



STRONG HEART STUDY

INVESTIGATING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE
IN AMERICAN INDIANS

newsletter

strongheart.ouhsc.edu

Volume 22, Number 2

December 2010

Become a Participant of the Strong Heart Stroke Study

Participant enrollment recently began for the landmark Strong Heart Stroke Study (SHSS) in the Arizona, Dakota, and Oklahoma field centers. Strokes are more common among American Indians compared to the US population. Strokes reduce or cut off the blood supply to part of the brain and are an important cause of death and disability (e.g., slurred speech, confusion, loss of memory, paralysis of one side of the body, etc.) of American Indians. Some strokes are called silent or mini strokes because a person is unaware he or she had a small stroke, but these can also cause problems with mental and physical functioning of the person.

Little is known about factors that lead to stroke and the resulting reduced quality of physical and mental function among American Indians. The SHSS is being done in the American Indian communities on the Strong Heart Study (SHS) participants to measure the extent of brain damage in those who have had stroke; to determine how many persons have had mini strokes; to determine the impact that strokes and mini strokes have on physical and mental function; and to determine what characteristics may predict strokes. In other words, the SHSS will investigate whether strokes may be related to certain blood and physical changes, such as changes in heart function. We also will search for anything that might predict poor physical or mental function in later life. We hope that the valuable knowledge gained through this study will provide information that can be used to develop programs to prevent stroke and to identify opportunities for intervention. This study will also provide information on predictors of healthy lifestyles among Indian elders. A major goal of SHS and SHSS is to discover things that will result in new programs to increase quality of life for elders.

The goal for each of the three SHSS field centers (Arizona, Dakotas, and Oklahoma) is to enroll 333 participants. SHSS will investigate stroke in SHS participants in order to find out how what was learned about SHS participants 20 years ago may relate to the development of stroke in American Indians. **Thus, SHSS can only enroll people who are participants of the Strong Heart Study and had their first SHS**

exam sometime between 1989 and 1992. The SHSS examination includes Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the brain (the MR scanner produces images of the brain or any other body part without the use of radiation), physical function, blood pressure, ECG, blood tests, brain functions such as memory, and screening for depression. It takes 3 to 4 hours to complete the full SHSS examination (not including travel time), and it can be completed in one or two visits. When the full exam is completed, the participant receives \$200 for time and travel. Participants who are unable to complete the MRI part of the exam will receive \$100 for time and travel. If you feel you are eligible to participate in the stroke study, please contact our study staff. Our staff will ask you questions to verify your eligibility, since there are a few medical conditions that could make someone ineligible.

To volunteer for the stroke study, please contact the study staff at:

Oklahoma:

Oklahoma Strong Heart Stroke Study
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Lawton Indian Hospital
1515 N.E. Lawrie Tatum Road
Lawton, OK 73507
Phone: (580) 248-7715
Please leave your name and phone number on the answering machine if a staff member is unavailable.

Arizona

Arizona Strong Heart Stroke Study
MedStar Health Research Institute
1616 East Indian School Road
Suite #250
Phoenix, AZ 85016
Phone: (602) 277-0488

Dakotas:

Dakota Strong Heart Stroke Study
Missouri Breaks
HCR 64 Box 52
Timber Lake, SD 57656
Phone: (605) 964-3415

Meet the Principal Investigators

A note from the editor:

A Principal Investigator (PI) is the lead scientist working on a research study. The SHS is so large and complex that we actually have five PIs, one for each major area of the study. You might expect conflict and competition with five people in charge, but that is not the case if you ask any of our PIs.

“There is an amazing amount of cooperation among the PIs at the SHS,” Dr. Howard said. “We always work toward our common goal. We all want the maximum benefit for the community. Our commitment is to the participants and the community.”

Every PI on the SHS agreed with Dr. Howard. They all expressed their gratitude to each other and how lucky they are to work with one another.

In writing this issue of the SHS, I had the opportunity to speak with each Principal Investigator with the Strong Heart Study. We discussed their job with the SHS, their personal and professional goals and motivation, and about their life outside of work. Each one expressed genuine concern and commitment to the American Indian communities. Each also spoke fondly of their families. At work, we often get caught up in our daily tasks, but I really enjoyed hearing about the love each PI has for his or her family, and the about the joy they find in life—both at work and at home.

Chances are that you have met at least one of the Principal Investigators or have seen them in the community. If not, we want to take this opportunity to introduce them to you. If you recognize any of them in your community, we hope you’ll introduce yourself. They will be happy to meet you.

Barbara Howard



Dr. Barbara Howard is the Principal Investigator for the SHS at the Arizona Center. She is a senior scientist and formerly President of the MedStar Health Research Institute, and Professor of Medicine at Georgetown University. She works on several other studies that focus on heart disease and diabetes, including studies with Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, and a major study of postmenopausal women. Dr. Howard has also served as the chair of several prestigious committees and sat on expert panels that study health and nutrition.

When Dr. Howard talks about her research, her voice reveals the energy and passion she has for the people in the communities where she works. It is clear that she is strongly motivated and enthusiastic, and at the core of all the work she does, her goal is improving health in the community. Dr. Howard has another goal. She hopes to lead the way in getting more American Indian scientists and investigators in leadership positions.

When asked what she enjoys doing outside of work, she didn’t hesitate to say that she loves spending time with her family. She speaks affectionately about her three children and six grandchildren. It is evident that family plays a strong role in her life. In

addition to spending time with her family, she also spends her free time boating, walking and reading.

Shelley Cole



Dr. Cole is a Principal Investigator for the SHS, and her work focuses on genetic research and identifying inherited risk factors for heart disease and diabetes. Dr. Cole works at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research in San Antonio, and has been involved with the SHS for more than 10 years. She shows great appreciation for her co-investigators in the SHS, and she also shows admiration for the SHS participants. Dr. Cole enjoys the scientific aspect of her work, but feels that the outcome is most rewarding when her research brings answers to complicated questions that directly impact health and disease. It is clear that she is dedicated to finding answers to questions about heart disease and diabetes in American Indians and other populations through her work with the SHS.

You can almost hear the smile on Dr. Cole’s face when she talks about her eight-year-old daughter. “She determines what I do in my off time,” Dr. Cole said. Her time at home is dedicated to her daughter and her family, which is exactly how she likes it.

Elisa Lee



Dr. Elisa Lee is the Principal Investigator of the SHS Field Center and Coordinating Center in Oklahoma and has been with the SHS since it started in 1988. Dr. Lee has a passion for research and determination to find answers to health problems affecting American Indians, particularly diabetes and heart disease. Dr. Lee said that it is rewarding to see the SHS research make a positive impact in the community. She considers herself especially fortunate because she has been able to take what she's learned from the SHS and other research she was involved with to design prevention programs like one of her current projects, The Balance Study.

In addition to working with the SHS, Dr. Lee teaches a course at the College of Public Health at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. She is also the director of the Center for American Indian Health Research, and she has worked on several other studies related to heart disease and American Indians.

Dr. Lee's family is a very important part of her life. Her daughters are grown now with families of their own, and Dr. Lee and her husband take any chance they have to visit them. She especially enjoys spending time with her five grandchildren. "We are a very close family," Dr. Lee said. "When we are together, we have a lot of fun."

Richard Devereux



Dr. Richard Devereux is a Principal Investigator for the SHS at the Ultrasound and ECG Reading Center at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City. He joined the SHS during Phase II of the study. Dr. Devereux is a cardiologist (a medical doctor who specializes in the heart and cardiovascular system) and he is also the director of the Adult Echocardiography Laboratory at the New York Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Cornell Medical Center where he and his colleagues who are also SHS investigators read and interpret the ultrasound and EKG information from SHS participants. In addition to this demanding work, Dr. Devereux is a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiology at Cornell University Medical College. He is an author on over 550 peer-reviewed articles.

As you can imagine, Dr. Devereux leads a busy life, but he always finds time to spend with his family. Dr. Devereux especially loves spending time with his grandchildren.

Lyle Best



At the Strong Heart Study, Dr. Lyle Best serves as the Principal Investigator of the Dakota Center, but his professional life and personal life extend much further than that. Dr. Best is also a family physician, scientist, teacher, mentor, father, husband, cattle rancher... the list goes on. At the SHS, he supervises the scientific aspects of the study, which include ensuring that the collection of data is accurate and unbiased, and he also ensures that the participants' rights are guaranteed. This is obviously a big and time-consuming responsibility, yet Dr. Best still makes time for his other professional passions, which include researching the genetic influence on preeclampsia and working with students at Turtle Mountain Community College, working as a family practice doctor one day a week in his local community, and teaching family practice resident physicians

in Minot, ND.

Dr. Best's roots are in North Dakota. He and his family have left their home state of North Dakota a few times to pursue his professional aspirations, but he always returned to North Dakota where he and his wife raised their three children. Dr. Best speaks fondly of his community and his children, and it is obvious that he takes great pride in both. Dr. Best said that the connection he has with his community continues to inspire his work with the Strong Heart Study. He said that he hopes the research he's involved in provides answers, cures, and hope to his community, neighbors, and friends who suffer from diabetes and heart disease.

When Dr. Best is not at work, he is likely to be found working with his cattle, in his shop welding, or traveling with his wife.



STRONG HEART STUDY COORDINATING CENTER
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Center for American Indian Health Research
College of Public Health
P.O. Box 26901
Oklahoma City, OK 73126-0901

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Permit No. 220

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Strong Heart Study

Newsletter

December 2010



Richard Fabsitz



In this series of profiles, we featured the SHS's Principal Investigators, but we also wanted you to meet our program official, Dr. Richard Fabsitz. Dr. Fabsitz has played an important role in every step of the way since the beginning of the SHS in 1988. At the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), which is the agency that funds the SHS, Dr. Fabsitz is the "go-to guy" for the SHS. He was involved from the very beginning when the NHLBI was approving the original funding for the SHS, and he continues to sit on the steering committee (the committee that governs the conduct of the study) and joins the Principal Investigators in making the most important decisions about the SHS.

Dr. Fabsitz is passionate and thoughtful about the work he does at the NHLBI. In addition to the Strong Heart Study, he also serves as the program official for the Genetics of Coronary Artery Disease in Alaska Natives study and the Project Officer for the CARE:

Candidate-gene Association Resource project. Dr. Fabsitz says that he is proud of the work he's done with the Strong Heart Study. He finds the work he does with SHS particularly rewarding because the SHS aims to work with the American Indian community. From the beginning, Dr. Fabsitz eagerly wanted to get the study right so both the NHLBI and the communities involved in the SHS would benefit from the results coming from the study.

In his spare time, Dr. Fabsitz enjoys traveling to visit his children, and spending time at the beach with his family. He is especially happy to visit his young grandson, the newest member of the Fabsitz family.



Investigators and Principal Investigators from the SHS. The group gathered together for a community meeting in 2007.