



22 May 2008

Explanatory Statement
Research Project 2007 /000515

Title: Determining health risks in older persons from extreme hot weather

Chief Investigators: Professor Joseph Ibrahim, Dr. Deborah Roberts

Co-Investigators: Professor Nigel Tapper, Professor Leon Piterman, Dr. Sue Evans,
Professor Peter Cameron, Ms. Judy McInnes

Background

We are interested in heatwaves and how to minimise their effects on older people. Heatwaves claim more lives than any other natural hazard in Australia. Our continent is the driest in the world with prolonged periods of heat during summer. During these occasions, temperatures range from 30° to 40° C, and can persist for days in coastal areas and for weeks in inland regions. With increasing evidence that global warming is occurring, we are likely to experience more heat waves.

The European heatwaves in 2003 claimed nearly 45,000 lives, with lower death rates in areas with established risk management and public communication strategies in place. Those most at risk during periods of extreme heat are the older person, those who live alone, who are reliant on others for care needs, suffer chronic illness or take various medications.

Why did we choose you to participate in this research project?

You were selected as a possible participant in this project since in your role as General Practitioner you may be involved in the care of people aged over 65 years. We are seeking information from 500 health professionals and carers to assist us in our understanding of current knowledge regarding management of older people during a heatwave.

Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research project.

Please read this Explanatory Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in this document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a colleague, relative, friend or health worker.

Once you understand what the project is about, and if you agree to take part in it, you will be asked to complete and return the attached Survey. By completing and returning this Survey, you are implying that you are happy to consent to participate in the research project.

The aim & purpose of this research

There is currently little in place to anticipate and prevent the serious consequences of a heatwave in Victoria, so this project aims to generate new knowledge to formulate a relevant, timely, effective and appropriate State Wide Heatwave Plan to improve survival and health outcomes of older Victorians during periods of excessive heat.

What does the research involve?

The research involves completing a survey.

If you agree to participate, we request that you complete the Heatwave Survey that can be accessed by clicking on the following web address link:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=lefKaXPQE111WjIRIVJ7GA_3d_3d

A hard-copy of the survey can be obtained from Project Officer Judy McInnes at judy.mcinnnes@med.monash.edu.au, or phone 0447 598 789.

Possible benefits

There are no direct immediate personal benefits to you in participating in this project. However, the aim of this project is to better understand what health professionals and carers understand about heatwaves and subsequent care of the older person. If problems are identified and the system is improved, then this will have positive flow-on benefits to the community during periods of extreme heat.

Inconvenience/discomfort

There are no possible risks to those who choose to participate in this project. The Survey will take 15-20 minutes to complete, and may be done so at your leisure. If you do not wish to answer certain questions, you do not have to do so.

Alternatives to Participation

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate.

Confidentiality

All information collected from you is anonymous.

Your employer will not know whether or not you have chosen to answer the survey.

Neither your email or postal address will be attached to your survey response; therefore we have no way of linking your survey response to you.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the Monash University regulations, and kept on the premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for up to 7 years. Electronic data is not identifiable and is accessible only by password. Only the researchers, and those employed for the purpose of this project such as data managers will have access to the data.

Results

A report of this research will be submitted to the Department of Human Services. In addition, the report will be made available on the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Patient Safety website: <http://www.crepatientsafety.org.au>. If you would like a printed copy of the report, please contact Ms. Judy McInnes on 0447 598 789, or Dr Sue Evans on 9903 0017. We anticipate the project will be completed by end-2008.

Payment

This study is voluntary. Participants will not be offered monetary incentive to participate in the study.

Ethical Guidelines

This research project will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct Involving Humans (June 1999) produce by the National Health and Medical Research Council

(NHMRC) of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

This project is being coordinated by the Department of Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine at Monash University and is being funded by the Department of Human Services, Victoria. The ethical aspects of this project have been approved by Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans.

<p>If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the research centre:</p>	<p>If you would like to make a confidential complaint or have a concern about the manner in which this research project number 2007/000515 is being conducted, please contact:</p>
<p>Ms. Judy McInnes Project Officer, Centre of Research excellence in Patient Safety Dept of Epidemiology & Preventative Medicine Level 3 Burnet Tower (Alfred Hospital) 89 Commercial Road Melbourne 3004</p> <p>Tel: 0447 598 789 Email: Judy.McInnes@med.monash.edu.au</p> <p>Dr. Sue Evans Executive Officer/ Senior Research Fellow Centre of Research excellence in Patient Safety Dept of Epidemiology & Preventative Medicine Level 3 Burnet Tower (Alfred Hospital) 89 Commercial Road Melbourne 3004</p> <p>Tel: 9903 0017 Email: Sue.Evans@med.monash.edu.au</p>	<p>Mrs Lyn Johannessen Human Ethics Officer Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800</p> <p>Tel: 9905 2052 Fax:99051420 Email: scerh@adm.monash.edu.au</p>