Thanks to the dedicated participation of you, our participants, for the past half century the Framingham Heart Study has pioneered in the discovery of risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Findings from Framingham about the adverse health effects of high blood pressure, smoking, high cholesterol and other conditions continue to change the way medicine is practiced. “Knowledge gained from the Framingham Heart Study has contributed to dramatic declines in deaths from heart disease and stroke over the past 30 years. Deaths from heart disease have declined by more than 50 percent and those from stroke by more than 60 percent,” according to Dr. Claude Lenfant, Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Dr. Aram Chobanian, Dean of the Boston University School of Medicine, agrees. He stated “Framingham researchers have helped change people’s basic habits and, in doing so, have improved the health and well-being of countless lives.” But these are complicated diseases and many questions remained unanswered.

Now the Study is about to enter a new phase: the enrollment of a third generation of participants, the grandchildren of our original cohort of 5,209 men and women who were examined in the 1940s and 1950s. Dr. Thomas H. Stamler, the Framingham Heart Study’s Principal Investigator said, “This will be one of the most important phases of the Framingham Heart Study, as we use the information we learn about heart disease in children and their parents and grandparents to help prevent heart disease in their future generations.” According to Dr. Stamler, “We are preparing to examine how cardiovascular conditions are related in children, parents and grandparents from hundreds of families.

The first phase of the Third Generation Study will last approximately three years during which time participants will visit the clinic for a half-day of examinations, just as they did in the past. And like their parents and grandparents, all participants will be examined for diabetes, hypertension, and other important diseases,” according to Dr. Philip A. Wolf, Boston University’s Principal Investigator for the Study.

When Dr. Dawber and other founders of the Framingham Heart Study recruited Framingham residents in 1948, they had the foresight to envision that heart diseases might cluster in families. Indeed, Framingham researchers subsequently discovered that a reported “family history” of heart disease does predict future risk for heart disease. With enrollment of a third generation, the FHS researchers will be able to examine how cardiovascular conditions are related in children, parents and grandparents from hundreds of families.

The willingness of the third generation to follow in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents will ensure that people all over the world will continue to benefit from future discoveries made in Framingham.

Daniel Levy, M.D.
Director, Framingham Heart Study

Framingham Heart Study to Enter New Phase

THOSE WE LOST ON SEPTEMBER 11
Samuel Seltzer proudly held the distinction of being the oldest surviving member of the original cohort of the Framingham Heart Study until he died suddenly in West Palm Beach, Florida, on December 29, 2000, at the age of 105. His daughter and son-in-law Millie and Phil Raddler tell us that he enjoyed relatively good health, lived alone and was active and alert until his death. He voted in the recent presidential election as a citizen of Palm Beach County and emphatically stated that he had absolutely no problem with “that ballot”. We extend our condolences to Sam’s family, as well as our great appreciation for his dedication and loyalty as a Framingham Heart Study participant for over 51 years.

Mona Waller, a member of the original cohort of the Framingham Heart Study, on the death of her daughter, Meta Waller on September 11, 2001. Meta, an offspring participant in the Heart Study, was Special Programs Manager for the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army at the Pentagon where she worked for 12 years. She was at her desk when the hijacked airliner crashed into the Pentagon.

Paige Hackel, on her way to California, lost her life on American Airlines Flight 11. Paige had eagerly anticipated becoming a member of the third generation of the Framingham Heart Study. We join her mother, Marjorie Farley and her husband Allen Hackel in mourning her most untimely death.

Marian Bellwood, Offspring Participant Coordinator, will be contacting offspring participants about several ancillary studies, which have been approved by the Framingham Heart Study Executive Committee.

Maureen Valentino is the participant coordinator for the third generation. Each member of the third generation will receive an enrollment form some time between January 2002 and December 2004. After receipt of the completed form Ms. Valentino or a member of her staff will contact the participant. Ms. Valentino can be reached at 800-854-7582 x417 or 508-935-347 with any questions.

WE SHALL ALWAYS REMEMBER ...
Samuel Seltzer

Published by the Friends of the Framingham Heart Study in collaboration with Boston University • The Framingham Heart Study is funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
Brain Donation Program

The Framingham Study has been conducting research on neurological disorders for several decades. In 1984, we began a postmortem brain tissue donation program. Over 370 subjects have enrolled so far. Analyzing postmortem brain tissue may confirm a previous diagnosis of stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease or other rare neurological illness, provide a diagnosis that was earlier unclear, or discover an unexpected problem. It can also document the extent of a disease. Having a definite diagnosis may benefit the donor’s family, by giving them a better idea of their genetic risks.

Brain donations from mentally healthy individuals are useful to compare with individuals known to have neurological disorders. In this way, we continue to learn why some people remain mentally competent and physically healthy throughout their lives, while others develop strokes or become demented. Many of our participants, by nature altruistic, have expressed a desire to be organ donors. Just as a donation of a kidney or heart gives an individual recipient a second chance at a healthy life, a brain donation to research increases the chance of a healthy old age for the next generation.

We at the Framingham Study are particularly interested in exploring the environmental and genetic links to neurological diseases. Because our original members and many of their children and other family members have been coming to the Heart Study for so many years, we have a wealth of data on physical and neurological conditions, life styles and changes which have occurred over time. Many subjects have also had MRIs and neurological testing. By relating this clinical information to neuropathological findings, we have a unique opportunity to study risk factors for disease. That is why the Framingham Brain Donation Program is open only to the members of the Framingham Heart Study.

Although we started the program only four years ago, the Brain Donation Program has already contributed significant information on the aging process, and we reported preliminary findings at the American Academy of Neurology in California last year.

Brain Donation Program, please call Linda Clark at 1-800-248-0409 or 508-935-3426.

As this newsletter goes to press, we have five members who are over 100 years of age. Our “senior” senior is Anna Skinner, who will turn 104 at the end of January. Mrs. Skinner, who enrolled beginning in 1948, is still alive and most are still active members of our Study. Many still come to the clinic for their regular exams and others have home visits or nursing home visits. During this exam cycle our 26th 3 three members of the clinic staff, Suzanne McRae, Bernadette Shaw and Tricia Kelly visited participants in Florida. For members who live far away and cannot come to Framingham or we cannot visit, we keep in touch by telephone or in writing, either with them or their family members.

The Original Cohort

We are delighted to report that of the 5,209 original members of the Framingham Heart Study who enrolled beginning in 1948, 722 are still alive and most are still active members of our Study. Many still come to the clinic for their regular exams and others have home visits or nursing home visits. During this exam cycle our 26th 3 three members of the clinic staff, Suzanne McRae, Bernadette Shaw and Tricia Kelly visited participants in Florida. For members who live far away and cannot come to Framingham or we cannot visit, we keep in touch by telephone or in writing, either with them or their family members.

State of the Art Heart Imaging Tests Planned for Third Generation and Offspring Studies

For more than 50 years, Framingham Heart Study research has focused on risk factors for heart attacks and coronary disease, but until now there have been no tests that directly visualize the disease in the coronary arteries before the heart attack occurs. “For the first time in the history of the Heart Study,” notes senior Framingham scientist Dr. Christopher O’Donnell, “we are able to detect atherosclerosis in otherwise healthy men and women by measuring the calcium deposited in their coronary arteries using heart CT (computed tomography) scans.”

From the first set of heart CT scans completed in 327 FHS volunteers, researchers have made several interesting observations, including the finding that high cholesterol and cigarette smoking measured when participants were younger predicted the presence of coronary artery disease 25 years later. Calcium deposits in major arteries such as coronary arteries are related to risk for heart attacks. Studies of CT scanning in FHS will help determine whether the extent of calcium deposited in arteries can be considered a risk factor useful for predicting possible future heart attacks.

In a related study involving the same volunteers, another new test called calcium magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was performed to detect heart abnormalities and disease in the major artery (the aorta) of the body. Using this test, atherosclerotic deposits are directly visualized in lifetime pictures.

In the next several years, many Offspring and Third Generation participants in the Framingham Heart Study will be invited to undergo a heart CT scan test. Offspring participants may also be invited to undergo a heart MRI test. These tests are extremely simple, requiring the participant merely to lie flat during the test. The tests offer the unique opportunity to drug centers and will be arranged at the convenience of the participant.

At the Framingham Heart Study we will help determine who will benefit from these new sensitive tests in clinical practice. Calcium deposits tend to run in families. Therefore, FHS research based on these tests may also identify genes that lead to coronary artery disease and other forms of heart disease. The scans will be coordinated by the Framingham Heart Study and by the Family Heart Study.

More information can be obtained by calling Marian Bellwood at 800-854-7582 or Emily Mandeles at 800-446-488.

The Brain Donation Program has already contributed significant information on the aging process, and we reported preliminary findings at the American Academy of Neurology in California last year.

As always, your participation is greatly appreciated, and whether you believe you have arthritis or not, the information you provide will help us better understand who gets this disease and why. We look forward to seeing you again!