



For Immediate Release

Contact: Sarah Wally, MS, RD
Kellen Communications
202-207-1120; swally@kellencompany.com

National Survey Findings: Americans are Concerned about Heart Health, But Not Proactive Enough to Prevent It

Trends in Reducing Heart Disease Risk Are Headed in Wrong Direction

WASHINGTON (November 2, 2009) -- Recent research indicates that despite decades of progress, fewer Americans are now considered "low risk" for heart disease compared to years past. Adding fuel to the fire, a new study is making headlines with the alarming statistic that 7 in 10 obese teens already have at least one risk factor for heart disease. To help educate families about prevention, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA) has released findings from a new national consumer survey and launched a campaign to educate families about heart disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S.

The national survey revealed that more than three in five (61%) Americans incorrectly believe that the processes related to heart disease do not begin until adulthood. Alarming, fewer than four in ten (38%) correctly surmise that people should be concerned about living a heart-healthy lifestyle beginning in childhood and continuing throughout every life stage.

Research on reducing heart disease risk clearly shows that a more comprehensive approach to being heart-healthy is key. According to a study published in the journal *Circulation* in September, despite the success of past heart disease awareness and education campaigns, the recent trend toward reducing cardiovascular risk is now going in reverse. The vast majority (92%) of Americans are still at risk, primarily because of the rise in obesity.

“This is a wake up call for parents and their children in particular,” says Laura Hayman, Ph.D., RN, a member of the PCNA Board of Directors and a leading researcher on obesity and cardiovascular disease in children, adolescents, and families. “Some strides have been made; however, since more and more children are currently overweight, they are more likely at risk for obesity-related conditions later in life such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes.”

Statistics from a newly released Canadian study echo Dr. Hayman’s concerns about the link between the ever-present obesity epidemic and heart disease risk - particularly among teens. The findings, presented in October at the Canadian Cardiovascular Congress, showed that among a sample of 14 and 15 year old students, rates of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity were unusually high and increasing over time.

Research has found that when children learn about heart-healthy eating habits, it can strongly influence their behavior to reduce heart disease risk later in life. Yet, according to the PCNA survey, less than one-third of Americans follow a diet that is healthy for their heart. Also, seven in ten (70%) would not want their kids to adopt their eating habits because they do not think they set a good example when it comes to food choices (26%) or some of the time they eat food that is not healthy (44%).

“We are at a critical juncture,” explains Hayman. “It is imperative for parents to lead by example with an all encompassing heart-healthy lifestyle, making the necessary changes both in diet and physical activity.”

Since the PCNA survey found that the majority of Americans are at risk of heart disease due to some lifestyle factor, such as being overweight or having high cholesterol, small incremental changes in diet and physical activity can have a lasting healthy effect. To help parents learn how to make important lifestyle changes and become better role models for their children, to help reduce their risk of heart disease in the future, PCNA has launched a national education campaign called “Family at Heart.”

Visit www.FamilyatHeart.org for information on how to improve your family’s heart health.

###

Note to Editors: The nationally representative survey of 1,000 adults was conducted by Kelton Research September 14-21, 2009 using an online methodology. Quotas were set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S population ages 18 and older. The margin of error is +/- 3.1%. The survey was commissioned by the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association.

Release from the Canadian Cardiovascular Congress:

<http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ikIQLcMWJtE&b=5552717&ct=7611615>

Abstract of the study in Circulation:

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19752328?ordinalpos=1&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_DefaultReportPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum