

OpT In Update

The Optimum Thiamine Intervention Trial (OpT In) is a four-year research project trialing different doses of thiamine (Vitamin B1). We are trying to find the best dose to treat symptoms of Wernicke Korsakoff Syndrome (WKS), and to prevent brain damage in people at risk of thiamine deficiency due to risky alcohol intake. The project has been happening in the Alice Springs hospital since September 2014. Menzies researchers Dr Kylie Dingwall, Katie Kingshott, Annette McCarthy and the Addictions Medicine team lead by Dr Jen Delima, aim to recruit over 450 patients onto the project.

To help achieve this goal, we have recruited a casual researcher, Heidi Wilkinson, to work weekends. Heidi is a Nurse and has previously worked in the Emergency Department at the hospital.

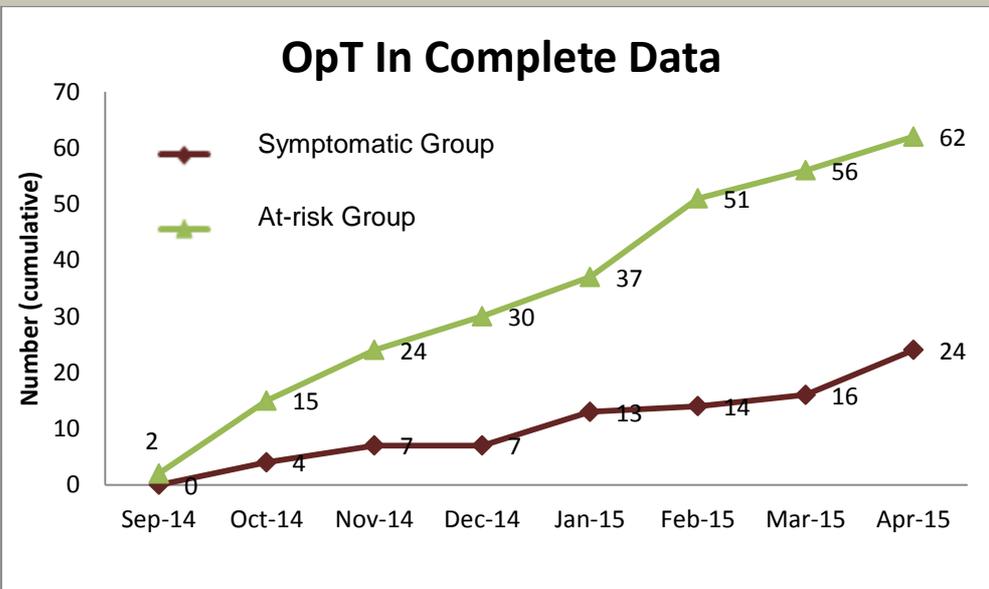


Heidi Wilkinson,
Casual Researcher

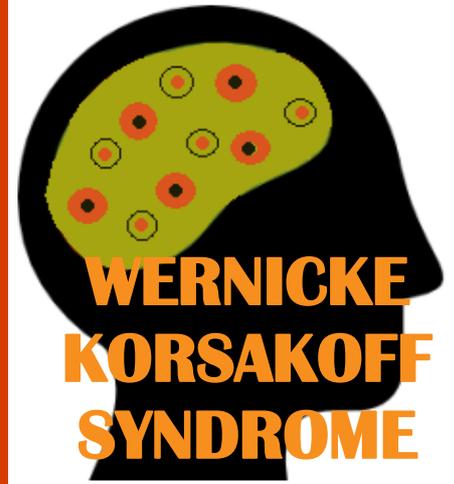
Patient Recruitment

Of the 160 patients recruited to OpT In, we have collected full data on 86 so are well on the way to reaching our target of 450. A full data set includes neurological and cognitive (memory and concentration) tests before and after the patient receives thiamine. The results from the tests will show us what dose of thiamine leads to the most cognitive improvement.

Thank you to the Emergency Department staff at the Alice Springs for referring patients to the trial. Your support does not go unrecognised!



This graph shows the total number of patients with full data since September 2014



There are two parts to Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome (WKS):

1. Wernicke's Encephalopathy (WE):

A neurological condition that results from severe thiamine deficiency, primarily caused by excessive alcohol intake. It can be diagnosed when 2 of the following are present:

- confusion (*cognitive impairment*),
- oculomotor abnormalities (*problems moving the eyes*),
- ataxia (*poor balance*),
- nutritional deficiency.

Thiamine administered intravenously is the most common treatment.

2. Korsakoff Psychosis:

The long term, often irreversible brain damage that occurs when WE is untreated. Symptoms can include short term memory loss, problems with learning new information or skills, personality change, and confabulation (making up events to fill the gaps in memory).

Optimum Thiamine Intervention Trial

Newsletter, May 2015

OpT In Indigenous Reference Group - Update

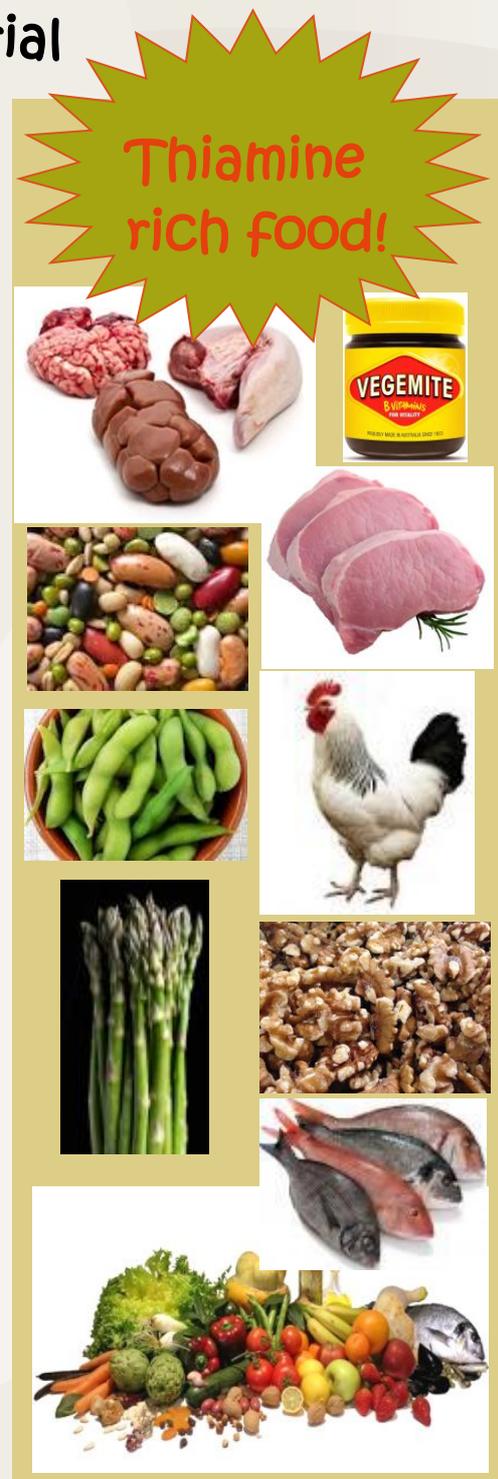
The OpT In Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) includes staff from CAAC Safe and Sober, DASA, Tangentyere, Flinders University, and Aboriginal Liaison Officers from the Hospital.

The group met for the third time since the project began on 15th April. The IRG is a valuable resource for the researchers, as the group provides feedback and advice on cultural and community matters.

The IRG provided some helpful advice on creating a comfortable environment for patients. Some tips provided by the group, which can be helpful for anyone working with patients with alcohol and other substance use issues, include:

- Be honest with what you want from a patient, and they will be honest with you.
- First build trust through having a yarn.
- Give information in a story format, and explain how their story can help others.
- Tell patients when they have improved, this feedback makes them feel good.
- Confirm with the patient that they understand what you have asked of them by asking them to relay the information back to you.

At the April meeting, it was decided that future IRG meetings will remain as an informal forum, and will be used as space to learn from each other, and to learn about the project and thiamine. If you are interested in joining the IRG, contact: annette.mccarthy@menzies.edu.au



Aboriginal Language Tools

With the help of the Aboriginal Interpreter Services, we have made consent videos and cognitive tests in four Aboriginal languages. Patients are very curious about these tools. We have found that the consent videos are good for engaging with patients. We also feel confident knowing that patients have had the opportunity to hear about the project in language before providing consent. If you are interested to see the language tools, please email annette.mccarthy@menzies.edu.au



Photo: Annette McCarthy and IRG member, Kath Martin of Flinders University check-out the Central-Eastern Arrernte consent video