

2013 AHS-2 Research Frontiers

Dear AHS-2 Participant!

To keep track of a “family” of 96,000 individuals is not easy, yet that is what we need to do in a study such as AHS-2. Interesting results have already been published, and more will follow this year.

This short letter will give you a very brief overview.

Your continued participation is absolutely essential if the study is to live up to its potential. All that means is that you need to complete the short questionnaire that arrives every 2 years. Half of you have already received it earlier this year, the other will receive it later this year.

Help us
Fill in the
Missing
Pieces!



Gary E. Fraser, MD, PhD
Director, Adventist Health Study

Important Questions Perhaps Only AHS-2 can Answer

Based on both our research and that of others, it is becoming increasingly clear that a diet that contains mainly fruit, vegetables, legumes, and nuts and a minimal amount of processed foods, is very healthy. There are questions of whether small amounts of dairy may be beneficial or conversely increase risk, or what level of adverse effects small amounts of added meat may have, whether fish or poultry affect risk one way or the other. These are all important questions that of all the studies, possibly only AHS-2 can answer.

Adventist Experience Sure to be Illuminating

Of course, these answers may differ depending on whether we are thinking of particular cancers, heart disease, or risk of dying from any cause. Other diets, such as the Mediterranean diet, have many similarities to some forms of a vegetarian diet. The Mediterranean diet is definitely healthier than the typical Western diets, but can we do even better? Even aside from health, there are the very adverse environmental consequences of meat production. There is also the ethical issue of animal cruelty to consider. The Adventist experience is sure to be illuminating.

Your continued participation is absolutely essential if the study is to live up to its potential.

Please continue to help us fill in many pieces of the puzzle!

You asked . . .

► **Q:** “I already filled out my questionnaire and mailed it back. How come you sent me another one?”

► **A:** The main reason is that, to save money, our questionnaires are being mailed by a commercial mailing house.

We create the address list and forward it to them, but then it takes 2 to 3 weeks to print and assemble the envelopes and questionnaires, making sure they match. The actual mailing by the USPS takes another couple of weeks, so we sometimes have an overlap of as much as a month. In the meantime, some of your questionnaires are coming in, but it is too late to stop the second mailing.

For our Canadian participants, the overlap is even longer, since the questionnaires are returned to a Canadian post box. There they get picked up and boxed and sent to us via FedEx, adding a few more days to the process.

To avoid this problem, we would suggest that you complete and return the questionnaire within one or two weeks.

However, sometimes it does happen that a questionnaire gets lost in the mail, so filling it out a second time will be very valuable to us.

We apologize if this causes you any inconvenience. If we can come up with a more efficient method, we will certainly implement it.

► **Q:** My aunt passed away 2 years ago. How come you keep sending her questionnaires?

► **A:** When dealing with the loss of a loved one, people often don't think about notifying the AHS-2 office. So, the only way we will find out is by linking our data with that of the National Death Index. Even though we do this every year, there is a lag of 2 years in the data available. Thus, if someone died in 2011, we won't find out until perhaps mid-2013.

Again, a big THANK YOU to all.

Hanni Bennett
Adventist Health Study

Did you know you are impacting research nationwide?

When you update researchers at the Adventist Health Study-2 about your health status and diet, you probably feel good; after all, you are one of 96,000 people driving nutrition research and progress and helping to determine the links between eating, health and disease.



How You are Helping to Beat Cancer—Globally

Claire St. John
Karen Jaceldo-Siegl, DrPH
Adventist Health Study

Researchers at Loma Linda have spent a lot of time tackling the No. 1 killer of Americans—heart disease. Now, they're turning their attention to the second leading cause of death in the United States—cancer. To effectively track the development of cancer and understand how lifestyle and diet are connected, the AHS-2 must link to cancer registries. But because the 96,000 AHS-2 participants are spread across the United States and into Canada, researchers have to link up with more than 50 cancer registries, all with different rules and requirements.

A small number of previous studies have attempted to connect their data on such a grand scale. Other studies have linked up with only two or three different cancer registries because the process is so difficult, but AHS-2 wants to see the complete picture.

We have now obtained agreements with 48 registries and have linked data with most of them. This year, we plan to intensify this effort and link with all registries. Thus, by the end of the year, we expect to have a large enough data base that will finally enable us to look into possible links between diet, lifestyle and cancer.

Researchers Around the World Joining with AHS-2

Because this process is extremely time-consuming and costly, other researchers are taking notice. Other long-term studies around the United States are joining AHS-2 in an attempt to streamline the process of linking cancer registries to data. Future plans envision being able to have researchers learn more quickly about the work of other scientists and benefit more quickly from research results of other groups. Clearly, the most important goal of all research, no matter where it is being conducted, is to answer big questions such as: “How do we prevent cancer from occurring in the first place?”

You are making a difference—globally

The next time you're filling out an update survey or talking on the phone with an AHS-2 researcher, go ahead and allow yourself a little pride at the fact that you're not only contributing to the important research underway at Loma Linda University. You're also having an impact on how researchers are answering questions nationally and internationally.

Remember, it could not happen without you.



On the Scientific Cutting Edge of Research on Health and Wellness

You are part of a unique group

For over a hundred years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged its members to adopt a lifestyle emphasizing health and wholeness of mind and body.

Adventists have been traditionally encouraged to eat a plant-based and thus meat-free diet, and make sure there was time for exercise and reflection. In other words, they generally treated their bodies like temples. Now, the rest of the world is taking notice. That is largely thanks to the Adventist Health Study, which has been tracking the behavior of Adventist members for more than 50 years.

Health pioneers

The first large-scale study of Adventists began in 1958 at Loma Linda University when nearly 23,000 California Adventists filled out a record of their eating patterns and health histories. Five years later, they answered questions about their current health status and diets, and 25 years after that, they were interviewed again.

The results were surprising to the scientific community, but less so for those participating in the study—they ate well to live well, and it wasn't news that it helped them live longer.

The study found that Adventists were less likely to die from a number of different cancers, less likely to die from coronary heart disease and less likely to die from all causes of death than the general population.

Adventists, it turns out, make a great group for a diet study: very few drink or smoke, but diets are more varied than the general population, ranging from strict vegetarianism to the common American diet.

Interestingly, the 1958 study—called the Adventist Mortality Study—found that even after habits like smoking or drinking were accounted for, Adventists still seemed to have a health edge over the general population.

How to enhance quality of life through food

Now, the Adventist Health Study turns its attention to applying its findings to a larger population.

With a grant from the National Institutes of Health, researchers at Loma Linda University have tripled their study population, reaching Adventists from all 50 states and parts of Canada. Nearly 100,000 Adventists are enrolled in the Adventist Health Study-2, which has set itself a goal of unraveling which particular foods and nutrients in the diet have a role in disease, particularly cancer and heart disease. So far, the research findings have garnered the interest of the World Cancer Research Fund, the USDA and the National Cancer Institute, which have all approved large grants for the study to continue.

By harnessing the many different diets of Adventists, from those who eat no animal products to those who include dairy or eggs or fish or meat, AHS-2 hopes to tease out the foods and nutrients most associated with disease and those most often found in the diets of long-term healthy people.

The study is expected to continue for two decades, with new results coming out frequently. Already, the study has found that those who eat a vegetarian diet are less likely to be obese or to develop metabolic syndrome, a risk factor for diabetes, heart disease and stroke and be less likely to die early or develop certain cancers. More details will follow during this year.

The study will search for answers to questions such as: Do soy products really prevent breast and prostate cancer? What foods help prevent cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis? Does faith contribute to a healthier life?

Faith and community

To answer that last question, researchers launched the Biopsychosocial Religion and Health Study in 2006, following a group of 11,000 Adventists who are also enrolled in AHS-2. Many studies have shown that those who attend church regularly live a longer life. But what aspects of religion account for worse or better health or is it mainly that religious people tend to adopt a variety of behaviors which result in living more healthy lives? The study is tracking some of the biopsychosocial pathways to health, with researchers who specialize in public health, psychology, medicine and religion.

Into the future

The Adventist Health Study makes it clear that a number of Adventist lifestyle choices impacts longevity and health. The AHS-2 will continue to investigate the individual elements of that lifestyle in an effort to reinforce behavior within our own community and bring important findings to the larger community. As in the past, those findings have the potential to have a significant impact on the health of the nation, and the world.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Ft Worth TX
Permit No. 3310

Address Correction : Please correct any mistakes or changes in your name and address and return this complete panel to Adventist Health Study-2.



Please PRINT clearly

FIRST NAME			MIDDLE INITIAL			LAST NAME		
STREET			APT#					
CITY		STATE		COUNTRY		ZIP/POSTAL CODE		
EMAIL ADDRESS				TELEPHONE				

Adventist Health Study-2: On the Web

► Keep Informed and Keep In Touch

The Adventist Health Study-2 web site is your 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year open door to what is going on at AHS-2.

If you go to www.llu.edu/llu/health, you will be connected to all of the latest information about what is happening now at AHS-2 and what is being planned for the future.

Some questions often come up. Here are answers to some of them:

► I want to locate easy-to-read summaries of some of the most important findings of AHS-2 researchers. Where can I go?

In the far left hand column of the AHS home page, click on "Findings for AHS-2." On the page that comes up, there are links to results dealing with a number of topics including "Lifestyle, Diet and Disease" and "Vegetarians and Vitamin D."

► I want to give a presentation in my church, community organization or service club reporting on the findings of the AHS. Where can I obtain materials for such a presentation?

In the far left hand column of the AHS home page, click on "Fact Sheets." You will be taken to a page that lists fact

sheets that contain an overview of the results of all five of the past and current AHS studies, a summary of cancer findings from AHS-1, and a presentation of information on the mental and physical quality of life of AHS-2 participants compared to national statistics.

► **How can I locate a list of the peer-reviewed scientific papers which have been published in the professional literature by AHS researchers?** In the far left hand column of the AHS home page, click on "Scientific Publications." You will be taken to a section which contains a listing of 342 scientific articles and abstracts published by AHS researchers to date which have been indexed in PubMed. PubMed is the database of references and abstracts in the life sciences and on biomedical topics maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine of the NIH. In addition, there is also a listing of references to 74 other publications by AHS researchers not indexed on PubMed.

► **We have changed our contact information. Where can we provide that information to AHS?** In the far left hand column, click on "Contact," and the mailing address, email address, and toll-free telephone number of AHS-2 are listed.

We again wish to thank you for your continued participation. Without you, the discoveries that AHS-2 researchers are making would be impossible.