

## **DALLAS HEART STUDY**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. What is the Dallas Heart Study?**

The Dallas Heart Study is a study of heart disease that involves over 6000 people from Dallas County. Between 2000 and 2002, each study participant was invited to visit University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and undergo testing to determine the health of their heart and risk factors for heart disease. The goal of the study is to use the information we collect to develop new ways to improve the diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of heart disease.

#### **2. Who is included in the Dallas Heart Study?**

The participants in the Dallas Heart Study were chosen to represent the population of Dallas County, with one exception. We have purposefully included a larger proportion of African-Americans in the study since this group has a particularly high rate of heart disease. An equal number of women and men (ages ranging from 18 to 65 years) participated in the study.

#### **3. What type of information was collected from the study participants?**

Each participant was interviewed and answered a series of questions about heart disease, about the medications they take, their lifestyle habits and understanding about heart disease, and also about the health of their families. Their height, weight and blood pressure were measured, and blood and urine were collected. Those individuals who came to the medical center (~3000 people) had imaging studies performed to look at the heart and the blood vessels (including CT scans and MRI scans).

#### **4. Is the study over?**

No, the individuals who participated in the original study are all going to be invited to return to the clinic this year to undergo the same series of tests. We will determine what has happened over the last 7 years in terms of the development of risk factors for heart disease. We will repeat the imaging studies of the heart and blood vessels and determine if there have been any changes in the size or strength of the heart, or in the amount of atherosclerosis (build-up of cholesterol in the arteries).

#### **5. Is the Dallas Heart Study open to new enrollment?**

The only new participants who will be invited to join the study this year will be spouses or significant others.

**6. Are the results of the testing provided to the participants or their doctors?**

After the participants visit the clinic, they are sent the results of their studies. The results are also sent to the doctor of their choice, if it is requested. No results are provided to anyone without the permission of the participant. The information that is provided to the participant includes the blood pressure, height, weight and the results of blood studies [for example, the levels of cholesterol and glucose (sugar) in the blood]. The results of the imaging studies are provided to the participant.

**7. Are any DNA (genetic) studies performed on the participants in the Dallas Heart Study?**

DNA studies are only done for research purposes. The doctors working in this study are trying to pinpoint the genetic differences between people that make us more or less likely to develop heart disease. In fact, doctors at UT Southwestern have recently found a genetic difference that protects individuals from heart disease. The goal is to develop new ways to diagnosis and treat heart disease before it causes symptoms. No studies are performed to determine paternity. DNA is not given out to anyone. The genetic information is completely safe and cannot be obtained by anyone, including law enforcement agencies. The DNA is protected by something called a *Certificate of Confidentiality* that is provided to the study by the Federal Government.

**8. What else do you measure in the blood and urine? Do you test for drugs? Do you test for infections?**

No. We do not measure the presence of drugs or any infections (for example, HIV or hepatitis) in the participants in the Dallas Heart Study.

**9. Who pays for the Dallas Heart Study?**

The Dallas Heart Study is supported by the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, which was established in 1993 by Donald W. Reynolds, who owned a number of newspapers.

**10. What has been learned that is new from the Dallas Heart Study?**

Over 50 papers have been published describing new information that was learned in the Dallas Heart Study which we hope will make an important difference in the way we treat heart disease. The study also provides the people of Dallas County a gauge of the status of heart disease here where we live. This is important because heart disease is the number one killer in our county, our state, and in our country.

## **11. Where can I learn more about the Dallas Heart Study?**

Additional information may be obtained by visiting the Reynolds Center website at link: <http://reynolds.swmed.edu/default.html> or by calling this number: 214.648.4555.