Education by Chocolate, ThinkWell and the public were the focus of the interactive inaugural lecture by Professor Amanda Burls at City University. Attendees were invited to join a randomized trial designed by Professor Burls and Dr Amy Price. Each guest was greeted and offered their own top secret envelope and a “clicker” to record responses at the door. The clicker reality check was to separate the men from the women. I just wish this was so easy in real life!
We were encouraged to use the ThinkWell Education By Chocolate trial to get in touch with our inner guinea pigs. It was fun! We found out in the first 10 minutes how just being practical and nice can mess up a trial. Some of us opened our secret envelopes early and found one of three kinds of chocolate inside. Our seatmates didn’t like the chocolate they got and we offered to swap so they could be happy (Strictly forbidden, because we were already Randomized, ((OOPs!))). Then there were the clickers, we were supposed to stick to the one assigned to us but we got so excited eating the chocolate with the special instructions (more about this in our protocol) that we had to
think hard to remember not to take the neighbor’s clicker.

**Why we Do Public Friendly RCTs**

![Image](https://www.cityuniversitylondon.org/)

**Purpose of the trial?**

Primarily pedagogic:
- The public can do it
- It is fun
- Participating in research helps you understand what makes good research

Primary chocolate outcome was performance on letter sequence at 30 minutes.

*(Protocol is being distributed)*

**Education By Chocolate Results and Protocol**

The results were surprising, the intervention we thought wouldn’t work at all turned out to get the best score, people liked milk chocolate better than other kinds and women seemed smarter than men *(no surprise there I heard the person behind me declare!)* We now have to think and discuss WHY the intervention we thought least effective got a better score, maybe we need another trial! Was it by chance, a secret ingredient, a learning curve... check back with us later or [join us on Facebook for the discussions!](https://www.facebook.com)

To find out what the trial was about and how we did it so you could even try this at home we have included our protocol. [Click here to see our protocol.](https://www.cityuniversitylondon.org/) Let us know what you think. What would you change?
Use Research Knowledge to Empower and Improve

Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) have long been dominated by industry and academics. The values and information brought by the public was largely ignored. Dr Burls shared with us that as members of the public we have great power to release good or harm depending on the knowledge that we have to share. For example in Rheumatoid Arthritis research it was only when the patients were asked that science found out the greatest barrier to recovery was exhaustion, interventions are in development to meet this need. On the other end of the spectrum we have the anti-vaccine movement where parents think falsely that vaccines cause autism. They refuse to subject their children to vaccination. This has increased disability and death rates throughout the world and all because the public was not informed and told only that experts say you must vaccinate.

How Parents And The Internet Transformed Club foot Treatment

Public knowledge can change the rate at which good treatment is implemented. It was concerned parents that found invasive major surgery for children with club feet was not a must and they promoted a kinder gentler alternative, The intervention that they campaigned for gently coaxes the child’s foot into place after minor surgery has now become the standard treatment. By using education and trials the public can do for themselves ThinkWell can improve clinical trials and make them more useful and public friendly with your help

PLOT-IT is ThinkWell’s Trials Platform
ThinkWell plans to discuss the results and future plans for Education By Chocolate on our Facebook page. Can you help us discuss and improve our trials for future projects. Some other topics we want to discuss include:

- E-Cigarettes
- Using tinted screens for vision improvement
- Meditation by chocolate
- Water for headache reduction
- Increased water for weight loss
- Home therapy for stroke patients

**Participant Perspective:**

A journalist, Ben Sawtell, attended the inauguration and participated in the Chocolate trials shares what the experience was like from the participant perspective. This is a well written and thoughtful synopsis of events as they happen in the real world of participation [http://www.city.ac.uk/news/2014/feb/getting-in-touch-with-your-inner-guinea-pig](http://www.city.ac.uk/news/2014/feb/getting-in-touch-with-your-inner-guinea-pig)

**Can you Help?**

We want your input, suggestions for trials and advice. Please comment on our Facebook page or below in the comments section.