

Southern Community Cohort Study

The Southern Community Cohort Study Newsletter is an annual publication for study participants.



Welcome

to the 2019
SCCS Annual
Newsletter.

The study team
would like to
dedicate this

issue to Dr. Margaret Hargreaves, who died at home on May 18, 2019. Dr. Hargreaves was Professor of Internal Medicine at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. She was Co-Principal Investigator of the Southern Community Cohort Study, and as a steadfast advocate for eliminating health disparities, Dr. Hargreaves was involved with SCCS research and operations for almost two decades. She was a proponent of community engagement in research and an expert in healthy nutrition in disease prevention. She will be missed by all of us at the SCCS.

In this issue, we report on some steps you can take to reduce your risks of heart disease *and* Alzheimer's disease or dementia, a topic of growing research interest in the SCCS as participants age.

To encourage eating avocado, we include a recipe from the American Diabetes Association for Black Bean Burger with Avocado-Lime Mayonnaise. Finally, we highlight one of YOU - our special SCCS participants.

Thank you again for being an active part of the SCCS. Please continue to let us know if you move or change your phone number by calling the SCCS toll free (1-800-734-5057) Monday – Friday 9 to 5 Eastern time.

**Your Study Team Leaders,
Dr. William J. Blot, Dr. Wei Zheng,
Dr. Martha Shrubsole**

What you can do now to reduce your risk of Alzheimer's later

– adapted from www.mysouthernhealth.com, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Alzheimer's disease is not an inevitable part of growing old.

According to Angela Jefferson, PhD, Director of the Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center, "Poor heart function could prove to be a major risk factor for dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. A very encouraging aspect of our findings is that heart health is a modifiable risk. You may not be able to change your genetics or family history, but you can engage in a heart-healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise at any point in your lifetime."

Here are **10 things** that you can do to improve your heart health, and thus your brain health, NOW:

Control Type 2 Diabetes –

reduce your blood sugar through diet and exercise to reduce risk of damage to your blood vessels.

Get active – you need 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week. Try walking a little more each day.

Stay socially connected – make time for friends and family.

Stay mentally active – take a class or learn something new.

Eat healthy – eat more vegetables, berries, nuts, fish and whole grains; cut back on salt to lower risk for high blood pressure and stroke.

Indulge in your favorite

creative hobby – take your mind off daily stress.

Get a routine check-up – know your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and healthy weight goal.

Sleep well – try for 7 or 8 hours each night.

Calm the nervous system – relax the body and mind with restorative yoga, slow deep breaths or calming music.

Quit smoking – its never too late to quit. Within 1 year of quitting, your risk for heart disease is about half that of a smoker.



Remember: What's good for the heart is good for the brain!

We remind all our participants that we will not contact you regarding any individual test results found from conducting our laboratory research as part of this study. Please remember to get your yearly check-up and all recommended health screenings.

Southern Community Cohort Study Microbiome Study

Did you know that each of us has bacteria living on our skin and inside of us? In fact, we have over 100 trillion of these microbes. Most of these microbes live together in our digestive system. These communities of microbes make up the “gut microbiome”.



Scientists are starting to learn about some of the ways in which our gut microbiomes are important in keeping us healthy. Some of the bacteria make nutrients that our bodies cannot make on their own. The gut microbiome also helps our immune systems work well so that our bodies can recognize and attack microbe invaders that do not belong.

The lab methods to find and study the gut microbiome have only been available for a few years. This means that there are still a lot of questions to answer about the how the gut microbiome may influence health and diseases like diabetes and cancer. You and your SCCS team will be a part of answering some of those questions.

When you receive your next follow-up questionnaire, you will be asked to consider providing a stool sample that can be used to look at the gut microbiome. We will send you a special kit to collect your stool if you are willing to do so. This is a different kind of sample than the test for colorectal cancer so please make sure that you still do your regular stool test with your doctor.

One thing that we do know is that everybody's gut microbiome is different. Because of this, it is important that as many people as possible participate so that we can learn about the many different types of gut microbiomes. It is also important that people with diseases and no diseases participate so that we can learn how the gut microbiome may change in disease. Over 4,000 of you who have already completed your follow-up questionnaire have also returned a stool sample. Thank you for your help in this important new area of research.

Research Highlights

Can one daily Polypill reduce blood pressure and lower LDL cholesterol?

In 2016 we told you about the new SCCS/Polypill study for prevention of heart disease on which Vanderbilt doctors, Franklin Primary CHC in Mobile AL, the American Heart Association, and your SCCS team had begun working. The Polypill is a single pill that contains 4 common heart medicines. The Polypill pilot study is complete and we want to thank the SCCS participants who took part. The study revealed that the Polypill approach was effective in lowering blood pressure and LDL cholesterol.

We plan on expanding the Polypill research to other cities across the United States, and YOU may receive an invitation to participate. We expect to provide details of the study findings and the plans for continued research in our next SCCS Newsletter.

Wang T, Munoz D, Blot W

Some women in SCCS rarely received important gene testing

We recently looked at rates of testing for changes in specific high-risk genes among women in the SCCS who had been diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer in 2000-2014, had Medicare insurance, and met conditions for gene testing. Changes in genes called BRCA1 and BRCA2 can increase risk for several types of cancer within families and may impact treatment. We found that although 92 women met the conditions for testing, only 8 women received the test (9%). While this rate is low, we hope that newer methods to improve access to gene counseling will increase test rates among all eligible women.

If you have been diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer, you can ask your doctor if gene testing may be right for you.

Gross AL, Blot WJ, Visvanathan K. (2018) BRCA1 and BRCA2 testing in medically underserved Medicare beneficiaries with breast or ovarian cancer. *JAMA* 2018320(6):597-598.

Should all men get a baseline mid-life PSA?

SCCS research published recently may be helpful for making decisions with your doctor about getting a blood test called “PSA” to screen for prostate cancer. The study involved testing of PSA in stored blood samples collected from black men at entry into the SCCS. They found that a single PSA blood test in mid-life (around age 45) could predict who would develop prostate cancer over the next 10 years. While levels above 4 are usually a signal for more testing, risks of prostate cancer were increased among black men with PSA levels as low as 1-3, while few prostate cancers developed if levels were below 1. **The study suggests that routine PSA screenings after 45 may be needed if their mid-life test was above the level of 1.**

Preston MA, Gerke T, Carlsson SV et al. Baseline Prostate-specific Antigen Level in Midlife and Aggressive Prostate Cancer in Black Men. *Eur Urol*. 2018 Sep 17. pii: S0302-2838(18)30627-4. doi: 10.1016/j.eururo.2018.08.032. [Epub ahead of print]

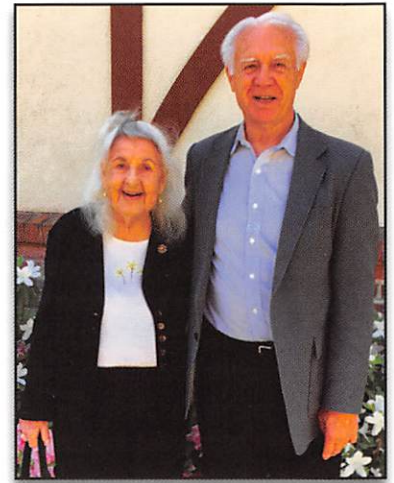
Participant Spotlight: Meet Ralph Walters

Mr. Ralph Walters joined SCCS in 2005 in his hometown of Meridian, MS, because he was interested in learning more about the causes and prevention of cancer.

Ralph met his wife, Evelyn, in San Diego, CA while he was in the U.S. Navy, and they've been married for 57 years. They have 7 children, 12 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. He retired from the navy in 1977. He is 78 years old. Evelyn is a registered nurse and a licensed marriage/family therapist, and at the age of 90 she still works part-time as a therapist. Ralph attributes their good health to his wife's excellent cooking with fresh organic vegetables.

He enjoys daily walking with his dogs and he loves drinking coffee. He said Evelyn really keeps him going!

Ralph shared his concern that even though they are healthy, their memories are starting to fade. He asked if we were going to do any research on Alzheimer's Disease. Like Ralph, many of you may be asking the same question.

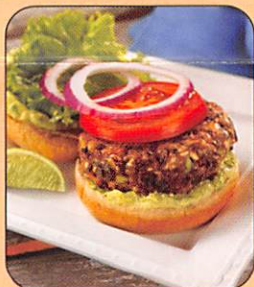


Evelyn and Ralph Walters

We are happy to announce that we've recently received funding from the National Institutes of Aging to begin a new research project on Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias. This new project will help us to learn how many SCCS participants are affected and provide data to help develop strategies for improved treatment and prevention of these diseases.

Black Bean Burger with Avocado - Lime Mayonnaise

©2009 by the American Diabetes Association ©The Heart Smart Diabetes Kitchen Reprinted with permission from the American Diabetes Association ®



Yield Servings: 4, Serving Size 1 burger

Mayonnaise:

1/2 ripe medium avocado, peeled and pitted
2 tablespoons canola mayonnaise
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

1 tablespoon water, if needed
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro (or parsley)

Burgers:

1 can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
1/2 (15 oz) can dark kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1/2 cup finely chopped green bell pepper
1/3 cup quick-cooking oats
2 large egg whites
1 tablespoon canola oil
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Canola oil cooking spray
4 whole-wheat hamburger buns, split and toasted
1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion
4 tomato slices and 4 lettuce leaves

Directions:

1. Place all mayonnaise ingredients in blender and puree until smooth. (Or mash and mix with a fork.)
2. Place beans in a gallon-sized resealable bag. Using a meat mallet, pound beans to a coarse texture, resembling lumpy mashed potatoes. Place beans in a medium bowl and add bell pepper, oats, egg whites, canola oil, and cayenne pepper. Mix well and shape into four patties.
3. Coat a large nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium heat. Add patties and cook 4 minutes on each side or until they begin to lightly brown. The patties will be fragile, so be sure to turn them gently.

Fresh tip: If desired, omit the buns and serve patties on the lettuce leaf, tomato slice, and onion. Spoon the mayonnaise mixture on top of the patties and serve with lime wedges.

Nutritional Information per Serving: Calories: 300 (Calories from fat 110), Total fat 12.0g (Saturated fat: 1.8g, Trans fat 0.0g), Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 785 mg, Total carbohydrate 33g (Dietary fiber 10g, Sugars 5g), Protein 19g.

EXCHANGES PER SERVING: 2 starch, 2 lean meat and 1 fat.

Reminder

It's important we have your most current contact information. Please help us stay in touch with you!
If your address or telephone numbers have changed, call us toll free at 1-800-734-5057 or (904) 398-2924 Monday-Friday 9 am - 5pm (Eastern Time). <https://www.southerncommunitystudy.org>



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Amazing Avocados

A vocados contain 20

vitamins and minerals per

serving, including **folate** (crucial

for cell repair, promotes healthy

brain functions, and reduces risk

of breast, cervix, lung and pan-

creas cancers) and **potassium**

(helps ease tension in your blood

vessel walls, which can lower

blood pressure). Eating just one-

half of an avocado per day can

provide anti-inflammatory bene-

fits, and also help you absorb

carotenoids in other foods, which

promotes good eyesight.

Avocados are high in mono-

unsaturated fat (the good fat)

that helps lower bad cholesterol,

when eaten in moderation.

Store avocados at room tem-
perature until ripe, which could
 take several days. When the out-
 side skins are dark greenish-pur-
 ple and yield to gentle pressure,
 without feeling squishy, they are
 ready to eat or refrigerate.



Wash well so bacteria or dirt
 aren't transferred from the knife
 onto the pulp.

Discard the large pit and scoop
 out the creamy pulp.
Avocados can be eaten many
ways. Guacamole is one way to
 enjoy eating avocados, you can
 also dice and toss on pasta or
 salads, puree for smoothies or
 substitute for butter or oil in your
 favorite baked recipes, spread on
 toast or slice onto sandwiches.
Caution: If you are allergic to
 latex, speak with your doctor
 before eating avocados.