

UNC Alumni Heart Study NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends,

It has been a long time since we were last in touch. We started our last questionnaire, Q12, on March 6, 2008. It has been a time of economic uncertainty for many, and this includes the funding of our research. However, we have been fortunate in receiving ongoing support for the UNC Alumni Heart Study from a variety of sources. The Marchionne Foundation has supported our work on understanding patterns of marital status. The Demography & Economics of Aging Grant at UNC Chapel Hill, directed by Dr. Donna Gilleskie, has supported our work with a small grant entitled "Personality, Expectations and Decision Making". Additionally, Dr. David Rubin's grant from the National Institute of Mental Health has received an additional five years of funding and will provide a large portion of our UNCAHS budget. The data you provided in Questionnaire 12 on traumatic events was instrumental in achieving this and the majority of our next Questionnaire will be devoted to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The goal of our work on this study is to better understand how personality and timing of potentially traumatic life events relate to the development and maintenance of PTSD. Even if you did not do Q12, your PTSD data is still extremely valuable and we welcome your participation this year. It is very important that we maintain a high rate of response for this coming Questionnaire.

In the PTSD section of Q13, we will ask about three traumatic events and one positive event. Q13 also includes our usual questions on your health and disease status, as well as sections on close relationships, your assessment of your memory function today, and your experience in mastering health behaviors such as smoking and weight control. These questions will be important pilot data for the future funding of our study. A final section of Q13 asks about economic issues, as part of our new collaboration with Dr. Gilleskie of UNC-Chapel Hill. We are happy to welcome her to our team, and here is a short introduction from Dr. Gilleskie:

"Having joined the UNC-CH faculty in 1994, I am currently a full professor in the Department of Economics. A true Tarheel born and bred, I graduated from Carolina ('89) with a BA in Economics and Mathematics, before heading to Minnesota to complete a PhD in Economics. Being able to call Chapel Hill home again has been a true pleasure, and I am quite excited to become a part of the UNCAHS. And, yes, I was on Franklin Street on April 6, 2009, with my 11 year old son cheering on the 'Heels!"

"As a health economist, my research focuses on the health insurance and medical care utilization decisions of individuals and how these decisions impact health and employment issues, e.g. how does prescription drug coverage affect the dynamic medical care use and health outcomes of the elderly over time; to what extent would employment decisions be altered by the introduction of mandatory retiree health insurance coverage by employers;

and should policies to promote better health target lifestyles or medical care use? Economists think about individual behavior a bit differently from the way psychologists do."

Our last three Questionnaires have been available in an online format, however we will not be able to offer Q13 in a web-based version initially. While we hope to be able to at a later date, at this point we will be mailing a printed version to all study members. At 22 pages, the online form is unwieldy and logistically difficult. As a printed Questionnaire, it flows along well and completion time is much shorter. We regret any inconvenience this may cause. The Questionnaire packets should reach study members in about 4-6 weeks. If you have any changes to the address we have for you, please call or email and we will update our records before sending out the packets.

My personal thanks to all of you. I always enjoy talking with people who call, as well as meeting people at weddings, dinner parties and events in Chapel Hill, at National meetings and also when folks come to the lab to visit. Please feel free to email me Ilene.siegler@duke.edu with any comments or questions. Because we are serious about confidentiality, I do not know who is in the Study, but I am delighted when you introduce yourselves to me.

Sincerely,



Ilene C. Siegler, for the faculty and staff of the UNC Alumni Heart Study



The UNC Alumni Heart Study

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