

## Fact Sheet

### **Mission and Purpose**

The mission of the South Asian Heart Center (SAHC) at El Camino Hospital is to reduce the high incidence of coronary artery disease among South Asians, and save lives, through a comprehensive, culturally appropriate program incorporating education, advanced screening, lifestyle changes, and case management.

The SAHC is the first nonprofit organization in the world to address the prevention of this global epidemic – affecting people of South Asian descent (from the countries of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). The SAHC will serve as a model for future programs in and around the country and throughout the world.

### **History**

In 2004, physicians at El Camino Hospital (ECH) identified an epidemic among their South Asian patients. This population represents just three percent of the (ECH) patient base, but presents six percent of total ER visits due to heart attacks. The hospital brought a team of more than 80 health professionals and South Asian community leaders to discuss the abnormally high incidence of heart disease among South Asian populations and explore the idea of a cardiac wellness center to address the problem. With seed money and support from ECH, and a volunteer team that created the entire program, that goal became a reality in 2006.

### **The Need**

South Asians are four times more likely to suffer a heart attack, and at younger ages, without prior symptoms or warning and without presenting the same risk factors as the general population. The high rate of heart disease even applies to those South Asians who are lifelong vegetarians, exercise regularly, do not smoke, and are not overweight. Additionally, more than half of heart attacks among South Asians occur before age 50, compared to an average age of 65.8 for the general male population, and 70.4 for the general female population. The epidemic affects both male and pre-menopausal female South Asians. Conventional tests and the NCEP ATPIII published guidelines for diagnosis, often underestimates the risk. However, heart disease is preventable with early diagnosis, aggressive lifestyle modifications, and medications.



Research has identified additional metabolic and genetic abnormalities specific to South Asians:

- The dramatic prevalence among South Asians of Metabolic Syndrome/Insulin Resistance (a pre-diabetic condition that can include low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides, abdominal obesity, high blood pressure and high fasting glucose) and full-blown diabetes.
- Higher levels of Lipoprotein (a) concentrations among South Asians, despite normal cholesterol levels. These are genetically determined and considered an emerging risk factor in the overall U.S. population.
- Lower levels of HDL2b, even with normal HDL levels. This particle is responsible for reverse cholesterol transport,
- Elevated levels of small, dense LDL particles associated with rapid progression of heart disease.
- Significantly higher levels of homocysteine associated with higher risk of cardiac death.

## Unique Approach

Most physicians evaluate South Asian patients the same way they evaluate other patients when assessing for coronary artery disease risk. Applying western standards and traditional guidelines to South Asians leads to underestimating the risk in this population. Additional risk factors—beyond high blood pressure, smoking, and obesity—may play a causative role, and as a result, they must be screened and treated differently from other ethnic groups.

The cornerstone of SAHC's comprehensive risk management program is the "four Rs":

- Identifying the traditional and emerging risk factors applicable specifically to South Asians.
- Offering personalized recommendations for prevention, focusing on lifestyle modifications and as necessary, medications.
- Providing referrals to wellness resources in the community such as nutritionists knowledgeable in the South Asian diets, and fitness, yoga, meditation and stress reduction centers that understand the SAHC program and help participants make long-term positive lifestyle changes.
- Rechecking patients periodically to make sure that they are on track. This intense, in-person case management ensures that participants stay on their heart-health management program.

## **Funding**

El Camino Hospital provided the seed funding for the SAHC. The program currently depends on donations from the community, and grants from foundations and corporations.

All the consultative office visits and ongoing case management are provided free of charge to the participants. The nominal cost of the lab testing is dependent on a patient's insurance coverage and billed directly by the lab.

## **Eligibility**

The South Asian Heart Center is El Camino Hospital's response to a health crisis unique to the South Asian population – a four-fold risk of heart disease compared to the general population. This epidemic affects the South Asian population worldwide. The Center's program of early evaluation with advanced screening for heart disease, and prevention through lifestyle modification is currently available to adults (over the age of 18) of South Asian descent in Silicon Valley.

The Center will also provide information on advanced screening to other non-South Asian populations and refer them to their primary care physician (or recommend physicians in its network if they do not have one) who can evaluate their need for advanced screening and/or treatment.

South Asians from anywhere in the world also can visit the SAHC Web site and learn about the program.

## **Executive Team**

- Cecile Currier, VP, Community & Corporate Health Services, El Camino Hospital
- Ajit Gokhale, Chair, Wellness Programs
- Vibha Jayan, Chair, Fundraising
- Seema Lindskog, Chair, Marketing
- Ashish Mathur, Executive Director
- Dr. Cesar Molina, Medical Director
- Nivisha Mehta, Director of Development
- Dr. Prasanna Menon, Chair, Program Executive
- Girish Shah, Chair, Community Outreach
- Dr. Padma Srinivasan, Chair, Physician Outreach
- Dr. Mintu Turakhia, Chair, Participant Assessment/Research

### **Physician Advisory Council:**

- Dr. Naras Bhat, MD, FACP  
*Director, Cybernetix Institute*
- Dr. Kanu Chatterjee, FACC, FRCP, MACP, MB  
*Ernest Gallo Distinguished Professor of Medicine, Division of Cardiology, UCSF Medical Center*
- Dr. Enas Enas, MD, FACC  
*Director of the Coronary Artery Disease Among Asian Indians (CADI) Research Foundation*
- Dr. Anmol Mahal, MD  
*Chairman, Board of Trustees, California Medical Association*
- Dr. Robert Superko, MD, FACC, FAHA  
*Chairman, Fuqua Heart Center of Atlanta at Piedmont Hospital*

### **Community Advisory Council:**

- Dinesh Desai, Retired investment businessman
- Parveen Jain, Vice President, McAfee
- Vibha Jayan & Jayan Ramankutty, President & CEO, Yume Networks
- Raj Jaswa, President, TiE Silicon Valley, Founder Selectica
- Sanjay Mittal, Founder, Selectica
- Girish Shah, President, Jain Temple

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To schedule a screening, volunteer time, or donate to the center, visit the web site at [www.southasianheartcenter.org](http://www.southasianheartcenter.org) or call (650) 940-SAHC (7242).

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