

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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HEART STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED TO COMPLETE FIRST PHASE OF LANDMARK PROJECT

DALLAS – July 9, 2002 – The completion of a landmark heart study could be in jeopardy if 800 Dallas County residents of the 6,000 who are enrolled in the Dallas Heart Disease Prevention Project at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas fail to finish its first phase.

While 2,200 Dallas County residents have finished the three noninvasive heart-imaging tests – provided free as part of the project also known as the Dallas Heart Study – 3,000 people must complete the clinic visit to ensure accurate statistical results.

“If we don’t have a good representation from Dallas County residents, we will not have the information to complete the study or design the second phase of the project,” said Dr. Helen Hobbs, director of the Donald W. Reynolds Cardiovascular Clinical Research Center at UT Southwestern and one of the study’s principal investigators.

“We need to gain an accurate cross-section of heart disease in Dallas in order to combat this disease. Each person is a representative of the entire county. When we miss someone it really has an impact,” said Hobbs, who also directs the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development.

Study participants will be paid for their participation and will receive taxi vouchers for the clinic visit if transportation is not available.

The Dallas Heart Study researchers aim to uncover new, treatable causes of cardiovascular disease, which claims Dallas County residents at a higher rate than the national average. Residents involved in the study can be part of a medical breakthrough against heart disease.

The heart-imaging tests include an electrocardiogram (EKG) to chart the heart’s electrical activity, an electron-beam computed tomography (EBCT) to measure calcium deposits in the heart, and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to produce three-dimensional images of the heart. Blood-pressure measurements and bone-density analysis will also be performed. All test results

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will be shared with study participants.

“We have already identified an alarming number of undiagnosed hypertension and diabetes cases,” said Dr. Ronald Victor, scientific director of the project and chief of hypertension at UT Southwestern.

“After completing this phase of the project, study participants will obtain pertinent information about the size and shape of their heart, and the extent of disease in blood vessels of the heart,” said Victor.

The Dallas Heart Study is the first heart-disease prevention survey of a multiethnic population in a single metropolitan area. Unlike most cardiac studies, the Dallas Heart Study includes a cross-section of ethnic groups, and half of the study participants are women.

The study is funded by a \$24 million grant awarded in 1999 from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. The goal of the project, which began in 2000, is to uncover new, treatable causes of heart disease, including their genetic basis, and to identify barriers to awareness and treatment of heart disease in various populations.

Individuals may not volunteer for the project, but those who have completed the survey should call the Dallas Heart Study hotline at 214-648-4555. Individuals who have completed the survey and blood tests may call 214-648-7234 to schedule an appointment for the heart-imaging tests.

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