



D-Health staff profiles

In this newsletter we feature Associate Professor Rachel Neale (Chief Investigator) and Briony Duarte Romero (Assistant Project Manager).



Rachel is the 'big boss' although in reality she is the shortest member of the team! She used to be a veterinarian but only practiced for a short time before realising that her passion lay in research. After completing her PhD in human medical research, she spent nearly 3 years

developing her research skills in Cambridge and Oxford (United Kingdom) before returning to Queensland to launch research programs in pancreatic cancer and vitamin D. Rachel writes the grants to obtain funding for the D-Health Trial, makes scientific decisions in collaboration with the scientific advisory panel, works closely with the project managers to ensure the smooth running of the trial, assists with data analysis, writes reports and is generally bossy. She juggles her work life with raising two teenage daughters and playing violin in an amateur orchestra.



Briony has a degree in nutrition and dietetics so is a great source of information about what we should be eating (she definitely encourages birthday cakes). Briony's degree gave her comprehensive knowledge about human health, so she manages the reporting of all our health events – if you've

talked to us about your health it is likely that you've spoken to Briony. She is also the organisational force in the office – she actually likes filing! Since joining the team, she has also developed fabulous data management skills. Briony has a serious green thumb, and when she isn't organising us and our data she can be found nurturing her garden, bushwalking or running to stay fit.

Contact us

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MISSED ANY OF OUR NEWSLETTERS?

You will find all our newsletters on our website (go to dhealth.qimrberghofer.edu.au and click on newsletters). If you would like to receive a copy of previous newsletters in the mail please let us know.

Winners of our \$200 Coles/Myer gift cards

Each year we randomly select 6 people (one from each state) to win a gift card. We think you're all wonderful and would love to be able to reward you all – sadly our budget doesn't allow it. Five of this year's winners are shown below.



Joan Lennox (QLD)



Alan Nanscawen (VIC)



Lionel Paterson (WA)



Penny Hellier (NSW)



Julie Holmes (TAS)

Blood samples

Each year we randomly select about 800 people and invite them to give a blood sample. About three-quarters of the people we select are able to give a sample. Keeping this proportion high is important because it helps to ensure that the results we generate from these samples are representative of all the D-Health participants. If you are selected and you have any questions or need help finding a collection centre please give us a call. Thank you to those of you whose blood we have in the freezer!

We mainly use the samples to measure circulating vitamin D. We have just received our second set of blood results from our laboratory partner and are very pleased to see that the difference in the average vitamin D level between the two groups in the trial (vitamin D and placebo) is exactly as we would expect (approximately 35 nmol/L).

Annual survey returns

Our annual surveys are a crucial part of the way we capture information about your health. With the data from the surveys we can do things like compare the proportion of people who have a heart attack in group A with the proportion in group B to see if taking vitamin D reduces the risk of heart attack.

We have now mailed 43,360 annual surveys since the trial began! Nearly 98% of these are completed, and almost 60% are returned within 3 weeks of us sending them. This is wonderful because the quick return means that we don't have to phone to check if you've received your survey or need any help filling it in. We continue to be extremely grateful for your help with this.



How long has the trial been going?

We launched the trial in January 2014 so some of you have just finished your 3rd year in the trial! Fifty percent of participants have been in the trial for at least 2.5 years. Time is flying and it feels like it won't be long now until you've all completed 5 years. Thank you for staying along for the ride.

Taking part in D-Health 'Sub-studies'

To help us understand the effect of vitamin D on health, we sometimes ask people to take part in sub-studies so that we can collect detailed information about particular health outcomes. For example, we have invited some people to keep a diary to tell us how often they fall. Participants often tell us that they don't think we would be interested in their results because they are generally healthy (for example, because they rarely fall). However, D-Health aims to study the general population and not just people who have a particular health condition, so we are interested in all of you, even if you are super healthy!

We have compiled a list of frequently asked questions. If you haven't received a paper copy and would like one please send us an email or give us a call. You can also go to our website: dhealth.qimrberghofer.edu.au