Study may help participants to lower cholesterol

By Susan Haine

Heart disease is the number-one killer of Americans.

Drugs such as Pravachol and Zocor have been proven to help Americans lower their cholesterol, decreasing their chances of developing cardiovascular disease.

Now, researchers at UCSD are studying the statins within Pravachol and Zocor. Statins are cholesterol-lowering drugs and about 13 million people in the United States take them. One thousand people have already participated in the Statin Study at UCSD, but researchers are looking for more, specifically for African-Americans and people of Latino background. And you have a chance to participate in this study, which is testing these drugs to see if they affect mood, thinking and general quality of life.

During the study, participants are given a daily dose of Pravachol, Zocor or a placebo for six months. During that time, the participants visit the study’s offices five times, for about two to three hours per visit to fill out questionnaires, give blood and urine tests, play games, and take simple cognitive tests, such as being timed while putting pegs into a pegboard.

At the end of the eight months, participants receive a free cholesterol analysis, are given a personalized dietary analysis, and are given $125. As well, during the study all participants have a two-in-three chance that they will receive a free, eight month supply of a statin, which, per pill, can cost up to $5.57 without insurance.

“Many people who do the study are people who are told they may want to consider going on cholesterol lowering drugs, but aren’t sure it is right for them,” said Diana Gemme, the study’s clinic manager.

“Through the blood tests and possibly receiving the drugs for a period of time, they can decide whether it is right for them to take a statin.”

But the benefits of participation in this study are not just individual. Participation, especially by African-Americans and Latinos, is important because it can help researchers measure the effects of these drugs on all people.

“Our health care system’s research is based on middle-aged white males,” said Julius Philips, a San Diego community outreach worker who also participated in the Statin Study. “All medicines made are made for white males. I encourage participation of minority groups to help advance medical studies, all our bodies react differently to different things.”

Male participants need to be older than 20 and females need to have already gone through menopause. No participants can have taken cholesterol-lowering drugs within a
month of beginning the study and participants cannot have heart disease, stroke or diabetes.

The study is looking for participants until the end of July. If you are interested, please contact Diana Gemme at (858) 558-4950, extension 202.

Sidebar
Heart Facts from the American Heart Association

Cardiovascular disease is America’s No. 1 killer.
61.8 million Americans have some form of cardiovascular disease.
It also ranks the No. 1 killer of African Americans and Latinos.
About 4 in every 10 African American's have cardiovascular disease.
Among Mexican-Americans, about 29 percent of men and 27 percent of women have cardiovascular disease.