

Coronary heart disease risk assessment improves with coronary artery calcium scoring

TORRANCE, Calif. (January 14, 2004) -- In an article published in the January 14 edition of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers conclude that there is evidence that CT scans for calcium can play a significant role in predicting cardiac deaths and may assist physicians in making treatment decisions for the millions of people in the middle-range of coronary risk. The research study done at the South Bay Health Watch at the Research and Education Institute at Harbor-UCLA involved 1461 research volunteers in LA's south bay suburbs and was funded by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health.

The South Bay Heart Watch findings support and confirm the recommendations of the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology Consensus Group that selected use of CT scanning can assist in evaluating risk and determining appropriate preventative therapy in these persons.

Coronary artery calcium scans measure the amount of calcium buildup in the arteries of the heart. Calcium is one of many substances found in atherosclerotic plaques. The calcium score correlates with the amount and severity of blockages a person has.

According to the one of the study's authors, Robert C. Detrano, MD, PhD, "The findings are particularly significant because treatment decisions are the hardest to make for patients of middle risk. If a large amount of coronary calcium in such people is found to be an important predictor of future coronary disease, doctors might be able to make faster and more aggressive treatment decisions such as prescribing drugs or lifestyle changes." Dr. Detrano is a principal investigator at the Research and Education Institute and a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiology at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

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