

High Blood Pressure Among African Americans Not Genetic

According to a new study conducted by researchers at Loyola University's Strich School of Medicine, genetics may not explain the increased incidence of high blood pressure in black Americans.

Studies have shown that black Americans are more likely to suffer from high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart attacks, strokes and obesity. The study compared blood pressure readings from black populations in the United States, Nigeria and Jamaica. They also compared readings from white populations in the United States and in five European counties.

In Nigeria, the rate of high blood pressure among adults aged 35 to 64 was 13.5 percent, whereas in Jamaica, it was 28.6 percent, and the highest, 44 percent, was in the United States.

Since the incidence of high blood pressure among black populations tended to increase with the transition to industrial societies, the study suggests that the problem may be related to a combination of lifestyle and socioeconomic factors.



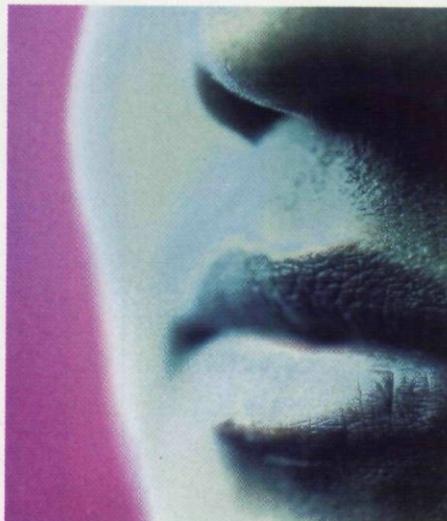
Saliva a Key Predictor for Oral Cancer

Scientists funded by a division of the National Institute of Health have isolated the presence of four distinct cancer-associated molecules in saliva, that, when elevated in number, can distinguish with 91 percent accuracy healthy people from those diagnosed with oral squamous cell carcinoma.

The study focuses on using mRNA, the molecular intermediate between gene and protein, to diagnose squamous cell carcinoma, the sixth most common cancer in the United States. Their research suggests that RNA patterns in saliva may be informative of other cancers and common diseases.

Although people commonly have about 3,000 chemically distinct mRNAs in their saliva at any one time, the researchers identified four mRNAs whose synchronized rise in expression increased the probability that the saliva belonged to a cancer patient. Without knowing anything about a patient's health history, the researchers could identify the saliva from cancer patients in nine out of 10 samples, indicating that their tests were as good or better than blood analysis.

The groups hope to follow up with a 200-patient study that will help them use mRNAs in saliva to distinguish between the various stages of cancer. If perfected, saliva test could be painless, quicker and less expensive than other diagnostic methods.



Hormone Replacement Therapy Increases Stroke Risk

A new study conducted at the University of Nottingham in the UK suggests that Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is associated with an increased risk of severe stroke. Previous individual trials have produced inconclusive results, but the UK study systematically reviewed evidence from 28 completed clinical trials that included nearly 40,000 women between the ages of 55 to 71.

Followed over a period of one to seven years, the study found that women who used hormone replacement therapy had a 29 percent higher risk of stroke than those in comparison groups. The frequency of a poor outcome, judged as death, disability or dependency, was 56 percent higher than those not taking HRT. The study concluded that patients at high risk of stroke, such as those with previous stroke, coronary heart disease or multiple vascular risk factors, should not take hormone replacement therapy unless there is a strong contrary medical reason.

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