



HEALTH

Meditation benefits patients with heart disease

Blood pressure, insulin resistance improved, even without weight loss

(June 13, 2006) In a study of adults with coronary heart disease who were stable and were receiving optimal medical care, 16 weeks of transcendental meditation not only led to significant reductions in blood pressure, but also improved heart rate variability and insulin resistance, which is associated with an increase risk of diabetes.

These beneficial health effects were achieved without changes in body weight, medication or psychosocial variables, investigators report in the American Medical Association's Archives of Internal Medicine.

"This study, using a rigorous study design with NIH funding, demonstrates incremental benefit of TM to standard good medical care in CHD patients," study investigator Dr. C. Noel Bairey Merz from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California, told Reuters.

"CHD patients who want to 'do it all' for optimal risk reduction should consider learning and practicing TM," Merz recommended.

TM has previously been shown to lower blood pressure, but its effect on other risk factors associated with CHD has not been thoroughly studied, according to the team.

Their study included 53 adults with stable CHD who were instructed in TM, while 51 similar patients, serving as a comparison group or "control" group, received standard health education. A total of 84 patients (82 percent) complete the study. Among the 19 dropouts, 12 were in the control arm; 15 dropped out before starting either intervention owing to lack of interest in their group assignment.

At the end of the 16 weeks, patients in the TM group had lower blood pressure compared with the control group, as well as greater improvements in blood glucose and insulin levels, indicating a reduction of insulin resistance. Patients who practiced TM also had more stable heart rate variability.

"These results suggest that TM may modulate the physiological response to stress and improve CHD risk factors, which may be a novel therapeutic target for the treatment of CHD," Merz and colleagues conclude. --Reuters