

HEALTH

Chronic Diseases Strike Minority Groups

Chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and stroke are the major killers of Americans today -- and they are known to hit some minority groups harder than the general population. But a pioneering analysis says that key health habits linked to education explain many of the differences that were once thought to be racial or ethnic.

"Chronic Disease Among Minority Populations," a report published today by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, says in every race or ethnic group studied, death rates from the major killers are higher among people who smoke cigarettes, are physically inactive or are overweight. These risk factors, in turn, are more prevalent among people who have not finished high school.

The study is the first comprehensive national study of demographic data, risk be-

haviors and health data related to chronic disease among African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asian, Pacific Islanders, Hispanic Americans. The data were collected from respondents in 47 states and the District of Columbia, whereas previous studies that dealt with only one or two racial or ethnic groups.

The research not only compared racial and ethnic groups to the general population but to one another, yielding a comprehensive comparison of the health status of these groups.

For both men and women, the percentage reporting current cigarette smoking was highest in American Indians and Alaskan Natives, and lowest among Asian and Pacific Islanders.

The percentage who reported a sedentary life style was approximately ten percent higher among African American and Hispanic respondents than among American Indian respondents.

But in every racial/ethnic group, risk factors for chronic

diseases were lower among people with higher education attainment.

That was true among all ethnic/racial groups studied. This same high correlation also has been identified between risk factors and education in studies of the general population.

CDC Director David Satcher, M.E., said, "The good news here is that men and women are not destined to die of one or another chronic disease because of their race or ethnic group. They can modify their risks by changed lifestyle.

CDC is an agency of the U.S. Public Health Service and has its headquarters in Atlanta.

Dr. Satcher spoke at the CDC's Ninth Annual Conference on Chronic Diseases in Washington, D.C.

Copies of the report, "Chronic Disease in Minority Population," may be obtained by contacting the Office of Surveillance and Analysis of the CDC, at 404-488-5583.

OSHU Tests Clot Dissolving Drug



Dr. Wayne Clark

Oregon Health Sciences University is one of fewer than 30 institutions across the country selected to participate in a major clinical trial that could one day lead to a new treatment for stroke, a leading cause of death and disability.

The study, one of the most ambitious stroke therapy trials ever undertaken, is testing the therapeutic effectiveness of an experimental drug called pro-urokinase, or pro-UK, in breaking up cerebral blood clots that cause stroke.

The drug must be administered

to patients within six hours of the first sign of stroke symptoms. Medical researchers believe that by rapidly dissolving occluding blood clots, the drug may significantly reduce the brain damage associated with stroke.

As you already may be aware, stroke is the nation's leading cause of disability and the third leading cause of death. Existing approaches to stroke treatment focus on preventive or rehabilitative efforts and currently there is no approved, interventional treatment for stroke such as the approach being tested in the study.

Dr. Wayne Clark is the lead investigator at Oregon Health Sciences University.

Patients with symptoms of acute cerebral artery stroke admitted to participating trial centers are being screened for entry into the study. Patients who are admitted to the hospital within six hours after the onset of stroke symptoms and who meet other study criteria, are eligible to participate.

While medications exist to prevent secondary stroke and rehabilitation offers some hope to stroke survivors, there is currently no effective treatment for an initial stroke.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and is the leading cause of disability.

HIV Prevention Program Needs Volunteers

Cascade AIDS Project's Men's HIV Prevention Program, one of the most extensive and active HIV education and outreach projects in the Portland area, is looking for motivated and committed volunteers to help in its mission of fighting the spread of HIV infection.

In the midst of a campaign called Speak To Your Brothers, the organization seeks to establish contacts and use social networks to pass critical interpersonal support, are expected to create positive changes in decisions that affect each individual's health and the health of the whole community.

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Chocolate May Be Better For You Than You Think

(NU) - Are you ready for the sweet truth about candy? It may be better for you than you think.

Just sink your teeth into these myths, and then savor the sweet truth.

MYTH: Candy has a high fat content and will lead to weight gain.

TRUTH: A 1 1/4-ounce milk chocolate bar has just 13 grams of fat; a dark chocolate bar has just 12 grams. Splurge with a milk chocolate almond bar, and you'll consume 14 grams of fat.

With candy, like all else in a weight management plan, the key is moderation. But if you're watching your diet, bringing something sweet into your life may actually be good for you.

"An occasional sweet treat helps you stick to a healthy eating plan," says registered dietician Annette B. Natow, author of "The Fat Counter" and "The Fat Attack Plan."

MYTH: Chocolate is high in cholesterol.

TRUTH: Chocolate contains no animal fat and is actually low in cholesterol. For instance, a 1.65-ounce chocolate bar contains only 12 milligrams of cholesterol.

To feel really righteous, choose candy made from natural ingredients, like Brown & Haley's boxed chocolates or Almond Roca.

MYTH: Candy is a major cause of tooth decay.

TRUTH: Tooth decay is primarily the result of poor oral hygiene. Cavities occur when any food with fermentable carbohydrates is left on the teeth too long.

MYTH: Chocolate causes acne.

TRUTH: Studies show there's little connection between chocolate and acne. Just ask the lucky midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy who were asked to eat at least three chocolate bars a day for four weeks.

At the end of the four weeks, there was no change in the condition of their skin.

MYTH: Chocolate is high in caffeine.

TRUTH: A one-ounce milk chocolate bar has only six milligrams of caffeine. A five-ounce cup of instant coffee, on the other hand, contains between 40 and 108 milligrams. So relax on your next coffee break ... with a bit of chocolate.

You'll have lots of company. Brown & Haley President Mark Haley, whose company has been making candy for more than 75 years and is one of the country's largest boxed-chocolate manufacturers, says Americans consume about 2.6 billion pounds of chocolate every year.

NATURAL REMEDIES

Herbal Cancer Cure Is Hot On-Line Topic

(NU) - What are the hot topics out in cyberspace? If you hook up with Prodigy's Health Bulletin Board, you'll find lots of e-mail on holistic medicine, including antioxidant therapy and an herbal remedy known as Essiac, discovered in the 1920s by a Canadian nurse.

Essiac is believed to be a cure for cancer.

As the story goes, Rene Caisse was a head nurse in an Ontario hospital when she met a patient with a strangely scarred breast. The patient told her a friend, an Ojibwa Indian medicine man, had given her the recipe for a remedy that cured the hard mass on her breast.

When Caisse acquired the recipe, she called the herbal compound it produced Essiac, which is her name spelled backwards.

While the name Rene Caisse is hardly a household word in the United States, it seems some Prodigy e-mailers have done their holistic health homework and know about her. In fact, one woman said she has "tons of information" on Caisse and Essiac and offered to share it with anyone who's interested.

Caisse's compound, which is marketed in the United States as

Flor*Essence, consists of sheep sorrel, burdock root, slippery elm bark, rhubarb root and other herbs. Together they act as a powerful detoxifier, purifying the body but causing no dangerous or uncomfortable side effects.

In cancer patients, the remedy is said to localize growths within the body, break them down and flush them out, along with other toxins.

Essiac has been tested at Chicago's Northwestern University, the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in New York and the Bioran Blood Chemistry Laboratory in Cambridge, Mass.

The studies at Sloan-Kettering and Bioran showed promising results. In the Bioran study, doctors concluded that Essiac can be used in conjunction with conventional cancer therapies.

For more information on Essiac, check out "The Essiac Report: Canada's Remarkable Unknown Cancer Remedy," a new book by Los Angeles author Richard Thomas. To order a copy, call 1-800-796-4300.

Then, you might share what you've learned with everyone else in cyberspace.

Lasers Speed Back Surgery Recovery Time

(NU) - Slipped discs, a condition responsible for severe back pain in thousands of Americans each year, can be treated successfully today through advanced laser surgery.

Since laser surgery is less invasive than traditional techniques, it means shorter hospital stays and faster recovery for patients.

The surgery, which uses a concentrated light beam much like a scalpel, has long been used to treat a number of medical conditions, from cataracts to gallstones and torn knee ligaments. But only recently, and in just a few medical centers nationwide, has it been used for patients suffering from herniated ("slipped") discs.

"With traditional surgery, back patients used to spend days in the hospital and have months of at-home recovery," said Douglas Weiland, a surgeon at the Florida Spine Institute in Clearwater, Fla. The hospital is a pioneer in laser surgery for spine repair.

Because the procedure is minimally invasive, it's generally considered safer for patients.

For a copy of the Florida Spine Institute's free educational video about spinal laser surgery, call 1-800-477-7746. Phones are answered by nurses or physicians' assistants who can answer questions.



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