

Under the Microscope with Professor Graeme Hankey

Research into stroke prevention has been boosted after the Heart Foundation awarded \$120, 000 to Professor Graeme Hankey and the 'VITATOPS' project.

The VITATOPS project, the only trial of its kind, studies the effect of B-vitamin (B6, B12 and folic acid) supplements in preventing another stroke among people who have had a recent stroke.

Professor Hankey, Head of the Stroke Unit at RPH, said these B-vitamins reduce homocystine levels in the blood, which had been linked to heart attacks and strokes.

“People who have suffered a stroke have an increased chance of having another – and in the first month after having a stroke the likelihood of recurrence is 10 per cent,” Professor Hankey said.

“The VITATOPS project is currently run in 19 different countries and aims to enrol and follow-up 8000 people over two-and-a-half years. To date, 4,700 people have been enrolled”

Half of the patients receive a placebo and the other half receive the B-vitamins.

Doctors around the world collaborate in this study voluntarily and Blackmores have donated the tablets.

Professor Hankey said the study was a real team effort and thanked Julia Pizzi and Michelle Tang who coordinate the study around the world.

“The Hospital and its staff have been a huge support, and I’d like to particularly thank the administration, Pharmacy, Research Foundation, and Neurology and Radiology departments,” Professor Hankey said.

Stroke causes nearly seven per cent of deaths in Australia and the number of disabled stroke survivors is likely to increase in the future, given the rapid ageing of the population.

“I hope that through this study we will be able to find an affordable, effective treatment for stroke,” Professor Hankey said.