



MEDIA RELEASE

19 May 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Clinical Trials Day – highlighting the importance of clinical research and clinical trials – and a link to our history

Each year on May 20, International Clinical Trials Day is celebrated and commemorated in order to improve clinical practice worldwide. The day was established in order to bring focus on clinical research and clinical trials and to the central role that research plays to the quality of our health-care systems.

The day also marks the anniversary of the first known example of a clinical trial. On 20 May 1747, on board a ship named *Salisbury* in the open sea, the Scottish naval Surgeon James Lind started comparing six treatments on twelve sailors with scurvy. The patients were similar - they all had putrid gums, spots and lassitude - and they were accommodated in the same room, and shared similar meals. Lind divided them into six groups of two patients each: two patients were given cider, two elixir vitriol, two vinegar, two sea water, two a concoction of spices, garlic, and mustard seeds, and two oranges and lemons. Within six days, one of the patients given oranges and lemons became fit for duty and the other became well enough to be appointed as nurse for the remaining patients.

James Lind reported this experiment in 1753 in 'A treatise of the scurvy'. Although understanding the efficacy of oranges and lemons in scurvy had to wait until the discovery of vitamins, James Lind had established the foundations of evidence-based medicine, now a cornerstone of health services.

This discovery proved important for Australia, as Captain Cook used this knowledge to keep his sailors scurvy free on his voyages and enabled them to discover the East Coast of Australia.

Clinical trials are an important aspect of bringing new treatments and hope to patients all over the world and used to test new forms of therapy and evaluate potential treatments that have had some positive effect against disease. They may test new treatments, including new drugs, surgical procedures and medical devices (such as pacemakers or stents).

Providing access to the best and most appropriate cures and therapies available worldwide, clinical trials form one of the most important means of improving patient survival and quality of life.

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Media Enquiries:

For more information please contact
Marketing Coordinator, Clare Schodel on
P +617 3331 3944 | M +61 407 737 460 | E marketing@qctn.com.au

Queensland Clinical Trials Network Inc.
PO Box 2366, Toowong DC Q 4066
AUSTRALIA
www.qctn.com.au



New medical treatments must be tested in clinical trials and found to make a beneficial difference to the disease or condition being treated before they can be made available to the public. Well-known treatments and drugs, such as Gardasil, underwent clinical trials prior to being made available to the public. Without these clinical trials, these treatments would not be available.

However, before a trial can commence, all proposed trials must be reviewed, critiqued and approved by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). These reviews ensure that strict guidelines are in place to protect clinical trial participants.

Patients must also give informed consent. Informed consent is the process of learning the key facts about a clinical trial before deciding whether or not to participate. It is also a continuing process throughout the study to continuously provide information for participants. To help someone decide whether or not to participate, the doctors and nurses involved in the trial explain the details of the study.

The research team then provides an informed consent document that includes details about the study, such as its purpose, duration, required procedures, and key contacts using terms and language that will ensure the document can be easily understood. Risks and potential benefits are explained in the informed consent document. The participant then decides whether or not to sign the document. Informed consent is not a contract, and the participant may withdraw from the trial at any time.

Queensland Clinical Trials Network Inc. (QCTN) is an organisation that is promoting the life sciences industry on domestic and international levels. Made up of over 60 member entities, QCTN's mission is to be instrumental in developing Queensland's capabilities to support the clinical development of new therapies.

To see a list of some of the trials being undertaken in Queensland visit www.qctn.com.au

About QCTN

QCTN is based in Queensland and was established in 2005 by the Queensland Government as part of its Smart State Initiative. It is a not-for-profit, incorporated association of Queensland based, life sciences research organisations and related entities. QCTN itself does not conduct any form of clinical research.

As a primary point of contact for domestic and international organisations seeking to undertake preclinical and clinical research in Australia, QCTN helps identify and connect sponsor organisations with the appropriate Queensland research institutions, hospitals and other life sciences service providers.

For further information about clinical trials and/or to participate in one, please visit www.qctn.com.au or contact QCTN on 07 3331 3999 or email trialinfo@qctn.com.au

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