, I can stand now, with help; I can move my legs, and I couldn't move a muscle in the leg or the arm. I've got my confidence back".

Julie Luker. "The idea is to trial very early rehabilitation after someone has had an acute stroke, actually starting within 24hrs of the onset of stroke. Keeping people in bed or inactive for a long time leads to complications, so some of the problems people can get into after stroke can be associated with inactivity."



Jean Armstrong (stroke survivor) and Julie Luker, Main AVERT Investigator at Flinders Medical Centre.

Well done to Julie and her team. While there is always a degree of artistic licence in media exposure, it helps us get the message out.

This newsletter is for *everyone* who is a part of the AVERT team. This includes people living with stroke, their families and carers who support our research program, investigators and stroke unit staff in Australian and overseas hospitals; members of the important committees overseeing the trial; and all other supporters including volunteers and donors.

Looking for 2104 people with stroke from all over Australia

We currently have **139** patients recruited to the trial.

To make sure we get the number of patients we need into the Phase III trial, we are moving to a hospital location near you.

We now have staff from 9 hospital stroke units actively participating. They are:

- Austin Hospital, VIC
- Royal Melbourne Hospital, VIC
- West Gippsland Hospital, VIC
- Royal Perth Hospital, WA
- Flinders Medical Centre, SA
- Newcastle Mater Misericordiae, NSW
- Wyong Hospital, NSW
- Westmead Hospital, NSW
- Wesley Hospital, QLD

We have 3 new hospital sites who have agreed to become the 'home of AVERT' and staff will start recruiting patients over the next few months.

- Hobart, TAS
- Geelong, VIC
- Frankston, VIC

We are also talking to many other interested hospitals around Australia who are keen to join the team.

Australia and Beyond: AVERT International

We are going beyond Australian shores with AVERT. The **first international** AVERT site will be Auckland, with AVERT-NZ. We are also in discussions with sites in the UK and Canada.

Donations

We would like to sincerely thank John Van Holsteyn for his kind donation towards the purchase of a wheelchair for use in one of the AVERT hospitals. This wheelchair is special, and allows patients to be seated comfortably, exercise on demand and rest back when needed. We would like to purchase a chair for every hospital involved in the trial – so thank you John!

All donations to the National Stroke Research Institute (NSRI) are tax deductible, and donations can be directed to an area of interest. If you would like to make a donation to AVERT, you can call the National Stroke Research Institute on 03 9496 2888.

Volunteer Support

We have been fortunate to have had fantastic volunteers with a range of skills to help us with our trial. We would like to thank:

Tony Cross, (Julie Bernhardt's hubby) for carpentry services; **John Van Holsteyn**, for setting up our financial reporting system and numerous other tasks; **Anne Smith** (0421748666) and **James Tham** (03 9820 1444) from TBH Management Services who have provided professional project management support with setting up MS Project Management Program; and **Sheelagh Purdon** for facilitating our management setup for the trial. If you have the inclination to give us a hand, feel free to contact us at avert@nsri.org.au or by phoning **03 9496 2888**.

Want to know more?

We regularly update what is happening on the National Stroke Research Institute website. This includes media reports, publications, interviews and newsletters. Go to.

<http://www.nsri.org.au/avert.htm>

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2007 Publications

Bernhardt J, Dewey HM, Thrift AG, Lindley RI, Moodie M, Donnan GA. Improving outcome after stroke: Protocol for a phase III very early rehabilitation trial (AVERT). *The Lancet*. <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/misc/pr/otocol/protocolreviews>

Bernhardt J. Advancing rehabilitation clinical trials design [Editorial]. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 2007. 14(2):52

Bernhardt J, Chan A, Nicola I, Collier J. Little therapy, little activity: Rehabilitation within the first 14 days of organized stroke unit care. *Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine* 2007. 39: 43-8.

Bernhardt J, Indredavik B, Dewey H, Langhorne P, Lindley R, Donnan GA, Thrift AG, Collier JM. Mobilisation "in bed" is not mobilisation [Letter to the Editor]. *Cerebrovascular Diseases*. 2007. 24: 157-158

Dewey HM, Sherry E, Collier JM. Stroke rehabilitation 2007: What should it be? *International Journal of Stroke*. 2007. 2:191-200.



National Stroke Research Institute