Volunteers Wanted to Investigate Link Between Obesity and Steroids

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The University of Birmingham is looking for volunteers to continue a five year study examining the impact the body's natural steroids have on obesity and Type 2 Diabetes.

The BPODS study, which is run by the University's Medical School will chiefly investigate the role a single enzyme called 11BHSD1 plays in affecting our fat levels and our potential to develop Type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes, which is linked to obesity, is one of the most significant current public health problems. More than 2 million people currently suffer from the condition in the UK a number, which has increased significantly over the last twenty years.

Dr Jeremy Tomlinson from the University's School of Medicine expalins: "We believe that the body's production of steroids is linked to our ability to metabolise fat and the likelihood of developing diabetes. 11BSD1 is the enzyme responsible for creating the active steroid cortisol, which is found in a number of the body's tissues, including fat. By monitoring changes in people's weight, lifestyle and steroid levels over a long period of time, we hope to be able to check whether levels of 11BSD1 play a part in causing diabetes".

The team's preliminary work suggests that higher levels of cortisol in the body increase the risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes. This could eventually lead to the development of new diabetes drugs, which block the effects of 11BSD1.

The team are looking for healthy adults (aged between 30 and 60), who are already overweight to come in for a yearly "MOT", where the research team will measure a number of key functions including tests for diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol and fat mass. The data will then be used to build up a picture of how obesity and diabetes may be linked to the body's production of steroids.

At each yearly visit researchers will measure participants' blood pressure, cholesterol levels and give each participant a full DEXA scan to measure body composition and fat distribution. The researchers will take a fat biopsy from each patient to measure the levels of cortisol and 11BSD1 in fat cells.

Dr Tomlinson continues: "The yearly consultations are an opportunity for participants to get advice about leading a healthy lifestyle as well as a key part of the research. Anyone interested, should get in touch with us in confidence to discuss the project further."

If you are interested in taking part in the study or for more information contact Dr Jeremy Tomlinson on 0121 415 8715 or e-mail**J.W.Tomlinson@bham.ac.uk (mailto:J.W.Tomlinson@bham.ac.uk)**

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