

Weight loss cuts prostate cancer risk

ATLANTA (AP) — Here's another reason for men to avoid packing on extra pounds over the holidays: A new study has found that losing weight reduces the risk of an aggressive form of prostate cancer.

After tracking the weight of nearly 70,000 men between 1982 and 1992, researchers from the American Cancer Society and the Duke

University Prostate Center found that men who lost more than 11 pounds had a lower risk for aggressive prostate cancer than men whose weight remained the same over a decade.

Previous studies have found that obese men have a higher risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer.

This study appears to be the first to indicate that recent

weight loss can decrease that risk.

In the study reported this month in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, researchers analyzed the height and weight of the men in 1982 and 1992 and every three years after that until 2003. At that time, more than 5,200 of the men — more than 7 percent — had prostate cancer.

Among those cases, about one in eight had a form of cancer that was aggressive but had not spread to other areas of the body. The study's major finding focused on those aggressive cases, with researchers concluding that those who lost 11 or more pounds were 42 percent less likely to develop that form of prostate cancer than those whose weight remained the

same.

"Whether it's exactly 40 percent, we don't know, but they lower their risk when they lose 11-plus pounds.

We feel confident, at least in this population, that was real," said lead researcher Dr. Carmen Rodriguez.

More than seven times as many men whose weight remained the same developed aggressive prostate cancer compared to those who lost 11 or more pounds.

"No significant associations" were found regarding the effect of weight gain or loss on the most severe forms of prostate cancer, those that spread throughout the body, the study said.

The number studied was small, the researchers acknowledged, because fewer than 15,000 men lost weight over the time period, and only 1,000 of those developed some form of prostate cancer.

The 69,991 participants were part of a bigger cancer society study of 1.2 million Americans that began in 1982.

Rodriguez said men should avoid putting on ex-

tra weight as they get older.

"The main message for men is to not get overweight. If they are overweight, that's another reason to try to lose weight, just to decrease the risk for prostate cancer," said Rodriguez, who works for the Atlanta-based cancer society.

Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer for men, and about one in six will get it during his lifetime. It is the second leading cause of cancer death for U.S. men.

The study is considered the first of its kind to examine the role of weight change in the development of prostate cancer, said Dr. Ronald Ennis, director of radiation oncology at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center in New York, who was not involved in the study.

"This is one of the best studies" examining the role of weight on prostate cancer, Ennis said. "It does seem to be true that if you are overweight, you are at risk of getting more aggressive forms of prostate cancer, and if you lose weight, you can decrease the risk."

War trauma raises heart risks

CHICAGO (AP) — A groundbreaking study of 1,946 male veterans of World War II and Korea suggests that vets with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are at greater risk of heart attacks as they age.

The new study is the first to document a link between PTSD symptoms and future heart disease, and joins existing evidence that vets with PTSD also have more autoimmune diseases such as arthritis and psoriasis.

A second study, funded by the Army, found that soldiers returning from combat in Iraq with PTSD reported worse physical health, more doctor visits and more missed workdays.

The Army study is based on a survey of 2,863 soldiers one year after combat.

"The burden of war may be even greater than people think," said the first study's lead author, Laura Kubzansky of the Harvard School of Public Health, who studies anxiety, depression and anger as risk factors for heart disease. Her work, with colleagues from Harvard and Boston University, appears in Monday's *Archives of General Psychiatry*.

Their study was funded by the National Institutes of

Health and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Army study appears in Monday's *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

The possible link with heart disease didn't surprise one Iraq veteran diagnosed with PTSD.

"It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out," said John Oliveira of New Bedford, Mass., a former Navy public affairs officer and veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It should also be a wake-up call that the cost to treat those of us suffering from PTSD could dramatically increase as we age."

Medical authorities first accepted post-traumatic stress disorder as a psychiatric condition in 1980 at the urging of Vietnam veterans.

In PTSD, the body's normal hormonal response to stress becomes trigger-happy, scientists believe. Long after traumatic events, people remain edgy, fearful and prone to nightmares and flashbacks. The continual release of adrenaline prompted by these symptoms may wear down the cardiovascular system, Kubzansky said.

"It's not enough to simply welcome them home and do some immediate evaluation

or help with reintegration," she said. "They need to be tracked and watched carefully."

The Harvard and Boston University researchers analyzed data from the Veterans Administration Normative Aging Study, a long-term research project tracking Boston-area vets.

They looked at health records of men who completed either a 46-item questionnaire measuring PTSD symptoms in 1986, or a different 35-item PTSD assessment in 1990. Both questionnaires are recognized tools for diagnosing PTSD and ask about symptoms such as sleep problems, nightmares, numbness, a heightened sense of being on guard and intrusive memories of traumatic events.

Over the 10 to 15 years after completing the questionnaires, the vets with more PTSD symptoms were more likely to have heart attacks. For each level increase in symptoms on the 1990 assessment, the risk of heart attack or chest pain rose 18 percent — even after the researchers took into account known heart disease risk factors such as smoking, alcohol use and high blood pressure.

Although the men had different levels of PTSD symptoms, very few had enough symptoms for a true diagnosis, Kubzansky said.

The study needs to be repeated to see if the findings hold true for PTSD-diagnosed veterans, and for women, she said.

The data also didn't track how frequently the men exercised, so researchers couldn't tell if the men with PTSD symptoms were getting more or less exercise than other veterans.

Dr. Gary J. Kennedy, director of geriatric psychiatry at Montefiore Medical Center, called the study "impressive." He said one symptom of PTSD is avoiding activity, which could account for some of the effect on the heart.

Kennedy, who was not involved in the study, said treatment options for PTSD include drugs, talk therapy and behavioral changes, such as getting more exercise and taking action to solve small problems in life rather than shutting down emotionally.

"We've got a whole generation of veterans coming back (from Iraq and Afghanistan) and their health needs are just going to be tremendous," Kennedy said.

Activists

(Continued from Page 10) with international and national issues this year, BLSA — the largest student-run organization in the nation with 200 chapters — was facing the lowest number of African-American enrollment in law schools in almost 12 years, a 6.7 percent decrease since 1995, according to the American Bar Association.

"That's the lifeblood of our organization," said Sterling. "We hit the ground running, actively recruiting students."

He said while focusing on outside issues and the rigor of law school, BLSA began

conducting free college law camps to help increase scores on the Law Student Aptitude Test and allowing undergraduate students to join BLSA for free.

The challenge of getting students involved in civic activism is especially great for leaders of Black organizations on majority White campuses.

For Calina Byrd at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis., the challenge has been just strengthening the Black Student Union she leads while trying to serve the community. The private campus of 2,300 students has

only about 100 Black students, 30 of them are active in the BSU.

"There's, like, one minority in every class here," she says. "So, we've been working on campus first to get that together, trying to see where we can make the biggest impact."

She said to help strengthen the BSU, students have also formed an NAACP chapter.

Life is much easier at historically Black colleges, says Lakeshia Myers, a graduate of Alcorn University in Lorman, Miss. "Students were more active," said

Myers, now a graduate student at predominantly White Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee. "I have to deal with more of the opposing viewpoints."

Sterling, the Texas Southern University, law student, said: "We basically have a burden. We have a debt that we owe to go back and fight because people have fought for us to have these opportunities to attend law schools and work for these firms and make a lot of money and do all these things. Well, we owe them. The best way to pay them back is to be involved in our communities."

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