Welcome to the first issue of the “ASK ME ABOUT ENRICHD NEWSLETTER”, a newsletter designed for you, the participants in ENRICHD. This newsletter will keep you up-to-date about what is happening in ENRICHD. In these pages, we will introduce you to some of the people and organizations involved in conducting the study, and answer some of the questions many of you have had about ENRICHD. We will provide you with information on current health and scientific topics of interest that you may find useful or of interest.

What is ENRICHD?
ENRICHD stands for Enhancing Recovery in Coronary Heart Disease Patients. ENRICHD is a nation-wide clinical study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The study is designed to evaluate whether counseling for patients with depression and/or low perceived social support after a heart attack will reduce their chances of future heart attacks or death from heart disease.

ENRICHD Centers
ENRICHD is recruiting 3,000 participants from 72 hospitals through eight main clinical centers across the United States (See map on page 4). To date, 1,928 people have been enrolled in ENRICHD nationwide. We currently have 1,078 men and 850 women enrolled, so we are more than halfway to our goal of 3,000! Participants come from all walks of life, including homemakers, mechanics, teachers and doctors. It is a very diverse group, with almost close to 44% of the group being women, and almost 33% representing an ethnic minority group.

Greetings from the ENRICHD Study Chair, Lisa Berkman, Ph.D.
Thank you for your participation in this national clinical study, ENRICHD. The aim of ENRICHD is to learn whether we can improve health in patients who have recently had heart attacks by reducing their levels of depression and improving their level of social support. Many studies have now shown that people who are depressed or lack emotional support have worse health after they have had a heart attack. In some cases, the depression or social isolation was long-standing and occurred well before the heart attack. In other cases it seems more like a reaction to the heart attack. In either case, heart attacks when coupled with depression or social isolation appear to be very stressful experiences, which may then lead to poor health and increased risk of death. Again, thank you for your participation in this important study.

You are a Pioneer
We bet you didn’t realize it, but you are a pioneer! Why? Because by participating in ENRICHD, you are involved in a truly groundbreaking effort! (see the full story on page 2)

Thanks from the NIH
Everyone working on the ENRICHD study, the team of Coordinators, Counselors, and Physicians at your site, as well as those of us at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Coordinating Center, would like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in ENRICHD. We are grateful that you agreed to participate, because without each and every one of you, this important study could not be carried out.
The story behind ENRICHD

As an ENRICHD participant, you are making history. Below is the "(hi)story behind the story".

ENRICHD is the first ever-large scale, multi-center clinical trial undertaken by NIH to learn whether social support and counseling can aid in patients’ recovery from a heart attack. Up to this point, large clinical trials conducted by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the part of the NIH that studies heart problems, has focused on the effects of drugs and surgical treatments on recovery from heart attacks. These large clinical trials, involving thousands of participants and taking many years to complete, have led to many wonderful advances in the treatment of heart disease. Treatments such as beta-blockers, aspirin, bypass surgery, angioplasty and others have become routine parts of clinical care because they were proven to work in large clinical trials. Many lives have been saved because of these studies. But until now, researchers have not tested in a clinical trial whether psychological treatments have similar positive effects. That is why your participation is so important.

Why the ENRICHD Study?

We now know a lot more than we used to about how the mind and body interact to affect our health. For several decades, behavioral scientists have been gathering information on whether certain psychological and social factors, for example, feelings of depression and low social support might be linked to how well people recover from heart-related illnesses. Studies that have been conducted thus far suggest that psychosocial factors may indeed play a role in our physical health, especially after an event such as a heart attack. However, these studies do not conclusively answer the question: Does providing counseling for depression or social support for people who've had a heart attack affect their future health? To answer this question, a large study was needed; carried out in such a way that we can be confident about the answer we get at the study’s end. So, a number of years ago, several experts in the field of behavioral medicine met at the NIH offices in Bethesda, Maryland, and formally recommended that such a study be done. The Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute agreed, and ENRICHD was born!

Your participation in ENRICHD is therefore very important to us. You are helping the NIH answer a question that could potentially save lives and help people in the future have a better recovery after a heart attack. It is only through the participation of patients such as yourself in studies like ENRICHD that medical science can continue to advance, leading to better health for all of us.

Did You Know?

A unique aspect of ENRICHD is that the study was designed to enroll a large number of people from diverse ethnic groups, and a large number of women. Why is this important? This is important, because many studies of heart disease patients have not included enough people from these groups. By emphasizing diversity in our study, we will able to apply our findings more widely, so that many different people can benefit from the results.

We randomly assign each ENRICHD participant to one of two groups. One group receives usual clinical care patients get after a heart attack, the other group gets counseling in addition to usual care. The results of the study could show that counseling heart attack patients means time, money and energy expended without any benefit. Or the study could show that counseling enhances recovery. We don’t have the answers yet. That is why you’re so important to the study—whether you are in the usual care group or the counseling group.

Each participant in ENRICHD is followed up for an average of three years to gather information on his or her medical and social and emotional health. The length of time you will be followed in ENRICHD will depend on when you enrolled in the study. Some of you enrolled early on and will participate for about 4-1/2 years, while those of you enrolled near to the end of the study recruitment may participate for only 18 months.
Tips to Help Enrich Your Participation in the ENRICHD Clinical Trial

So, you’ve agreed to be part of this clinical trial called ENRICHD -- but what does that mean to you personally? We have described how your participation in ENRICHD will help us learn whether counseling helps people recover from a heart attack. This knowledge could benefit you and others with similar situations. But what is expected of you now that you’ve made the decision to help us answer this question?

Your Role

You can help ENRICHD be a success by committing yourself to do the following:

1. First we ask that you provide your ENRICHD Coordinator with the information she or he needs for the study. This information might involve having an ECG and answering questions in person or over the phone, in a hospital or clinic, or in your home. It is important that your ENRICHD Coordinator obtains certain types of medical information -- like the ECG -- so please cooperate with her/him. Every piece of information we collect will help us to answer the questions being posed in ENRICHD.

2. Let your ENRICHD Coordinator know about changes in your health status, such as hospitalizations or new symptoms. Any change in your health status is important and the ENRICHD Coordinator should be notified as soon as possible by you or by someone else.

3. If you have been assigned to receive counseling, you need to participate as much as you can. Try to arrange a convenient time to meet with your counselor so that you are able to meet on a regular basis. We know that sometimes things come up that make it hard to attend a session -- but when you have to cancel a session, please call to cancel and reschedule the session as soon as you can. Every session is important. If you miss a session and do not make it up, you may not get the full benefit of the counseling. It will also be harder for us to answer the questions we are asking in this study.

You are in a study that appreciates your participation. We want to work with you to make your time with us as pleasant and beneficial as we can. So please let us know what we can do to help you.

Information about how to contact the ENRICHD Coordinators, Counselors and other members of your ENRICHD team are given on page 4 of the ASK ME ABOUT ENRICHD newsletter. Please do not hesitate to call any of them if you have questions or need information, or if you have to miss a visit or a counseling session and need to reschedule. We understand that it can sometimes be hard to fit the visits and contacts required by ENRICHD into your life. We are committed to helping making your participation in this important study as easy as possible and to working with you to make ENRICHD a success!

Your local ENRICHD Coordinator can provide information about follow-up and any other aspects of your individual participation on ENRICHD.

You, the ENRICHD participants are important to us. The study’s success depends on you.

Reminder

Call your ENRICHD Coordinator if you have any questions about the study. Let your coordinator know if you have a change of phone number or address. This will help them stay in touch during the study.

You may write to us, if you wish, at the:
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