

STRESS & HEALTH STUDY NEWSLETTER

April/99

HISTORY



The Stress & Health Study

Set up in 1985, the Stress & Health study is investigating the effect on health of stresses and strains at work, at home and in the social environment. The idea came from a study in the 1960's which involved 18,403 civil servants, all men, known as the Whitehall study. Because of its association with this prestigious study and as you were all civil servants when you joined us, Stress & Health is known in medical and scientific circles as the Whitehall II study. Unlike the earlier study, Stress & Health includes women as well as men and is collecting information on a regular basis to enable us to answer more complex questions on health.



UPDATE

The Whitehall studies of British Civil Servants have had an important influence internationally. Most discussions of the determinants of the health of populations focus on health services or features of individuals' lifestyle, such as drinking, smoking and diet. Important as these are, what the Whitehall studies have shown is that the major determinants of health and disease are the circumstances in which people live and work. The unique contribution of the Whitehall II (Stress & Health) study is to show that features of the work environment and of the social environment outside work, as well as circumstances from early life are closely related to the biological processes that lead to disease and maintain health.



Medical Screening

Many of you have attended a medical screening at the Royal Homeopathic Hospital London. This is part of our Phase 5 data collection, along with the questionnaire which is sent to you.

The medical examination provides you with the opportunity to have your cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure checked. We also take a recording of your heart rhythm (ECG). We view this as a two way process, whereby we give you feedback about your health and you provide us with valuable information.

Your results

Thank you to those who have been very patient waiting for your results from the medical screening. The samples are analysed at different laboratories and hospitals all over the country. The results are sent back to us at University College, checked for accuracy and then sent to you and your GP. Because of the large numbers involved and the range of tests carried out there is an inevitable time lag between a visit to the clinic and when you get your results. We have had delays because the complex data handling systems took several months to set up. We anticipate that your results will be sent to you within 8-10 weeks. We apologise to those of you who have had to wait for a very long time.



Mobile Screening

Some of you were unable to make the London medical screening. So we brought the medical to you. We set up clinics in, Southampton, Plymouth, Newport, Birmingham,

Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

Thank you to all who attended.



PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH

When the study first started, it was easy to keep in touch with you because you all worked for the Civil Service. However many of you have now left or retired. We remain very interested in the effects that your work has had on your health and we have developed a new project which examines health and well-being in retirement.

If you need to change any details you think may help us keep in touch with you, please call Stephanie Smith on FREEPHONE 0800 0681562 or return the enclosed change of details card.

Your Views



We are very happy to receive comments from participants, so that we can improve things or change things for your convenience. These are some of the comments from a participant which were published in an article in the British Medical Journal (Nov. 1997) following her attendance at our Phase 5 medical examination:

"The sister in charge took immense care to be sympathetic and kind"

"I'm just going to ask you a few questions", said a young interviewer in a kindly tone.

"This was a well organised clinic."

And finally...A BIG Thank you

Professor Marmot and the team value your time and interest. More detailed scientific results from the study can be obtained from various scientific and medical journals. For a list of all publications, please call FREEPHONE 0800 0681562.