

Novartis, Telstra Health and Monash University join forces to tackle Australia's number one killer – heart disease

Mar 06, 2023

A new partnership combining innovative medicines, digital healthcare, and clinical care for heart health, will see trial of new model of care for Aussies at risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD).

- Australia is in a CVD emergency: One Aussie dies every 12 minutes from CVD.¹ It can happen at any age, however, high rates of obesity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure put many as young as 35 at risk,² costing the health system more than \$10 billion a year.³
- Major gaps in clinical practice are putting lives at risk: Current clinical guidelines are more than a decade old and do not recognise the latest evidence showing that higher-risk patients should be targeting a lower level of 'bad' cholesterol. Concerningly, there are an estimated 1.15 million Aussies at risk of CVD.⁴
- Putting all the tools in the hands of GP clinics could close gap in treatment and improve outlook for heart patients: Approximately 600 Aussies across 20 trial sites around the country are expected to take part in the pilot, which will see some specialist care services provided by GPs and nurse practitioners through access to accurate and timely real-world data to support decision making.
- Targeting cholesterol management could save lives: Reform to the way we manage cholesterol in this country has the potential to save more than 3,738 lives, prevent over 13,740 life-threatening CVD events like heart attack and stroke and save \$66.6 million in health costs over a five-year period.⁵

Sydney, Australia 2023 - A new Australian partnership announced today will enable a pilot to test a new model of care to improve cardiovascular health. The unique partnership will bring together leaders in digital healthcare solutions (Telstra Health), clinical care and research in heart health (Monash University, a partner in the Victorian Heart Hospital) and innovative medicines (Novartis Australia and New Zealand).

Commencing now, the ASCERTAIN implementation science study will review approximately 600 patients, across 20 sites in both urban and rural locations nationally. Designed by Monash University's Victorian Heart Institute, and run-in collaboration with Novartis, the new model of care pilot will help improve patient management via participating clinics in a primary care setting, with the support of digital tools (such as educational text messages, questionnaires) and nurse practitioners. The study will be overseen by experts from the Victorian Heart Hospital, and enabled by innovative technology, powered by Telstra Health.

"Telstra Health's digital health platform capabilities, including advanced data analytics and real time clinical decision support, are enabling our healthcare providers to quickly and effectively identify and treat Australians most at risk of cardiovascular disease, regardless of where they live. GPs will have a range of new digital solutions available to identify people eligible to participate in the trial, in turn improving access to the most modern and advanced treatments available," said Telstra Health's General Manager for Solutions and Growth, Rupert Lee.

In Australia, one person dies every 12 minutes from CVD¹ – making it the leading cause of death of Aussies.¹ It is a disease that does not discriminate and can happen at any age, however high rates of obesity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure put many Australians as young as 35 at risk.² High cholesterol alone is responsible for more than a third of all the years of healthy life lost to heart disease in Australia.⁶

Every 1 mmol/L reduction in LDL-C – or 'bad' cholesterol – reduces the risk of a CVD event like heart attack or stroke, by 20%.⁷ Yet, Australia hasn't moved the needle on cholesterol in 10 years, with 6.1% or 1.5 million Australians living with the disease in 2017-2018. Ten years earlier Australia's level of cholesterol sat at 5.7%.⁸

Australia's leading clinicians, including world-renowned Australian cardiologist, Professor Stephen Nicholls, Director of the Victorian Heart Hospital and Monash Victorian Heart Institute, believes we can help manage high cholesterol levels if we tackle some of the basic challenges we face. This includes heightening awareness, achieving regular testing, reviewing and updating clinical guidelines to ensure they reflect the latest evidence-based models of management, and increasing access to more effective treatments:

"Half of our high-risk patients in Australia do not have their cholesterol treated appropriately. So, whatever we're doing today isn't working for a lot of people, that's not a criticism, that's a reality. It's not to be better because we fail 50 per cent of our patients, and

that fail rate is only going to go higher every time we push the targets for 'bad' cholesterol levels lower," said Professor Nicholls.

The challenges Australia faces in CVD can be seen more acutely in regional and remote communities where, compared to major capital cities, CVD deaths are more than 50% higher in very remote locations, and more than 33% higher in remote areas.⁹

Australians living in the most disadvantaged areas are nearly twice as likely to be hospitalised for a heart attack than those in the most advantaged areas.⁹

If successful, this new 'hyper-care' model of care for cardiovascular disease patients can be scaled nationally, helping to address the gap in treatment being experienced by Aussies with CVD, in particular for those in rural and remote settings, and helping to improve the outlook for heart disease patients across the country. Tackling cholesterol – one of the leading risks for CVD – with models of care like that being trialed in the ASCERTAIN study, have the potential to save more than 3,738 lives, prevent over 13,740 life-threatening CVD events like heart attack and stroke and save \$66.6 million in health costs over a five-year period.⁵

"Too many Australians continue to lose their lives unnecessarily from CVD as a result of risk factors such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure. We have the tools at our disposal, now is the time to come together through unique partnerships like this, to think outside the box, and drive improvements in health outcomes. This study is an example of how we can do this," said Country President Novartis Australia and New Zealand, Richard Tew.

-ENDS-

For further information and media enquiries:

Camilla Jury, Camilla.jury@novartis.com / +61 439 949 776

Emma Nunan, emma.nunan@ogilvy.com.au / +61 421 429 584

About Novartis

Novartis is improving the lives of more than 2.8 million patients across Australia and New Zealand through our medicines. By partnering with the healthcare system, we are working for patients to address their needs, and we are committed to accelerating patient access to life saving treatments and associated healthcare.

We are reimagining medicine by using innovative science and technology to address challenging healthcare issues and our rich research pipeline has 200+ projects in development. We are transforming how clinical trials are run to increase patients' access to our industry-leading clinical trials footprint in Australia.

We continue to work on improving our environment for diversity, equity and inclusion and being a family friendly employer. Every day our inspired, curious, unbossed, and integrity-driven culture unites our people and encourages leadership at every level.

About Telstra Health

At Telstra Health, we work to improve lives through digitally-enabled care for our community. Our purpose drives us as we strive to realise a connected and improved digital health experience for all. By providing software products, solutions and platforms, we work with care providers in the hospital, health service, pharmacy, primary care and aged and disability care sectors to connect health information, clinicians and consumers across Australia.

About Monash University

Monash University is Australia's largest university with more than 80,000 students. In the 60 years since its foundation, it has developed a reputation for world-leading high-impact research, quality teaching, and inspiring innovation.

Monash is transforming the future of cardiovascular health – for Australia and for the world. We're committed to shaping global knowledge about cardiovascular disease, including how to better prevent it, better detect it, and better treat it. And we're applying this knowledge across every facet of cardiovascular care.

The Monash Victorian Heart Institute reflects our University-wide commitment to collaborative heart health solutions. We are focused on delivering excellence in research, education and training, to change the prevalence of cardiovascular disease in Australia.

References

1. Monash (2020) Matters of the heart: Tackling a disease that kills one Australian every 12 minutes. Available at: <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/news/latest/2020-articles/matters-of-the-heart-tackling-a-disease-that-kills-one-australian-every-12-minutes> Accessed: February 2023

2. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2021) Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/any_age.htm Accessed: February 2023
3. EvoHealth (2020) Australia's Cholesterol Heartache: A simple roadmap for urgent action on cholesterol management. Available at: <https://evohealth.com.au/insights/australias-cholesterol-heartache/> Accessed: February 2023
4. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: key findings. Australian Burden of Disease Study series 24. Cat. no. BOD 30. Canberra: AIHW; 2021. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/burden-of-disease-study-2018-key-findings/contents/key-findings> Accessed March 2023
5. Baker IDI (2019). Code Red: Overturning Australia's Cholesterol Complacency. Available at: <https://baker.edu.au/impact/advocacy/code-red> Accessed: March 2023
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australia's health. Snapshot: Biomedical risk factors. 7 July 2022. Canberra: AIHW; 2022. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/biomedical-risk-factors> Accessed March 2023
7. Baigent C, Blackwell L, Emberson J, Holland LE, Reith C, Bhalra N, et al. Efficacy and safety of more intensive lowering of LDL cholesterol: a meta-analysis of data from 170,000 participants in 26 randomised trials. *Lancet* 2010;376(9753):1670-81
8. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) High Cholesterol. Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/high-cholesterol/latest-release> Accessed: February 2023
9. National Heart Foundation (2020) Inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/69810/0255%20National%20Heart%20Foundation%20of%20Australia.pdf> Accessed: February 2023

Source URL: <https://www.novartis.com/au-en/news/media-releases/novartis-telstra-health-and-monash-university-join-forces-tackle-australias-number-one-killer-heart-disease>

List of links present in page

- <https://www.novartis.com/au-en/au-en/news/media-releases/novartis-telstra-health-and-monash-university-join-forces-tackle-australias-number-one-killer-heart-disease>
- <mailto:Camilla.jury@novartis.com>
- <mailto:emma.nunan@ogilvy.com.au>
- <https://www.monash.edu/research/vic-heart-institute>
- <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/news/latest/2020-articles/matters-of-the-heart-tackling-a-disease-that-kills-one-australian-every-12-minutes>
- https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/any_age.htm
- <https://evohealth.com.au/insights/australias-cholesterol-heartache/>
- <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/burden-of-disease-study-2018-key-findings/contents/key-findings>
- <https://baker.edu.au/impact/advocacy/code-red>
- <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/biomedical-risk-factors>
- <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/high-cholesterol/latest-release>
- <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/69810/0255%20National%20Heart%20Foundation%20of%20Australia.pdf>