

THE FIRST PHASE OF ADVANCE IS COMPLETE!



ADVANCE IS OPEN!

Hello from all of us at ADVANCE! We hope this newsletter finds you safe and well. We are delighted to get in touch to let you know that we have opened our doors again at Stanford Hall and we are seeing participants for their 3-year follow-up from autumn 2020 onwards.

We have been busy putting necessary measures in place to ensure we follow government guidelines and visits to ADVANCE are safe for you as well as our staff. For further details please check the [COVID-19 page on our website](#).

WE HAVE OUR ADVANCE COHORT!

Thank you very much to you all for taking the time to be part of the ADVANCE Study. We have now officially finished recruitment and have our ADVANCE cohort! It has been an absolute pleasure to meet you all and we are very excited to see you all again at your follow-up appointments - here's to the next 20 years of the ADVANCE adventure!

Over the next few months we will be looking at the data from your first visits to ADVANCE - we will keep you updated on what we find.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE NEWSLETTER?

We would love to hear your feedback. Please let us know your suggestions and comments on the newsletter using the contact details below.

Find us on
social media!



E-mail us at:

dmrc-advancestudyteam@mod.gov.uk

Call us on:

+44 (0)1509 251 500 extension 3408

Visit our website:

advancestudydmrc.org.uk



PRIZE DRAW

Now that we have finished recruiting new people to the ADVANCE Study, we will be drawing the winners for the first prize draw! You may remember, as a thank-you for taking part in ADVANCE, we offered participants an entry into our prize draw to win money for yourself or for a charity of your choice. The prize draw will be running for the life of the study, with the value of the total prizes going up each visit from £1,000 to £8,000.

On 14th of October we will be drawing the names and here is a reminder of the prizes for this first visit:

- 1 x £500
- 1 x £200
- 3 x £100

If your contact details have changed since your first visit, please get in touch to let us know so you don't miss out!

The winners will be contacted shortly after the draw.

PARTICIPANT VIEW: Ben Zissman

Name: Ben Zissman

Age: 31

Rank: Sapper

What county do you live in?

Derbyshire

When and where were you last

deployed? March 2010 in Afghanistan.

How did you hear about ADVANCE?

From another veteran I was hand-cycling with through the Help for Heroes program.

Why did you choose to take part in

ADVANCE? I was very keen to take part to find out how my overall body fitness was. The tests that were being offered are much more in-depth than I would be able to easily access myself.

What was the best part of the ADVANCE day? Meeting like-minded people.

What more would you like to see on the day? I was happy with everything that took place on the day.

Is there any other follow-up after the ADVANCE visit you would like? A

call a week later to discuss the findings of all medical tests would be helpful. This would cover any further questions I had after the visit.

What three words would you use to give feedback on your ADVANCE visit? Motivational, informative and fulfilling.

What are your interests/hobbies? Hand-cycling and gym fitness.

What new skill would you like to learn? Playing the piano.

What are your top 3 movies of all time? Dumb and Dumber, Forrest Gump and Back to the Future 1.



Have your contact details changed?

Let us know by the contact details above or by completing our online Contact Form using this QR code:



MEET THE TEAM - TASS WHITE

What is your role within ADVANCE?

Clinical administration lead. I do everything from the first phone calls with participants, getting them booked in, then organising everything that's needed for their booking. I work closely with the clinical team with the aim to blend all aspects of ADVANCE together a bit more.

What was no. 1 in the UK charts on the day you were born?

I believe by Robson and Jerome. Don't think I've ever heard it before, my mum insisted on Billy Joel when giving birth!

What jobs have you done before joining ADVANCE?

After I graduated from Bangor University (2017), I worked in a care home for adults with severe non-verbal autism. I loved it there, the residents were great and I got to put a lot of what I learned at uni into practice. I then went travelling for a year, which was the best experience. I volunteered on a game reserve in South Africa and got to hang out with the elephants and lions, spent 5 months in Australia, lived in a camper van throughout a New Zealand winter, then partied for two months in Thailand and Vietnam. I got home, and within a few weeks, I started at ADVANCE.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I really like getting potential participants excited about ADVANCE. Not only is it a brilliant and important study, but I think it's got great personal benefits to the participants and I like that I can talk to the guys about it and encourage them to take part. I also love being part of the team, we all get on so well and it's a really nice environment to be a part of. Plus, we all make sure there's a constant supply of biscuits, so what's not to love!



Tass with her mum and her dog Diwha.

If we could see all our participants together, what would you say to them?

Thank you so much for taking part! This really is an amazing study, but only because of how engaged you guys are with it.

What's your favourite meal?

Ooh difficult choice. It depends on my mood. My nan's roast dinner has to be on top though. Her roast potatoes are unrivaled, and there's always chocolate gateau for pudding.

What's your favourite drink?

Vodka - it doesn't give me a hangover!

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I spend a lot of time with my golden retriever, who I am convinced is part polar bear - he's huge. I love a bottomless brunch with my friends. I go to Leeds a lot to see my brother and sister, and as a family we like to get together for a game night.

What's the last book you read?

I re-read Harry Potter recently.

List three words that your friends or partner would use to describe you.

Kind, kinda weird.

Hello and goodbye!

In September we sadly had to say goodbye to our wonderful research assistant Sarah Evans. Thank you, Sarah, for all your hard work on ADVANCE - and all the laughs! Good luck in your new job. We will miss you and hope to see you again soon!



In December 2019 we welcomed a new ADVANCE team member - radiographer Travis Francis. He brought with him several years of clinical radiographic experience. Travis is in charge of organising and providing X-ray and DEXA scans for ADVANCE participants - and we are very lucky to have him on board!



YOUR ADVANCE DAY EXPLAINED - DEXA scan

In every newsletter we are going to explain a section of the ADVANCE Study day in a bit more detail to help show what your visit is all about and what we are investigating. First up is the DEXA scan which our lovely clinical nurse Molly has explained for you.

What is a DEXA scan?

During your visits to the ADVANCE Study, you will have had a DEXA scan - the one where you were laid on the scanner and the X-ray arm ran the length of your body to take images. DEXA stands for dual energy X-ray absorption and is a bone density scan. It produces pictures of the inside of the body. The DEXA scan is simple, quick and non-invasive, and it doesn't require a lot of preparation. Preparation on your end would have been to wear clothes with no metal or reflective parts, as this would have shown up on the scan. But if you forget, don't worry - we'll sort you out with one of our very fashionable hospital gowns! The test only takes 30 minutes to complete and you receive a full image report of the findings which will be explained to you in depth by the nurse at each visit.

Why is it part of the ADVANCE Study day?

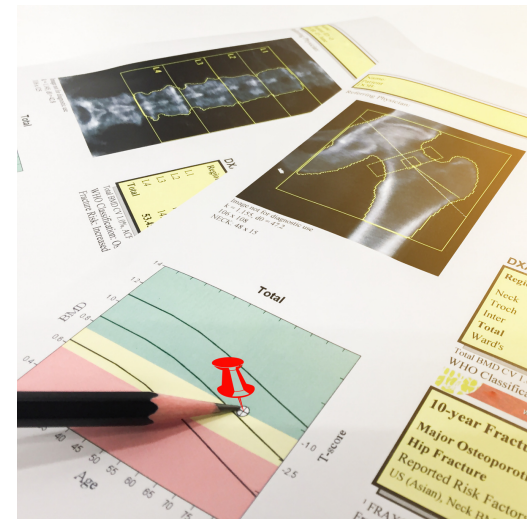
The DEXA scan aims to look at any differences in bone density between our injured group and the uninjured group over the next 20 years. We also want to investigate the impact of different lifestyles on both bone density and fat storage in the body. This scan will be used alongside all the other assessment results of ADVANCE to give us a wide overview of your long-term health.

For ADVANCE, images of the hips and the lumbar spine are measured to work out the strength or density of the bones. Lower bone density means you're at a higher risk of breaks and fractures. The hips are regarded as one of the most important measurement areas because they are common fracture sites which are associated with considerably poorer quality of life and increased mortality - think about the elderly and how often we hear of broken hips. The spine also gives us a very clear view of any differences or degradation of bone strength and density which is why we scan it at each visit stage of the study.



The photo above shows our clinical nurse Molly preparing a participant for his DEXA scan.

The ADVANCE Study is leading the way in generating the first sets of DEXA data for UK serving and ex-serving males. The scan is only one of the tools used to make a diagnosis by clinicians, so there's no need to panic over any results you receive. Our clinical team is always at hand to discuss your results with you on the day!



Not only does the DEXA scan measure bone density, but by taking a full body image it can look at fat distribution in soft tissue, and body fat percentage can be calculated too. This determines which areas of the body carry more fat and how much lean muscle mass is spread throughout the body. It can also assess something called visceral adipose tissue (VAT), which is fat located inside the abdominal cavity. It is packed between the organs (stomach, liver, intestines, kidneys etc.). Research has suggested that high quantities of VAT cause hormonal and metabolic changes that contribute to heart disease and other health issues.

Showcasing our science

In March 2020 the ADVANCE team attended the 'Trauma Recovery: new science and technology for mental and physical health' conference at the Royal Society in London. ADVANCE participant Dave Henson (first on the left) was a keynote speaker and ADVANCE Project Board member Dr Christopher Boos (second from the left) presented preliminary results from ADVANCE. Both got to chat with Prince Harry!



A NEW EXCITING STUDY COMING SOON...

We have a really interesting new study happening here with our colleagues at Stanford Hall. If you are one of our ADVANCE participants who sustained battlefield injuries resulting in a lower limb amputation, you may be particularly interested in this study.

We are very fortunate to have some state-of-the-art facilities here at Stanford Hall. We are using the equipment in these facilities to look at the impact of sustaining a lower limb amputation on future health. This study will look at the relationship between muscle function and performance in people with lower limb amputations. The results will be used to help improve the rehabilitation process and therefore improve quality of life.

We are offering three different 'packages' of the tests available. You can do all available tests, or choose to do any 1 or 2 of the following:

- **Package 1** – 3D motion capture to assess your movement. It will involve some balance work and walking tests (more detailed than currently collected for the ADVANCE main study)
- **Package 2** – Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and ultrasound of both your lower limbs
- **Package 3** – Strength assessments of your hip, knee and ankle muscles

Depending on which package(s) you choose you may be able to complete some tests on the same day as your ADVANCE follow-up visit or we can arrange for you to stay over for an extra day if you want to take advantage of all three packages. Speak to one of our recruitment team when booking your ADVANCE follow-up to discuss if you are available to take part in this additional study.

As a thank-you we will offer £100 if you participate.

We will also be able to offer these tests to some ADVANCE participants without lower limb amputations who will form the comparison group.

If you'd like to hear more about this study please contact the ADVANCE team via e-mail at dmrc-advancestudyteam@mod.gov.uk or call us on 01509 251500 (extension 3408).



Your new ADVANCE T-shirts have arrived!

On your next visit to ADVANCE you will be able to take home one of the brand new and trendy ADVANCE T-shirts, modeled here by Seamus, our senior research nurse.



IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER...

- Your ADVANCE day explained: Cardiovascular health tests
- Initial ADVANCE results explained
- Meet the team: Dan Dyball, research assistant
- And much more!

We look forward to speaking to you soon!



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