The “FOCUS” study: Faecal Transplantation for Ulcerative Colitis – An Exciting Australian Trial Opportunity

Faecal microbiota transplantation (FMT) is a promising potential treatment option for ulcerative colitis (UC). FMT involves “transplanting” the normal faecal bacteria from “healthy” donors to “diseased” patients. The complex balance of bacteria in the gut is now known to play a crucial role in maintaining health, and disturbances in them can lead to various diseases. The premise behind FMT is that by “transplanting” the faecal bacteria from healthy people to sick patients we can correct the underlying gut bacterial imbalance that causes certain conditions, including inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

While not a new therapy, FMT has received increasing attention in recent years as a safe and effective treatment for the gastrointestinal infection *Clostridium difficile*. A New England Journal of Medicine publication earlier this year found FMT to be a much more effective treatment for *Clostridium difficile* than the current standard of care with antibiotics, with no significant safety issues identified1.

As gut bacterial disturbance is known to play an important role in IBD, certain centres around the world are now assessing the role of FMT in the treatment of UC. Current treatments for UC are largely based on targeting the immune system and while effective in many, a substantial proportion of patients either do not derive benefits or experience side effects. Recently, a small pilot study from the USA showed that FMT in children and young adults with UC was safe and improved disease scores2. Larger trials are needed to confirm these findings.

An Australian study assessing FMT in UC is planned for commencement later this year. Professor Michael Kamm and Professor Thomas Borody, both international authorities in the field of IBD, will lead this trial. This study will be conducted at 2 Sydney sites - St Vincent’s Hospital, Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital; along with Nambour General Hospital, Queensland. This study has been approved by St Vincent’s HREC, reference HREC/13/SVH/69.

In order to run this trial, we are appealing for both suitable
- UC patients to participate in the study and undergo FMT
- Healthy individuals to serve as faecal donors

The success of this study is dependent on the recruitment of healthy volunteer donors from the Sydney metropolitan area who are able to provide stool for the study. Prospective donors will need to undergo screening to confirm good health and exclude transmissible conditions, after which they will be requested to donate for a variable time period. Financial reimbursement to cover donor time, effort and transport associated with study contribution will be available.
If you are interested in participating in the study as a patient, please contact the respective hospitals. If you are interested in contributing to the study as a healthy faecal donor, please contact the Department of Research, Centre for Digestive Diseases, the details of which are listed below. Prospective donors will need to be based in metropolitan Sydney.

References:


Contact for Potential Healthy Faecal Donors

**Department of Research,**  
**Centre for Digestive Diseases**  
Level 1, 229 Great North Road  
Five Dock, NSW 2046 Australia  
**Ph:** 02 9713 4011, prompt 2

**Healthy Faecal Donor Criteria**

Aged 18-65

No personal history of gastrointestinal disease

No major active medical problems or infectious disease

No antibiotics or probiotics in the last 3 months
Contact for Potential Study Patients

St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney NSW
-Dr Alissa Walsh or Dr Sudarshan Paramsothy
-Ph: (02) 8382 2061

Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital, Sydney NSW
-Dr Douglas Samuel or Dr Sudarshan Paramsothy
-Ph: (02) 9722 8794

Nambour General Hospital, Queensland
-A/Prof Johan van den Bogaerde or Dr Sudarshan Paramsothy
-Ph: (07) 5370 3716