

## **Cardiovascular Disease and AAPIs**

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for all people in the US, and stroke is the third leading cause of death. Heart disease and stroke are also major causes of disability and significant contributors to increasing health care costs in the US. The mortality rate for cardiovascular disease (heart disease, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) is greater than the combined rate for all leading causes of death (cancer, unintentional injuries, pneumonia/influenza, diabetes, suicide, kidney disease, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis). (US DHHS, 2000). The major risk factors for cardiovascular disease are hypertension, smoking, hypercholesterolemia, high alcohol consumption, and lack of physical activity. (Tamir and Cachola, 1994).

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) refers to a wide variety of heart and blood vessel diseases and conditions, including coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol. CHD accounts for the largest proportion of heart disease. (US DHHS, 2000). Medical research continually contributes to a body of data that confirms that certain populations are disproportionately affected by diabetes and CVD. (US DHHS, 2003).

### **Condition: Hypercholesterolemia**

For adults, a normal blood cholesterol level is 200 mg/dL or lower; borderline is 200 to 239 mg/dL, and 240 mg/dL or above is considered high. Based on the 1998 Heart and Stroke Statistical Update, an estimated 96.8 million American adults (51%) have blood cholesterol levels of 200 mg/dL or higher. (Hong and Bayat, 1999).

### **Condition: Hypertension**

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is a leading cause of stroke, renal disease, and cardiac disease for all populations in the US. (Tamir and Cachola, 1994). Hypertension is defined as elevated blood pressure, or systolic blood pressure of 140 mmHg or higher and diastolic blood pressure of 90 mmHg or higher. One in four American adults has high blood pressure. (Hong and Bayat, 1999). Contributors to hypertension include age, gender, relative body weight, alcohol consumption, ethnicity, place of birth, educational level, psychological factors, and knowledge and awareness. (Tamir and Cachola, 1994).

Among some AAPI groups, there is a high prevalence of heart disease risk factors, and these factors vary among ethnic groups. (Tamir and Cachola, 1994). This section provides information on the incidence, health practices and beliefs, health challenges, and adherence factors related to CVD and stroke for AAPIs.

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*Reducing Health Disparities in Asian American and Pacific Islander Populations:  
A Provider's Guide to Quality & Culture Seminar*  
<http://erc.msh.org/quality&culture>

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