

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Contact: Bridgette Rose McNeill
(214) 648-3404
or e-mail: bmcnei@mednet.swmed.edu

AFRICAN-AMERICANS SOUGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY OF KIDNEY DISEASE AND HYPERTENSION

DALLAS — May 7, 1996 — High blood pressure is called "the silent killer," but kidney failure is often its stealthy accomplice. And the deadly duo has targeted the African-American community.

Kidney failure is a common complication of high blood pressure, or hypertension, and can be even more deceptive than "the silent killer." They are both considered "silent" because few symptoms are exhibited.

Researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas are participating in the first major study of kidney disease among blacks, the African-American Study of Kidney Disease and Hypertension (AASK). AASK is a seven-year national trial being conducted at 20 medical centers.

"We want to find out if a more aggressive treatment of hypertension can prevent kidney disease," said Dr. Robert Toto, professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern and director of the acute and chronic dialysis units at Parkland Memorial Hospital. "Severe kidney damage can require dialysis or kidney transplantation."

Toto and other UT Southwestern physicians have been studying the effects of long-term blood-pressure control on the prevention of kidney failure in African-Americans for more than 10 years.

Early detection is key.

"A person can lose up to 50 percent of his or her kidney function before having any symptoms," said internal medicine senior research nurse Carolyn Bradley-Guidry.

African-Americans between the ages of 18 and 70 with diagnosed hypertension and no

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history of diabetes are being recruited for the study. Applicants will be screened with tests measuring their blood-pressure level and kidney function. Qualifying participants will receive free blood-pressure medications, physical examinations, and information and advice about how to care for their kidneys, blood pressure and general health.

The blood pressure of participants will be kept within the normal range.

"One of the greatest benefits of this study is that we aren't using experimental drugs," said internal medicine research nurse Tammy Lightfoot. "All the drugs are already on the market."

Improved management of hypertension has reduced deaths from heart disease and strokes, but hypertension continues to be the leading cause of kidney failure among African-Americans. In fact, kidney disease from hypertension is increasing every year, and the incidence rate is 6.1 times greater in blacks than in whites.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, 38 percent of black Americans vs. 29 percent of white Americans have hypertension. Hardest hit are blacks between the ages of 25 and 44, who are 20 times more likely than their white counterparts to develop hypertension-related kidney failure.

Other medical centers participating in the study include Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C.; Meharry Medical College School of Medicine in Tennessee; Morehouse School of Medicine and Emory University School of Medicine, both in Georgia. The study is sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

For more information call the UT Southwestern AASK clinic at (214) 648-7847.

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