Participant Information and Consent Form
Alfred Health
HREC No: HREC/12/Alfred/16; Local Project No.: 476/11

Full Project Title: Is amitriptyline effective for chronic low back pain?

Principal Researchers: Dr Donna Urquhart, Prof Flavia Cicuttini, Assoc Prof Anita Wluka

Associate Researchers: Prof Malcolm Sim, Prof Maurits van Tulder, Prof Andrew Forbes, Prof Stephen Gibson, Dr Carolyn Arnold, Dr Yuanyuan Wang, Ms Judy Hankin, Ms Alice Noone, Dr Jo Hall, Dr Paul Urquhart

1. Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project. This is because you have had low back for 3 months or longer. The research project is testing a new treatment for low back pain. The new treatment is a medication called amitriptyline.

This Participant Information and Consent Form tells you about the research project. It explains the tests and treatments involved. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research.

Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether or not to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative, friend or your local doctor.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. You will receive the best possible care whether you take part or not.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to sign the consent section. By signing it you are telling us that you:

- understand what you have read;
- consent to take part in the research project;
- consent to have the tests and treatments that are described;
- consent to the use of your personal and health information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information and Consent Form to keep. The Participant Information and Consent Form is 8 pages long. Please make sure that you have all the pages.

2. What is the purpose of this research?

Low back pain is a major health problem in Australia, resulting in substantial disability and financial costs. 80% of Australians experience low back pain during their lifetime, with 10% suffering from long-term pain and disability.

There are a number of different treatments available for low back pain. Low dose antidepressants (such as amitriptyline) are commonly used to treat pain in this condition. However, there is no clear evidence available to support their use. It has also been suggested that low-dose antidepressants may be particularly effective in a group of people that experience low back pain with leg pain. However, no study has investigated this.

The aim of this clinical trial is to determine whether low-dose amitriptyline is more effective than placebo (an inert substance) in the management of pain in people with chronic low back pain.

If this study finds amitriptyline to be effective, it will potentially enable this treatment to be considered by more individuals. Conversely, if we do not find amitriptyline to be effective, then it will provide strong evidence to significantly reduce its use for chronic low back pain.

Amitriptyline is approved in Australia to treat depression. However, it is not approved to treat low back pain. Therefore, it is an experimental treatment for low back pain. This means that it must be tested to see if it is an effective treatment for this condition. However, it is important to know that amitriptyline is being widely used in clinical practice to treat low back pain.

A total of 150 people will participate in this project and will attend one site.

Participants will be randomly divided into two groups; with one group receiving the treatment of amitriptyline and the other group receiving a placebo.

There are a number of hospitals and medical, specialist and allied health clinics involved with this trial in Melbourne.

This research is being conducted by the Musculoskeletal Unit at Monash University in collaboration with researchers from the VU University (Amsterdam), National Ageing Research Institute, Alfred Hospital and Caulfield Hospital Pain Management Service.

The research has been initiated by investigators, Dr Donna Urquhart, Prof Flavia Cicuttini and Assoc Prof Anita Wluka.

The research is being funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

No member of the research team will obtain any financial benefit from their involvement in this project (other than their ordinary wages).

3. What does participation in this research involve?

Participation in this trial will initially involve a screening process.

A research nurse will phone you to determine whether you meet the eligibility criteria for the trial. If you are female and child-bearing is a possibility, you will be required to undergo a pregnancy test prior to commencing the research project.

If you are eligible to participate, then a session will be organised for you to undergo a clinical assessment by a doctor and complete a questionnaire at the Alfred Hospital. This session will last for about 1 hour.

Following the assessment you will be randomised to the treatment or the control group. This means you will not have a choice regarding which group you are in. The treatment group will receive low-dose amitriptyline (25 mg) and the control group a placebo called benztropine. You will not know whether you are receiving amitriptyline or the placebo during the trial period.

The trial is for 6 months. You will be provided with either amitriptyline or the placebo for this period at no cost to you. You will receive the first three months of amitriptyline or placebo at the initial assessment session and the second three months of medication will be posted to you by mail. You will be required to take one tablet every second night for 2 weeks and then one tablet each night for the remainder of the 6 months.

You should tell study personnel if you are taking any other medicines, including any that you buy without a prescription from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop. Some medicines may be affected by amitriptyline or may affect how well amitriptyline works. It is also important not to start taking any other medicines during the study without talking to your doctor and research staff.

During the trial you will be contacted by phone on 5 occasions to monitor your progress. This will take place at 2 weeks, 1-2 months, 3 months, 4-5 months and 6 months. These sessions will take 20-30 minutes and will involve completing questionnaires over the phone with one of the research personnel. However, you will be offered the choice of either a face to face visit or a phone call from one of the research personnel at 3 and 6 months.

During the trial you will be asked to keep a diary of the expenses you incur each month as a result of your low back pain. This may include costs for medical or allied health appointments, other medications, hospital visits, home care etc. This information will be collected at each phone appointment.

You will not be paid for your participation in this research, but you will be reimbursed for any of the following costs that you incur as a result of participating in this research project ($10 for parking or transport costs per visit). You will be provided with a $30 supermarket voucher at the end of the trial to express our appreciation for your participation in the trial.

4. What are the possible benefits?

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research. However some participants may experience possible benefits, such as a reduction in low back pain and/or an improvement in their daily activity at home and/or at work. If this study shows amitriptyline is effective in treating low back pain, it may enable this treatment to be available to more people in the future.

5. What are the possible risks?

Medical treatments often cause side effects. You may have none, some or all of the effects listed below, and they may be mild, moderate or severe. If you have any of these side effects, or are worried about them, talk with your own doctor. Your doctor will also be looking out for side effects.

Many side effects go away shortly after treatment ends. However, sometimes side effects can be serious, long lasting or permanent. If a severe side effect or reaction occurs, your doctor may need to stop your treatment. Tell your doctor if you have any problems. Your doctor will discuss the best way of managing any side effects with you.

Low dose amitriptyline is commonly used in general practice to treat pain and is generally well tolerated. Any side-effects tend to be mild and may include dry mouth, constipation, fatigue, drowsiness, tremor and dizziness on rising.

The effects of amitriptyline on the unborn child and on the newborn baby are not known. Because of this, it is important that study participants are not pregnant or breast-feeding and do not become pregnant during the course of the research project. You must not participate in the research if you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, or breast-feeding. If you are male, you should not father a child. If you are female and child-bearing is a possibility, you will be required to undergo a pregnancy test prior to commencing the research project.

Both male and female participants are strongly advised to use effective contraception during the course of the research and for a period of 1 month after completion of the study. You should discuss methods of effective contraception with your doctor.

If you do become pregnant whilst participating in the study, you should advise your own treating doctor immediately. Your doctor will withdraw you from the study and advise on further medical attention should this be necessary. You must not continue in the research if you become pregnant.

You should advise your treating doctor if you father a child while participating in the research project. Your doctor will advise on medical attention for your partner should this be necessary.

If you become upset or distressed as a result of your participation in the research, the researcher is able to arrange for counselling or other appropriate support. Any counselling or support will be provided by staff who are not members of the research team.

There may be side effects that the researchers do not expect or do not know about and that may be serious. Tell your doctor immediately about any new or unusual symptoms that you get.

If you become distressed during your participation in the study, you can suspend or end your involvement at any time.

6. What if new information arises during this research project?

During the research project, new information about the risks and benefits of the project may become known to the researchers. If this occurs, you will be told about this new information and your doctor will discuss whether this new information affects you.

7. Can I have other treatments during this research project?

While you are participating in this research project, you may not be able to take some of the medications that you have been taking for your condition or for other reasons. It is important to tell your doctor and the research staff about any treatments or medications you may be taking, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins or herbal remedies, acupuncture or other alternative treatments. You should also tell your doctor about any changes to these during your participation in the research. Also ask your doctor to explain to you which treatments or medications may need to be stopped for the time that you are on the trial.

It may also be necessary for you to take medication during or after the trial to address side effects or symptoms that you may have. You may need to pay for these medications and so it is important that you ask your doctor about this possibility.

8. Are there alternatives to participation?

Participation in this research is not your only option. Your other options may include seeing your doctor or health care professional to discuss different treatment options for your low back pain. Please feel free to discuss these with your healthcare worker before deciding whether or not to take part in this research project.

9. Do I have to take part in this research project?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you don't have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your routine treatment, your relationship with those treating you or your relationship with Monash University or Alfred Health.

10. What if I withdraw from this research project?

If you decide to withdraw from the project, please notify a member of the research team before you withdraw. This notice will allow that person or the research supervisor to further discuss any health risks or special requirements linked to withdrawing.

If you decide to leave the project, the researchers would like to keep the personal and health information about you that have been collected. This is to help them make sure that the results of the research can be measured properly. If you do not want them to do this, you must tell them before you join the research project.

11. Could this research project be stopped unexpectedly?

This research project may be stopped for a variety of reasons. These may include reasons such as:

- Unacceptable side effects;
- The drug/treatment being shown not to be effective;
- The drug/treatment being shown to work and not need further testing.

12. What will happen when my participation in this research project ends?

At the completion of the trial, if you wish to know whether you received amitriptyline or the placebo, please contact the research personnel for further information.

Amitriptyline or the placebo will be provided to you during the trial for a 6 month period at no cost. Once the trial has finished we will not be able to continue to provide this treatment to you. However, if your doctor is in agreement with continuing the treatment after the trial, he/she can provide you with a prescription for amitriptyline. From this point you will need to cover the cost of your medication.

13. How will I be informed of the results of this research project?

Once the project is complete, we will send you a follow up letter to inform you of the findings of the study.

14. What else do I need to know?

- **What will happen to information about me?**

Any information obtained for the purpose of this research project that can identify you will be treated as confidential and securely stored at Monash University. It will be disclosed only with your permission, or in compliance with the law.

Access to data will be restricted to the investigators. The data will be stored indefinitely but at a minimum of 15 years after the final publication relating to the data. We plan to publish the results in medical journals.

Information about you may be obtained from your health records held at this, and other, health services for the purposes of this research.

Your health records and any information obtained during the study are subject to inspection (for the purpose of verifying the procedures and the data) by the relevant authorities; the Therapeutic Goods Administration and representatives of Alfred HREC or as required by law. By signing the consent section, you authorise release of, or access to, this confidential information to the relevant study personnel and regulatory authorities as noted above.

In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission. This confidentiality will be maintained by presenting aggregate data.

It is desirable that your local doctor be advised of your decision to participate in this research project. By signing the consent section, you agree to your local doctor being notified of your decision to participate in this research project.

Information about your participation in this research project may be recorded in your health records.

- **How can I access my information?**

In accordance with relevant Australian and/or Victorian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to access the information collected and stored by the researchers about you. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please contact one of the researchers named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

- **What happens if I am injured as a result of participating in this research project?**

If you suffer an injury as a result of your participation in this research project, please contact the research staff. Hospital care and treatment will be provided by the public health care system (Medicare) at no cost to you if you are eligible for Medicare benefits and elect to be treated as a public patient.

- **Is this research project approved?**

The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Alfred Health.

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

15. Consent

I have read, or have had read to me in a language that I understand, this document and I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of this research project as described within it.

I give permission for my doctors, other health professionals, hospitals or laboratories outside this hospital to release information to Alfred Health concerning my disease and treatment that is needed for this project. I understand that such information will remain confidential.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project as described.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

Participant's name (printed) ……

Signature Date

Name of witness to participant's signature (printed) ……

Signature Date

Declaration by researcher*: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher's name (printed) ……

Signature Date

** A senior member of the research team must provide the explanation and provision of information concerning the research project.*

Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.

16. Who can I contact?

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact Ms Alice Noone or Ms Judy Hankin on 9903 0553, or if you have any medical problems which may be related to your involvement in the project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the Alfred Hospital Rheumatology Registrar on 9076 2000.

Name: Ms Alice Noone /Ms Judy Hankin	24 hour Medical Contact
Role: Research Nurse	Rheumatology Registrar
Telephone: 9903 0553	Telephone: 9076 2000(Ask to speak to Rheumatology Registrar)
Name: Dr Donna Urquhart	Name: Assoc Prof Anita Wluka
Role: Principal Researcher	Role: Principal Researcher
Telephone: 9903 0555	Telephone: 9903 0994

For complaints:

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about being a research participant in general, then you may contact:

Position: Ms Emily Bingle, Research Governance Officer

Telephone: 9076 3619 Email: E.Bingle@alfred.org.au