



# STRONG HEART STUDY

Cardiovascular Disease in American Indians

## NEWSLETTER

April 1995

Volume 7, Number 1

### STRONG HEART STAFF COMPLETES MORE THAN 2,500 EXAMINATIONS

Examinations from Phase II of the Strong Heart Study reached 2,561 by the end of January, 1995. Over the same time a total of 2394 echocardiograms and 1,631 gallbladder exams had been completed. (Fewer gallbladder exams had been completed because many members of the Indian community have already had their gallbladders surgically removed due to gallbladder disease.) These numbers represent very high response rates in all three communities. Specifically, the Oklahoma center leads the group in completed examinations with 900, followed by Arizona with 859 and South Dakota with 802. However, South Dakota has pleasantly surprised everyone by completing echocardiograms on 915 to date. This is followed by Arizona which has efficiently completed echos on all the people they have examined (859), and Oklahoma with 620. The number of completed echocardiograms by South Dakota is especially welcome news because the South Dakota center must return the echocardiogram machines at the end of March to the CARDIA Study from which they were borrowed. Given this pressure to perform, the staff did an incredible job. Beverly Blake attributes the success not only to the echo technicians, Helen Beaty and Neil Sikes, but also to the recruiters in Eagle Butte, Fort Totten and Pine Ridge who have kept the schedule full at this critical time. It appears to be a true team effort!

The 2,561 examinations represent 56.3 percent of the group of 4,549 who were included in the original examination 3-4 years ago.

Having surpassed the halfway point, the staff is encouraged by the response rate as a clear demonstration of dedication by the community to SHS. A high response rate is important because the communities can understand the health status of their people and because of the need to learn more about samples routinely collected by the National

**HIGH RESPONSE RATES  
YIELD STRONG  
CARDIOVASCULAR  
HEALTH STATUS DATA**

Center on Health Statistics. Those surveys do not include a sufficient number of American Indians from which to draw valid conclusions. Thus, the *Strong Heart Study is serving as an important resource for data on the health status of American Indians*, particularly with regard to cardiovascular disease which has recently become the number one cause of death among American Indians.

As you strive to complete the Strong Heart Study examinations, remember that the individuals, their communities, and all American Indians will benefit from each additional exam completed. With the persistent hard work of all staff members and the continuing support of the community, the Strong Heart Study will deserve to be recognized as an important resource on the health status of American Indians.

**PREVENTIVE SERVICES  
PROVIDED BY  
THE STRONG HEART STUDY**

The Dakota Center Strong Heart Study (SHS) staff is committed to promoting health and preventing disease in the SHS participants. As part of this effort, SHS participants at the Dakota Center were offered age appropriate immunizations and tuberculin skin testing during the Phase I exams (1989-1992). The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

**TB RATES DECREASING**

Although tuberculosis (TB) has been a serious health problem for Native Americans, rates of TB are decreasing because of prompt diagnosis and treatment of active cases and preventive treatment of persons who have positive tuberculin tests. One hundred and seventy (11.3%) participants reported a history of active TB. Ten of these participants were found to have inadequate treatment and were referred for evaluation. Results of tuberculin

skin tests were recorded from medical records. All participants with a negative or unknown skin test result were offered a repeat test (Table 2).

We have information on 737 participants with a positive PPD indicating that 499 (67.7%) had completed preventive therapy. One hundred sixty-one participants who had not completed preventive treatment were referred to IHS facilities for evaluation.

Diabetic participants and participants with kidney problems, especially those on dialysis, are at high risk of getting TB if they have a positive PPD. They are high priority to receive preventive treatment to reduce their risk of getting active TB.

The Dakota Center is also offering Phase I SHS participants age-appropriate immunizations and all three centers are performing tuberculin tests on Phase I participants who have negative or unknown tuberculin tests.

**TABLE I  
IMMUNIZATIONS PROVIDED TO PHASE 1  
STRONG HEART STUDY PARTICIPANTS - DAKOTA CENTER**

	<b>Tetanus Diphtheria</b>	<b>Pneumovax</b>	<b>Influenza</b>
Number (%) Given	349 (23.2%)	269 (17.9%)	153 (10.2%)
Number (%) Up to Date	708 (47.1%)	451 (30.0%)	461 (30.7%)
Number (%) Refused	172 (11.4%)	177 (11.8%)	204 (13.6%)
Number (%) Vaccine not available	28 (1.9%)	208 (13.8%)	354 (23.5%)

**TABLE 2  
RESULTS OF TUBERCULIN SKIN TESTS**

Number (%) Negative (<10mm)	411 (27.3%)
Number (%) Positive (≥10mm)	824 (54.8%)
Number (%) Unknown	269 (17.9%)

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# YEAR END REPORT FROM EAGLE BUTTE, SOUTH DAKOTA

A year's work at the Eagle Butte Strong Heart Study came to an end the first week of January 1995. At the Eagle Butte office, staff and volunteers packed and loaded equipment in various vans and U-Hauls on January 4th. Al Crawford drove the U-Haul to Eagle Butte from Rapid City where he was met by Kurt Schweigman, who drove a car used to haul the more delicate instruments. The Eagle Butte staff, including Ramona Simon, Lillian Brown, Marcia O'Leary, and family volunteers loaded the van in less than 45 minutes bringing to an end a very successful year on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation.

Neil and Terry Sikes joined the caravan with the van, which is used to house the echocardiogram machine at Ft. Totten. Beverly Blake and Chick Price joined the crew later that night and their vehicles were packed with the remaining furniture and equipment. Neil and Kurt loaded and secured the echocardiogram machine from the Eagle Butte Hospital and the caravan started for Devils Lake Sioux Reservation and Ft. Totten on January 5, arriving about 7 hours later. The staff unloaded equipment on the following day and after the weekend, hit the floor running.

Exams are being done in an apartment located within an elderly housing complex in Ft. Totten. Cooperation with the Devils Lake Sioux Tribal Health, has made the program a success thus far with tribal and clinic departments being very responsive to the needs of the Strong Heart Staff.

The Strong Heart Study is very well received in the Ft. Totten community, with participants calling to schedule appointments and responding well to recruitment efforts. Recruiters Maxine Longie Paul and LuVerne Black Bird met a tremendous challenge to schedule as many participant as possible for echocardiograms before the echo equipment and staff left at the end of February. Participant turnout was excellent in spite of subzero temperatures, but the Devil's Lake people assure staff members that this winter has been much milder than average winters.

**Back Row:** R. Simon, C. Price, M. O'Leary  
**Middle:** K. Schweigman, L. Brown, T. Sikes, B. Blake  
**Front:** N. Sikes w/ Emily (rt.) and Chuckie on bended knee



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