The Framingham Heart Beat

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt, United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Thanks Participants of Framingham Heart Study

On November 29, 2007, the Honorable Michael O. Leavitt, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, (HHS), came to Framingham to express the nation’s appreciation to participants of the Framingham Heart Study (FHS). Their many years of dedication has made possible the SHARE (SNP Health Association Research) project, the phase of scientific research previously described in the Winter 2007 newsletter. The SHARE project was launched on October 1, 2007. FHS genomic data have been organized and are being distributed to researchers worldwide by the National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute, Boston University, and the National Library of Medicine. With the approval of both a SHARE Data Access Committee as well as the institutional review boards of their local universities and medical centers, researchers are beginning to access and analyze the data. The goal is to find patterns within the extensive FHS three-generational data sets that will lead to improved health and disease prevention.

The event on November 29th celebrated the upcoming 60th anniversary of the Framingham Heart Study and included as guests Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Elizabeth Nabel, Director of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, Dr. Robert Brown, President of Boston University, Dr. Karen Atteman, Dean of Boston University School of Medicine, Dr. Daniel Levy, Director of the Framingham Heart Study, and Dr. Philip Wolf, Principal Investigator of the Framingham Heart Study, as well as several local and state public officials. Every participant of the Heart Study was invited to attend this event. Below are excerpts of the remarks by Michael Leavitt.

“...I asked Dr. Zerhouni and Dr. Nabel for this opportunity to come and talk with you because there are so many things to acknowledge and be thankful for here, as this Study begins its 60th year. ... This is the Study that first pointed us toward the risk factors for cardiovascular disease that are so familiar to us all today. For a health care researcher, the Framingham data looks like 24-carat gold. The reliability and the depth that researchers see in this data comes from your consistency and openness over more than half a century. Here today in Framingham — I am honored to have the opportunity today to say “thank you” to all those who take part in medical research everywhere. ... There’s another reason to recognize the participants in the Framingham Heart Study at this point in time — and that’s your willingness to take a new leap into the future. I believe you’re on the cusp of giving much more. I’m talking about Project SHARE. And if this new research succeeds as we expect it to, it will help us achieve a new level of effectiveness in medical care. I call the goal “Personalized Health Care,” and it means making health care much more individualized and precise for every patient. Personalized Health Care depends on learning much more about the genetic basis of our health.”

One of the fundamental building blocks for achieving Personalized Health Care is the kind of information that can be gathered from existing studies. In Project SHARE, you’ve agreed to provide access to genetic data that has been collected as part of the Framingham Study. In Project SHARE, some of the best clinical data available to us has been collected over three generations — and you are sharing that data with researchers. Large samples will be a key to “personalizing” our findings.

In all of this, Framingham is a leader. We’ll need new analytical tools and new structures to understand the large amount of patient data that will become available. This Study will have new lessons to teach us and new insights to help our patients. Personalized Health Care can help us know our individual vulnerabilities. It can make health care more preventive. It can help us spot the onset of disease at a much earlier stage. And it can help us prescribe new therapies that are much more targeted and more effective.

Today, our medical knowledge is tied to our anatomy. We talk about lung cancer and heart disease. But in the future, we’ll be talking about diseases at a much different level. We’ll be talking about molecular-based diseases. That will give us all kinds of new treatments that are effective for very specific conditions in individual patients. Personalized Health Care can help us know our individual vulnerabilities. It can make health care more preventive. It can help us spot the onset of disease at a much earlier stage. And it can help us prescribe new therapies that are much more targeted and more effective.

The Recruitment staff (Participant Coordinators) schedule Framingham Heart Study visits when a new examination cycle begins. The Coordinators track name and address changes, contact information, and reported medical events to keep data current. The Coordinators are the advocates for our participants, keeping the lines of communication open at all times while staying within the guidelines of the Study requirements.

If you live out of town and are planning to visit the Framingham area soon, please call Maureen at 1-800-536-4143 so she can arrange a clinic appointment for you at a convenient time.

We have successfully completed Omni Gen 1 Exam 3 and would like to thank all of our participants who took part. We are preparing for Exam 2 of Omni Gen 2 participants, which will begin in the near future.

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Third Generation Exam 2 and New Offspring Spouse Exam 2

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TO CONTACT US:

We maintain several local and toll free numbers for our participants to reach us here at the Framingham Heart Study.

Receptionist: 508-872-6562 or 800-854-7582.
Linda Clark: Original Cohort Coordinator, Framingham Heart Study.
Maureen Valentinio: Offspring, New Offspring Spouse and Second Generation Coordinator. 508-935-3471 or 508-536-4134, maureen@bu.edu.

Brain Tissue Donation Program:
Paulina Drummond:  Omni Coordinator: 508-935-3417 or 800-536-4143. maureenv@bu.edu.
Marian Bellwood: Participant Coordinator and Recruitment Supervisor: 508-935-3429 or 800-451-0260. bellwood@bu.edu.

If you leave a voicemail message, please include a good time for us to return your call.
Please call or write us if you have a new street address, telephone number (home, work, or cell) or email address. Thank you!

MAJOR STUDIES AND FINDINGS

At the 50th birthday celebration of the Framingham Heart Study, the following achievements were highlighted:

**CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE**

- The Framingham Heart Study is a landmark longitudinal study that has contributed significantly to our understanding of cardiovascular disease prevention and management.
- The study has produced thousands of scientific publications, many of which have helped to shape current guidelines for the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease.
- The Framingham Heart Study has demonstrated the importance of lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, and smoking in the development of cardiovascular disease.
- The study has also provided evidence for the role of genetic factors in the development of cardiovascular disease.

**OSTEOPOROSIS RESEARCH**

- The Framingham Heart Study is also recognized for its contributions to the study of osteoporosis, a disease that affects millions of people worldwide.
- The study has conducted extensive research on the risk factors for osteoporosis, including age, sex, and hormone levels.
- The Framingham Heart Study has also evaluated the effectiveness of osteoporosis treatments, including bone density testing and medication therapy.

**GENETIC FINDINGS**

- The Framingham Heart Study has conducted extensive genetic research, including studies of the association between genetic markers and cardiovascular disease.
- The study has also conducted genetic epidemiology studies, which have provided insight into the role of genetic factors in the development of cardiovascular disease.

FRAMINGHAM, THE TOWN THAT CHANGED AMERICA’S HEART

It’s been said that the Framingham Heart Study put the town of Framingham on the world map. In keeping with this sentiment, ten years ago, at the time of the Framingham Heart Study’s 50th anniversary, the phrase “Framingham, the town that changed America’s heart” was created. As returning the form when it is mailed to you or by calling an FHS participant coordinator when you receive the form to provide this information by phone. Thank you! ♥

Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by low bone density and an increased risk of fractures, leading to significant health problems and reduced quality of life.

The Framingham Heart Study has conducted extensive research on the risk factors for osteoporosis, including age, sex, and hormone levels. This research has helped to identify individuals who are at increased risk of osteoporosis and has led to the development of effective screening and prevention strategies.

The study has also evaluated the effectiveness of osteoporosis treatments, including bone density testing and medication therapy. This research has helped to guide the development of evidence-based guidelines for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis.

The Framingham Heart Study has made significant contributions to the field of osteoporosis research, providing important insights into the underlying causes and mechanisms of the disease.

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN MEDICAL RESEARCH**

- I feel that it would be interesting to discover how much of a person’s chance of getting heart disease depends on genetics and how much it depends on environment. I think that my data could help in determining the answer to this question and continuing the understanding of a human’s most vital organ, the heart. ♥

- I feel like our family is very special because of the Framingham Heart Study. Not everyone has the opportunity to make a difference in the world in the way that participating in a multigenerational medical research study does.

- It is very satisfying to know that people are healthier and live longer than they would have otherwise due to the advances in medical research and that my family was able to be part of a study which helped society in such a great way.

- Not only has the Framingham Heart Study made a difference in the health of other people, it has also positively affected my family and our lives. We personally are healthier than we might have been due to this study...

- Last year Aliza Becker received the Dawber Memorial Scholarship. Portions of her deserving essay follow.

- The Framingham Heart Study participants who will be graduating in the spring of 2008 and their family members will begin in 2008. This will mark 60 years of participation for these participants. To learn more about the Brain Tissue Donation Program, please contact Linda Clark, Research Coordinator, at 1-800-248-0499 or 508-935-3429, or email her at lindac@bu.edu.

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- A team of Framingham investigators recently published a series of 17 linked papers that summarize a wide variety of genetic findings in our

- The Framingham Heart Study Brain Tissue Donation Program continues to contribute significant information on the aging process. We have analyzed brain tissue from 171 participants from 19 states, and currently almost 500 Study members are enrolled.

- Neuropathology analysis may provide confirmation of stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s or other neurological illnesses. We are particularly interested in identifying environmental and genetic links to neurological diseases, and neuropathology analysis could provide a clearer picture of genetic risk. The donor’s family receives a detailed report documenting our findings.

- We recently published a new finding that indicates of preclinical Alzheimer’s disease seem to be found in the posterior regions of the brain, located near the back of the head. Prior research had hypothesized that the earliest stages of Alzheimer’s disease occur in the temporal lobe. Identifying the earliest markers of Alzheimer’s disease is especially important because that is when treatment is most effective, and even when prevention may be possible.

- To learn more about the Brain Tissue Donation Program, please contact Linda Clark, Research Coordinator, at 1-800-248-0499 or 508-935-3429, or email her at lindac@bu.edu.

- Framingham Genetic Research Achievements

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- The 30th exam cycle for the Framingham Heart Study’s Original Cohort will begin in 2008. This will mark 60 years of participation for these dedicated men and women. Our original members had their first exams between 1948 and 1951 and have continued to have exams approximately every two years.

- We see many of our participants here in the clinic. We also see many at their homes or in nursing homes if it is more convenient for them. For participants who live too far away for us to visit, we keep in touch by telephone, doing health updates and keeping track of medical events that occur.

- Our Original Cohort’s long commitment to the work of the Framingham Heart Study is extremely gratifying. Their enthusiasm and dedication have influenced their children and grandchildren to participate as well, and we cannot thank them enough.

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We recently published a new finding that indicates preclinical Alzheimer’s disease is more frequent than previously thought. Using new imaging and computer analysis, we found that 14% of asymptomatic people had early signs of the disease. While this is a small number, it implies that if we can identify these early signs, we may be able to intervene to prevent disease.

To learn more about the Brain Tissue Donation Program, please contact Linda Clark, Research Coordinator, at 1-800-248-0499 or 508-935-3426, or email her at lindac@bu.edu. Remaining donations will be used to support scientific research.

FRAMINGHAM GENETIC RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS

A team of Framingham investigators recently published a series of 17 linked papers that summarize a wide variety of genetic findings in our study. The publications of the Framingham Heart Study cover genetic studies of heart disease and stroke, high blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity, diabetes, blood chemistry results, lung function, kidney disease, and many other medical conditions.
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We look forward to seeing you in clinic!

THE HONORABLE MICHAEL O. LEAVITT, UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, THANKS PARTICIPANTS OF FRAMINGHAM HEART STUDY

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“...I asked Dr. Zerhouni and Dr. Nabel for this opportunity to come and talk with you because there are so many things to acknowledge and be thankful for here, as this Study begins its 60th year. ... This is the Study that first pointed us toward the risk factors for cardiovascular disease that are so familiar to us all today.

For a health care researcher, the Framingham data looks like 24-carat gold. The reliability and the depth that researchers see in this data comes from its consistency and openness over more than half a century. Here today in Framingham — I am honored to have the opportunity today to say “thank you” to all those who take part in medical research everywhere. ...”

There’s another reason to recognize the participants in the Framingham Heart Study at this point in time — and that’s your willingness to take a new leap into the future. I believe you’re on the cusp of giving much more. I’m talking about Project SHARe. And if this new research succeeds as we expect it to, it will help us achieve a new level of effectiveness in medical care. I call the goal “Personalized Health Care,” and it means making health care much more individualized and precise for every patient. Personalized Health Care depends on learning much more about the genetic basis of our health.

Today, our medical knowledge is tied to our anatomy. We talk about lung cancer and heart disease. But in the future, we’ll be talking about diseases at a much different level. We’ll be talking about molecular-based diseases. That will give us all kinds of new treatments that are effective for very specific conditions in individual patients. Personalized Health Care can help us know our individual vulnerabilities. It can make health care more preventive. It can help us spot the onset of disease at a much earlier stage. And it can help us prescribe new therapies that are much more targeted and more effective.

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In all of this, Framingham is a leader. We’ll need new analytical tools and new structures to understand the large amount of patient data that will become available. This Study will have new lessons to teach us about aggregating and analyzing large amounts of patient data, getting sound results, and doing it securely.

If you have any questions about the SHARE project or any other aspect of participation in the Framingham Heart Study, please contact Maureen Valentino at 800-536-4143.

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