

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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RESEARCHERS UNCOVER ALARMING NUMBER OF UNDIAGNOSED HYPERTENSION, DIABETES CASES IN HEART STUDY

DALLAS – Sept. 28, 2001 – A landmark heart disease study at UT Southwestern Medical Center, which will continue for at least seven more months, has already identified a large number of study participants who have undiagnosed high blood pressure or diabetes.

The Dallas Heart Disease Prevention Project, which began July 1, 2000, has interviewed more than 4,000 Dallas County participants out of the 6,000 that will be needed.

Of those, 1,186 cases of hypertension, or high blood pressure, were diagnosed, 417 of which were unaware of their condition. And 73 participants were unaware of their elevated glucose levels, indicating diabetes.

“It is essential to make people aware of these conditions, which are risk factors of cardiovascular disease,” said Dr. Ronald Victor, scientific director of the project and chief of hypertension at UT Southwestern.

“This is the whole spirit behind this project. If it helps just one person it’s worth it. So far, it’s helped hundreds,” Victor said.

Confidential in-house interviews will be conducted through April 2002, and blood tests and clinical tests will continue throughout the summer of 2002.

To ensure successful results, researchers need residents who are selected to participate in the last two steps of the project, which is the first heart-disease prevention survey of a multiethnic population in a single metropolitan area.

The aim of the project is to reduce death and disability from coronary heart disease among Dallas County community members, who are affected by the disease at a higher rate than the national average.

Researchers will analyze the collected data to uncover new, treatable causes of heart disease and identify the barriers to awareness and treatment of heart disease in the various ethnic populations of Dallas.

(MORE)

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Hypertension, which affects 50 million Americans, is often referred to as the silent killer because symptoms of high blood pressure are often unnoticeable until complications occur. Diabetes affects more than 16 million Americans, and was recently deemed an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease by the National Cholesterol Education Program Expert Panel on Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Cholesterol in Adults.

“High blood pressure and elevated blood glucose levels have a long asymptomatic phase in which the risk factors are producing damage to the cardiovascular system and setting that stage for a heart attack, stroke or kidney failure without making the person feel bad,” Victor said.

“By the time things have gotten so bad and individuals are actually having symptoms of heart disease, the condition may have already reached the critical stage.”

UT Southwestern was awarded a \$24 million national competitive grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation for cardiovascular clinical research in 1999. The award established the Donald W. Reynolds Cardiovascular Clinical Research Center. The Dallas Heart Disease Prevention Project is the centerpiece of the Reynolds Center that will bridge basic research and patient care.

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation is a national philanthropic organization founded in 1954 by the late media entrepreneur for whom it is named.

For more information about the Dallas Heart Disease Prevention Project contact the hot line at 214-648-4555 or log onto the World Wide Web at <http://cardiology.swmed.edu/heartbeat/>.

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