



“HEAT” Study

A study aiming to reduce the risk of stomach bleeding in aspirin users is believed to be the UK’s largest interventional academic drug trial, after 30,024 patients volunteered to take part, a number of which are in Cumbria and the North East.

The study, known as HEAT, was funded and supported by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and closed last month after recruiting patients over a five year period. In low doses, aspirin is used as a long-term treatment to prevent heart attacks and strokes. Researchers on the study believe that by thinning the blood, aspirin makes ulcers in the stomach bleed. These ulcers may be caused by a particular type of bacteria, and so the study aims to find out whether a short course of antibiotics to remove this bacteria will reduce the risk of bleeding in aspirin users.

Due to the large number of patients that needed to be recruited, the study was delivered with the involvement of 1,260 general practices across the UK. General practices issued more than 185,000 invitation letters to potential participants aged 60 and over who were daily aspirin users.

In addition to supporting the set-up of the study, the NIHR funded approximately 80 clinical research nurses to then recruit patients. The nurses were able to consent up to 12 patients a day, enabling recruitment in such large numbers.

Last year, there were almost 17,000 hospital admissions for gastric ulcers and more than 1,850 recorded deaths for gastric and duodenal ulcers. If successful, the study will help to reduce NHS costs and improve health outcomes by reducing hospital admissions, increasing patient safety and preventing premature deaths.

Phil Evans, GP and NIHR National Specialty Lead for Primary Care, said:

“The HEAT study is an excellent example of how you can deliver large scale research within the NHS.

“This would not have been possible without the participation of general practices and patients, whose contribution to research is vital if we are to provide improved care and treatment in the future.”

In total, 5,357 patients tested positive for the bacteria, known as *H. pylori*. These patients will continue to be followed up, with **results of the study expected to be published in 2020**.

This is a contraction of the NIHR news-story – the full version of which is found using the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/more-than-30000-aspirin-users-take-part-in-uks-largest-interventional-academic-drug-trial/7526>