



[National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute \(NHLBI\)](#)

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## **NIH Funds Largest Long-term Study of Health and Disease in Hispanic/Latino Populations**

### *Hispanic Community Health Study to Begin in Four Cities*

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and six other components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) today announced contracts totaling \$61 million over 6 ½ years to conduct the largest long-term epidemiological study of health and disease in Latin American populations living in the United States.

As many as 16,000 participants of Hispanic/Latino origin — 4,000 at each of four sites — will undergo a series of physical examinations and interviews to help identify the prevalence of and risk factors for a wide variety of diseases, disorders, and conditions. Participants in the Hispanic Community Health Study will range in age from 18 to 74 years and will be followed over time for occurrence of disease. The study will also determine the role of cultural adaptation and disparities in the prevalence and development of disease. In line with the recommendations of a 2003 NHLBI report on epidemiological research in Hispanic populations, the study will recruit persons who identify themselves as Hispanics or Latinos, but will emphasize Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and Central/South Americans.

“The Hispanic population is the largest minority population in the United States, and it is expected to triple in growth by 2050. As this population continues to increase — and to experience varying rates of disease — it is vitally important to understand the risk factors and health behaviors that contribute to these diseases. The knowledge gained from this study will benefit not only Hispanic populations but will also enhance understanding of health and disease in other ethnic groups,” said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D.

The Hispanic Community Health Study is broad-based, addressing a wide variety of conditions, including heart disease, stroke, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, sleep disorders, dental disease, hearing impairment and tinnitus, diabetes, kidney and liver disease, and cognitive impairment.

The study will assess such risk factors as diet, physical activity, obesity, smoking, blood pressure, blood lipids, acculturation, social and economic disparity, psychosocial factors, occupation, health care access, the environment, and medication and supplement use.

“Like the landmark Framingham Heart Study which helped us understand the origins of heart disease and its risk factors and the Jackson Heart Study which is looking at heart disease in African Americans, the Hispanic Community Health Study also promises to make a tremendous contribution to the nation’s public health,” said NHLBI Director Elizabeth G. Nabel, M.D.

“There are many questions to answer,” said Nabel. “Why are Hispanics experiencing increased rates of obesity and diabetes and yet have fewer deaths from heart disease than non-Hispanics? Why is asthma more common in certain Hispanic groups? Only a long-term epidemiological investigation can answer questions like these and apply what is learned to prevent disease.”

In addition to NHLBI, which is the primary funding agency, the following NIH components will provide additional funds: the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities; the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders; the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke; and the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements.

“Since the risk of disease in a population can be influenced by different cultural and genetic backgrounds, it was important to have the study include population groups from several geographic areas and countries of origin and with residence in the U.S. for varying lengths of time,” said project officer Paul Sorlie, Ph.D., chief of NHLBI’s Epidemiology Branch.

The four field study sites awarded contracts are:

- Bronx, NY (Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, Sylvia Wassertheil-Smoller, Ph.D., Principal Investigator)
- Chicago, IL (Northwestern University, Martha Daviglus, M.D., Ph.D., Principal Investigator)
- Miami, FL (University of Miami, Neil Schneiderman, Ph.D., Principal Investigator)
- San Diego, CA (San Diego State University, Greg Talavera, M.D. M.P.H., Principal Investigator)

NHLBI awarded the contract for the study’s data coordinating center to the University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill (Lloyd E. Chambless, Ph.D., Principal Investigator).

According to the study’s deputy project officer, Larissa Avilés-Santa, M.D. of NHLBI’s Epidemiology Branch, there’s a good chance that, like other immigrant groups, as immigrant Hispanic populations adapt to the lifestyle and culture of the U.S., they will increase their risk of developing some chronic diseases. “We want to identify the changes in risk associated with immigration and acculturation to living in this country,” she said. “Then we will identify changes most strongly related to disease risk, and figure out how best to prevent those which are most harmful to health.”

To interview Dr. Sorlie, Dr. Aviles-Santa, or Deputy Project Officer Phyliss Sholinsky of NHLBI, contact the NHLBI Communications Office at 301-496-4236. To interview Dr. Daviglus, call Charles R. Loebbaka at Northwestern at 847-491-4887; to interview Dr. Schneiderman, call Annie Reisewitz at University of Miami Communications, 305-284-1601; to interview Dr. Wassertheil-Smoller, call Abe Habenstreit or Sheila Millen at Albert Einstein at 718-430-3601; to interview Dr. Talavera, contact Lorena Nava at San Diego State University at 619-594-3952; to interview Dr. Chambless, call Ramona DuBose at UNC School of Public Health, at 919-966-7467.

*Part of the National Institutes of Health, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) plans, conducts, and supports research related to the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart, blood vessel, lung, and blood diseases; and sleep disorders. The Institute also administers national health education campaigns on women and heart disease, healthy weight for children, and other topics. NHLBI press releases and other materials are available online at: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov).*

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