

SOUTH ASIAN HEART CENTER PRESENTS EARLY FINDINGS FROM FIRST YEAR OF RESEARCH

South Asians at higher risk even under age 40

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA, September 30, 2007— Dr. Mintu Turakhia, a cardiologist and epidemiologist at the University of California San Francisco, and Chair of Research for the South Asian Heart Center at El Camino Hospital, presented a first-ever summary of research data collected during the Center's first year of operation.

Three hundred health care professionals attending a physician symposium sponsored by the hospital September 8th in San Jose participated in a discussion of the much-anticipated data, which came from 800 participants screened during the first 17 months of the South Asian Heart Center's operation.

The data track closely with a large international case control study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in early 2007, which demonstrated that South Asians have higher levels of risk factors for heart disease. They also have a four-fold higher incidence of CAD when compared to the general population, with the disease often developing at an earlier age.

Dr. Turakhia said, "Overall, participants coming to the Center reflect precisely the Silicon Valley South Asian population. They are young, highly educated, and two-thirds are male. And the rates of risk factors, even in individuals under the age 40 are extraordinarily high."

Highlights of the data included:

- The mean age of participants was 44 ± 11 years
- Most participants were born on the Indian subcontinent
- Nearly a quarter (23 percent) had hypertension



- Ten percent had diabetes
- 36 percent had a family history of cardiovascular disease
- 51 percent were overweight
- 19 percent had an elevated fasting blood sugar reflecting insulin resistance or frank diabetes
- There were alarming rates of cholesterol disorders

“Arguably, the most potent risk factor in South Asians is low HDL levels,” said Dr. Turakhia. “We found low HDL in an astonishing 45 percent of participants, and rates were similar in men and women. HDL-2b, an anti-atherogenic good cholesterol sub-particle, was low in 27 percent of participants, most of whom already had low HDL. However, HDL-2b was also low in 7% of patients with normal HDL levels, which may suggest that these patients are at risk despite HDL levels that are normal based on established cut-off values. As a result, particle sub-typing may add prognostic value in specific clinical scenarios unless more aggressive HDL cutpoints are used.”

The South Asian Heart Center data also reveals high rates of the metabolic syndrome, a potent combination of conditions linked to blood vessel inflammation, atherosclerosis, and diabetes, according to Dr. Turakhia. Some 15 percent of men and 9 percent of women had the metabolic syndrome and an alarming 29% of men and 16% of women were well on their way toward developing it — just one criteria short.

“It is unequivocally clear that risk stratification and treatment of the Bay Area South Asian population is an unmet clinical need,” Dr. Turakhia concluded.

Dr. Cesar Molina, Medical Director at the Center, commented on the importance of earlier screening for South Asians.

“One of the most important differences in our approach is the age at which we’re screening individuals in our program,” said Dr. Molina. “More than half of heart attacks among South Asians occur by age 50, and a quarter below the age of 40, yet traditional guidelines for risk stratification weight age as one of the most important factors, thereby missing the high risk for

premature CAD in this population. “The best available data indicates that habits that tend to protect individuals from CAD—such as vegetarian lifestyle, non smoking and physically activity—may not fully protect this population from premature CAD. . That’s why it is critical that we change the thinking not only of physicians, but of the South Asian community that is so profoundly affected.”

By 2010, it is estimated that South Asians—who trace their ancestry from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka—will bear 60 percent of the world’s heart disease burden. By 2015 over 60 million Indians in South Asia will suffer from coronary artery disease at the current rate. The South Asian Heart Center is the first non-profit organization in the world devoted to combating this worldwide epidemic.

With input from a community-wide task force of cardiologists, internists, nurses, nutritionists and family physicians, the Center developed a comprehensive health risk assessment factoring in family history, medical history, diet, activity, stress and advanced lipid and metabolic testing.

“The in-depth assessment has been critical,” said Dr. Molina, “because it permits our participants and their physicians the opportunity to address specific issues through changes in their diet, exercise routine, medications and even meditation.”

The South Asian Heart Center’s program helps make that happen. It provides each participant with a comprehensive risk assessment along with personalized recommendations for prevention, referrals to wellness resources that help participants make long term positive lifestyle changes, and periodic re-checks to help keep participants motivated. Intense in-person case management is used to ensure that patients stay and succeed on their heart-health management program which is provided free of charge.

Dr. Turakhia said the Center is also analyzing follow-up data collected after participants and their physicians have been given results of screening and have followed an individually-tailored risk prevention/management program for various periods of time. “It’s very clear that South Asians are at high risk,” Turakhia says. “However, the real question for the Center is – how effective are we at getting our participants to exercise, eat right, and when appropriate, get

treated by their physicians?” The Center will seek to determine how effective the programs are at reducing risk in the participant group—and what factors have the greatest impact on success.

Since the launch of the South Asian Heart Center at El Camino Hospital—the first nonprofit center in the world focused exclusively on preventing the global epidemic of heart disease among South Asians—it has conducted outreach to primary care physicians, cardiologists and endocrinologists to raise aware of the unique CAD risks of this population. More than 400 physicians have attended its symposia, lectures and workshops. Other health care providers also have announced plans for programs focused on the South Asian population’s unique health risks. South Asians constitute three percent of the South Bay population.

“We’re happy to have raised awareness and spurred others to take action, too,” Dr. Molina said. “We hope our findings will spur everyone to look carefully at how to approach the South Asian heart disease epidemic effectively.”

About the South Asian Heart Center

The Center is made possible through the generosity of the community, and through the generous in-kind contributions of El Camino Hospital. To learn more, to schedule a screening, to volunteer time, or donate to the center, visit the web site at www.southasianheartcenter.org or call (650) 940-SAHC (7242).

About El Camino Hospital

Located on a 41-acre campus in the heart of Silicon Valley, El Camino Hospital serves residents in the El Camino Hospital District – Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, and portions of Sunnyvale and Palo Alto – as well as those in surrounding communities. Established in 1961, this non-profit, locally controlled community-based hospital has delivered the highest level of medical services to the community for more than four decades. Recognized both locally and nationally for its quality of care and high patient, physician and employee satisfaction scores, ECH is the only hospital in the Bay Area and one of only six in California that has been designated as a nursing magnet hospital by the American Nursing Credentialing Center.

To learn more about ECH and its services, visit our web site at www.elcaminohospital.org. For a physician referral, visit our web site or call the El Camino Health Line at (800) 216-5556.

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