

The Cardiovascular Health Study: Design and Rationale

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ABSTRACT

The Cardiovascular Health Study (CHS) is a population-based, longitudinal study of coronary heart disease and stroke in adults aged 65 years and older. The main objective of the study is to identify factors related to the onset and course of coronary heart disease and stroke. CHS is designed to determine the importance of conventional cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors in older adults, and to identify new risk factors in this age group, especially those that may be protective and modifiable. The study design called for enrollment of 1250 men and women in each of four communities: Forsyth County, North Carolina; Sacramento County, California; Washington County, Maryland; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Eligible participants were sampled from Medicare eligibility lists in each area. Extensive physical and laboratory evaluations were performed at baseline to identify the presence and severity of CVD risk factors such as hypertension, hypercholesterolemia and glucose intolerance; subclinical disease such as carotid artery atherosclerosis, left ventricular enlargement, and transient ischemia; and clinically overt CVD.

These examinations in CHS permit evaluation of CVD risk factors in older adults, particularly in groups previously under-represented in epidemiologic studies, such as women and the very old. The first of two examination cycles began in June 1989. A second comprehensive examination will be repeated three years later. Periodic interim contacts are scheduled to ascertain and verify the incidence of CVD events, the frequency of recurrent events, and the sequelae of CVD. *Ann Epidemiol* 1991 Feb; 1(3):263-76



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