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Healthy volunteer experience following research bronchoscopy

Introduction: Fibreoptic bronchoscopy with bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) of healthy volunteers can provide important information across a variety of research objectives. We sought to determine the experience of healthy volunteers following a research bronchoscopy, particularly in relation to pre-procedural expectations.

Methods: We conducted bronchoscopies on healthy volunteers (n=69, ages 18-47 years) as part of an ongoing study investigating immunological responses to aerosolised bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG). Bronchoscopies were performed as outpatients following standard local procedures. Questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale were sent to volunteers via email following completion of the 6-month study follow-up period (n=53 to date).

Results: 29/53 (55%) of questionnaires were returned. All volunteers felt they had a clear understanding of the risks involved in the study (agree n=9, strongly agree n=20). Experience of the bronchoscopy compared to prior expectations varied. Nine volunteers (31%) felt undergoing a bronchoscopy was as expected, 11 (38%) felt it was worse/ much worse and 9 (31%) felt it was better/much better than expected. Within free text comments in those who found it worse than expected, post-procedure adverse symptoms and feeling less sedated than expected were most common. 20/29 volunteers (69%) would undergo a research bronchoscopy again.

Conclusions: Understanding the experience of healthy volunteers following bronchoscopy will allow us to tailor and improve our informed consent process, for example spending increased time detailing the use of conscious sedation. The majority of our volunteers would be willing to undergo a research bronchoscopy again in future.