

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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STANFORD -- The Stanford University School of Medicine announced today (July 14) the creation of a Lipid Research Clinic and Specialized Center of Research (SCOR) to conduct a wide-ranging investigation of treatment and prevention of heart disease.

The new programs, supported by federal grants totalling \$773,387 the first year and projected at almost \$4 million over the next five years, reflect a new commitment by the federal government to the prevention of heart disease.

A diverse research team, incorporating faculty members of Stanford's School of Humanities and Sciences as well as the School of Medicine, will conduct the studies.

Included in the anticipated five-year programs will be investigations of metabolic abnormalities and levels of blood lipids (fats, cholesterol and other compounds) in relation to heart disease; epidemiology (prevalence, distribution and control) of the disease in communities; effects of family structure, attitude and motivation on behavior toward health issues; and methods of modifying behavior to aid in effective prevention of the disease.

Dr. John W. Farquhar, associate professor of medicine at the Medical School and a well known researcher in heart disease, is the director of the Lipid Research Clinic and SCOR program. Dr. Peter D. Wood, research associate in medicine and prominent lipid chemist, is the deputy director of both.

The two closely-tied programs are being funded by the National Heart and Lung Institute as part of a broad new federal effort to combat heart disease. Nineteen research centers have been established across the country, including six Lipid Research Clinics and 13 SCOR centers for arteriosclerosis. Fifteen medical schools are involved, with Stanford and three other schools receiving grants for both centers.

The Stanford grants are expected to run almost concurrently for at least five years. The SCOR program (supported by a grant of \$363,514 for the first year) was initiated June 1, the Lipid Research Clinic (funded by a \$409,873 contract for the first year) on June 22.

"The National Institutes of Health have made it understood that this is a long-range commitment," Wood said. "Though the contracts are to be renewed annually, their estimate of the minimum time these programs will be funded is five years."

Farquhar called the establishment of the 19 research centers "a great new experiment" in one of the most pressing areas of medical study.

"We have an epidemic of coronary heart disease in this country that is largely preventable in younger age," he said. "It's a national tragedy that requires attention which is long overdue. These grants are timely entrees into this area of preventive medicine.

"Our studies will hopefully furnish us with information on who has heart disease, who has the precursors of it, and what can be done to treat existing disease and prevent its future occurrence.

"A large part of our effort will be to study the epidemiology of heart disease in communities. We've enlisted the help of a group of behavioral scientists in a team approach to learn about attitudes and motivation in behavior toward health issues, and means of changing behavior which can affect heart disease."

Following exhaustive studies of factors which influence conduct related to health, Stanford behavioral scientists will prepare mass media campaigns designed to bring about behavior change, and will also test the separate effects of frequent personal sessions (conducted in an encounter group fashion) on behavior change.

"We'll be trying to persuade people to change their behavior with respect to habits which affect coronary disease," Wood said. "These changes will probably involve moderate exercise, weight loss, cutting down or giving up smoking, and modified diets."

"In this effort we'll utilize films, radio, television and newspapers. However, we don't know that these media are effective in changing behavior, and one purpose of our studies is to first determine what are the minimum requirements for achieving important degrees of change."

The "team" aspect in these studies is emphasized to the extent that information gathered at the 19 nationwide centers will be continually compiled and compared.

Within Stanford's programs, inpatient clinic research findings will be linked to community studies, so that the choice of strategies for intervention in communities will be dictated by the results of inpatient research, Farquhar said.

Wood will supervise and coordinate the setting up of accurate semi-automatic measurement of plasma lipoproteins (components of blood which carry cholesterol and fat). Other clinical inpatient research will involve studies of metabolic abnormalities associated with heart disease.

"Another component of our studies will be the development of an ultrasound method for the early detection of arterial disease by non-invasive techniques," Farquhar said.

Both supporting agencies are divisions of the National Heart and Lung Institute, and Farquhar noted that the Stanford Lipid Research and SCOR programs are blended together, to a large extent.

Several faculty members from Stanford's School of Humanities and Sciences will be involved in these studies, including Department of Communication chairman Dr. Nathan Maccoby; Dr. Henry Breitrose, associate professor of communication; and Dr. Clifford R. Barnett, professor of anthropology. Miss Janet Voelker, of the Department of Communication will be film research supervisor.

In addition to Farquhar and Wood, researchers from the School of Medicine include Byron W. Brown, professor of biostatistics in the Department of Community and Preventive Medicine; Dr. Abraham Silvers, research associate in medicine; Dr. Gerald M. Reaven, professor of medicine; Dr. Donald C. Harrison, associate professor of medicine; Dr. Richard L. Popp, assistant professor of medicine; Dr. Jobst von der Groeben, professor of medicine in anesthesia; and Dr. Michael P. Stern, instructor in medicine.

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