

AHA JOURNAL REPORT

RENEGADE ANTIBODIES ARE LINKED TO HEART ATTACKS IN MIDDLE-AGED MEN

DALLAS — Finnish researchers report finding the strongest evidence so far that the presence of renegade antibodies in the blood is a risk factor for heart attack.

"This is the first prospective study demonstrating the clinical

infarction (heart attack) of 2.0 compared with the remainder of the population," they report in *Circulation*.

The risk was still twice as high even after the scientists accounted for other risk factors, such as age, smoking, blood

pressure and cholesterol levels. The aCL antibody level thus was an independent risk factor for heart attacks, Vaarala says.

The researchers found that the risk of heart attack, which is doubled in those with high aCL antibody levels, was increased

two and one-half times in smokers. But the risk was increased five and one-half times in those who smoked and had high antibody levels.

All participants in the Helsinki Heart Study had high levels of LDL, the main carrier of "harmful"

cholesterol in the blood and a factor contributing to hardening of the heart's coronary arteries. Scientists believe oxidized LDL is especially harmful. Vaarala's team found antibodies to oxidized LDL may be "cross-reactive" with aCL antibodies.

"Such a cross-reactor was by no means unexpected," write the scientists, because of structural similarities between the LDL molecule and cardiolipin, the phospholipid component to which aCL antibodies react. But (See Heart Attacks, Page 21)

HEALTH

importance of a high level of anti-cardiolipin (aCL) antibodies as a predictor of heart attack," says Outi Vaarala, M.D., Ph. D., first author of the report in the Jan. 1 issue of the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.

All previous studies have been retrospective, measuring the antibodies in people who had already had heart attacks or coronary heart disease, says Vaarala, a research fellow at Finland's National Public Health Institute. In their new prospective study, she and her colleagues examined men who were initially healthy (although all of them had high cholesterol levels) in order to determine if high levels of aCL antibodies were associated with heart attacks during the five-year study.

The middle-aged men (average age: 49) were participants in the Helsinki Heart Study. Of 4,081 subjects in the study population, a total of 140 had either a fatal or non-fatal heart attack during the course of the study. Blood serum drawn in 1981 or 1982, when the study began, was available for 133 (26 cardiac deaths and 107 non-fatal heart attacks) of the 140.

The 133 patients were compared with 133 control subjects who did not have heart attacks during the five-year follow-up. The average level of aCL antibodies was significantly higher in patients than in control subjects, the scientists found.

"Subjects with the antibody level in the highest quartile (top 25 percent) of distribution had a relative risk for myocardial

Plugging Into 21st Century Medical Care Today

(NU) - How will 21st century medicine look to the wise consumer?

One feature: a private, personalized system of preventive health screening. Based on quick, nearly painless annual blood tests, it will give participants increased positive control over their own health care, and provide life-saving early warning of potentially dangerous or debilitating diseases.

The program, available now, is based on blood chemistry analysis made by physician pathologists. This information provides for the consumer a comprehensive interpretation of the 64 blood test values available. The confidential results are mailed to participants and legally belong solely to them. They can also use the results to increase the quality of care given by health-care providers.

The system, known as HealthGuard, is designed for people whose health is fine, and who are determined to keep it that way, as well as for people who must track known health problems so that they may be treated appropriately.

"Your blood chemistry often changes before physical symptoms occur," says Mark Shannahan, president of HealthGuard which is based in Annapolis, Md.

"This is proactive health care," says Shannahan. "It is available nationwide, and people who want to take control of their own health, and those who want to be able to talk intelligently to their physicians, are

signing up for it."

Included in the program is a phone consultation with a nurse or dietitian. This is helpful if test results indicate that nutritional or lifestyle habits may require modification.

More serious indications are brought to the immediate attention of the participant by HealthGuard personnel.

The blood test requires a five-minute visit to a nearby MetPath blood lab, where blood is drawn. A written pathology report is sent to the consumer's home or office. More information is available by calling 410-849-2765.

"It's important," says Shannahan, "that the test results are interpreted by clinical pathologists, who are doctors' doctors. Only 2 percent of the blood tests in the United States are interpreted by pathologists, and it makes a difference."

The annual blood tests, over the years, produce a cumulative report that Shannahan says "creates an opportunity to view smaller test variances and look for signs that alert you to potential health problems."

"HealthGuard's potential, therefore, for reducing health-care costs and increasing the quality of care is substantial," Shannahan says.

"HealthGuard is no substitute for a doctor's care, and it isn't diagnosis or treatment," says Shannahan. "But it is a reliable 21st century tool you can use to help maintain good health."

UMC Foundation Presents \$363,000 Gift To Hospital

The University Medical Center Foundation last week presented \$363,000 to the UMC Board of Trustees - Money raised by this year's Children Miracle Network Telethon.

The presentation was made during the regular meeting of the UMC Board of Trustees at 9:00 a.m. in commission chambers of the Bridger Building, 225 Bridger Avenue.

The UMC Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organization chartered to raise funds for the purchase of equipment for the hospital.

Presently, the Foundation is focusing its attention on fundraising efforts to equip UMC's new pediatric emergency

unit which will open in early 1995. "It is the Foundation's goal to make this the premier facility of its kind in southern Nevada and the center of excellence for the pediatric emergency needs of the Las Vegas area community," said Rick Pyatt, chairman of the UMC Foundation. The new pediatric emergency department will allow us to treat over 30,000 children a year.

The Children's Miracle Network Telethon, which was broadcast last year on June 4 and 5 by KVVU Fox-5, is major fundraiser for the Foundation. All funds raised locally by the telethon return to the Foundation for use at University Medical Center.

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