

Under the Microscope

with Dr Christopher Beer

Researchers from Royal Perth Hospital are seeking volunteers for a study that will investigate the benefits of medication withdrawal.

Systematic termination of pharmaceutical agents trial (STOPAT) is a randomised trial of medication withdrawal funded by RPH and the Medical Research Foundation.

RPH Geriatrician and Clinical Pharmacologist Dr Christopher Beer said many doctors are concerned that patients are taking therapy which may be ineffective, no longer required, producing side effects or having a detrimental effect on quality of life.

“Many patients are also aware that therapy with several drugs simultaneously entails hazards related to drug interactions and side effects,” Dr Beer said.

In support of this point of view, up to 25% of all acute medical admissions to hospital are due to a clinical problem related to drug treatment.

Dr Beer said analysis of individual patients often reveals that some drugs are thought to be unnecessary either because the indication for them no longer exists or because they were carelessly prescribed in the first place.

“It has been shown that withdrawal of some drugs can alleviate a tendency to fall in elderly patients, and there is evidence that antihypertensive medication may be reduced without loss of antihypertensive effect.”

The STOPAT pilot trial will involve tapering or withdrawal of target drugs and follow-up will measure relevant physiological indices of well-being and quality of life.

Eligible volunteers need to be at least 50 years of age and taking blood pressure, heart, fluid or pain killing medicine which they are concerned may be unnecessary.

Research staff will seek agreement from the volunteer’s general practitioner prior to the volunteer entering the study and will then be regularly followed up.

The trial is being run by Clinical Pharmacologists Prof Alasdair Millar, Dr Christopher Beer and Dr PK Loh working with Clinical Pharmacist Mr Yan Ghee Peng.

People interested in receiving further information about the trial can contact Ms Rhana Arnold on 9224 1338.