

# HAUORA MANAWA HEART HEALTH

The Community Heart Study

November 2010

CHRISTCHURCH

Issue 10

## Study Update – Suzanne Pitama

**Kia Ora Koutou**, I hope this newsletter finds you well this November. We apologise that this newsletter has been late getting to you - the earthquake has caused a few hiccups in our processes. As you may have been aware our work place at St Elmo Courts (which recently featured on Close Up) has not withstood the earthquake and continual aftershocks. This meant that we were left without a work place! Last week we were finally able to move into a new work whare and hopefully the coming weeks will see us getting back to 'normal' work life. We only have four more weeks to complete the 2nd year follow up of our Christchurch participants. If we haven't seen you yet, please call our 0800 number. We are able to see you at our new premises or visit you at your home/work if that is more convenient for you. We want to give a special thanks to those who have recently come to see us, we especially acknowledge those of you who have lost your homes or had significant damage to your properties. It has been both sad and inspirational to hear how you have found the drive to make each new day a bit better and to work through these current trials. We will have a special Christmas newsletter out to you very soon.

## Would You Recognise a Heart Attack?

*Knowing the symptoms of a Heart Attack and how to react can help you save a life*

Often if someone is asked what they think a heart attack looks like, they will imagine a person suddenly clutching at their chest and falling to the ground in great pain. The reality is that most heart attacks start out slowly, with many people only feeling mild pain or discomfort to start with, and these symptoms may even come and go. In a lot of cases, because people don't realise what is happening, or they aren't sure what is wrong, they delay getting medical help until it is too late. Some people have reported feeling unwell for days before seeking medical advice, and are shocked to find out that they have suffered a heart attack. Knowing the different symptoms and what to do, can help you react quickly if you or someone you know has a heart attack.

The following paragraph lists the most common symptoms of a heart attack as described on The Heart Foundation's website. It's important to remember that not everyone feels all of these symptoms at once – some people may only experience one or two, others may only feel them very mildly. Even people who've had a heart attack may not immediately recognise the symptoms because they can be different from the last attack they suffered.

Nearly everyone who experiences a heart attack will say that they knew something was wrong because they just didn't feel "right".

### Warning Signs of a Heart Attack:

**Chest Discomfort** felt in the centre of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes. It could feel like an uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain, and it may come and go

**Discomfort in other areas of the upper body** felt in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, stomach or shoulder

**Shortness of breath** that often occurs alongside chest discomfort

**Other symptoms** such as breaking out in a cold sweat nausea, or light headedness

**It is really important to act fast if you or someone you know has chest discomfort, especially if they also have any of the other symptoms described above. Taking an aspirin (unless you've been told not to previously) and resting will help, but you must CALL 111 immediately and get to hospital as soon as possible.**

For more information visit the Heart Foundation's website:

[www.heartfoundation.org.nz](http://www.heartfoundation.org.nz)

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Please let us know if you've changed address or need to update your contact details

### Contact Us:

Hauora Manawa  
The Community Heart Study  
Maori Indigenous Health Institute  
University of Otago,  
Christchurch  
PO Box 4345  
Christchurch

**Free Phone:**  
0800 HAUORA  
(0800 428672)

If you'd like a question answered in the newsletter or have a healthy recipe, success story or photo you'd like to share, please email these to: [miriam.esteves@otago.ac.nz](mailto:miriam.esteves@otago.ac.nz)





Vicky Cameron

*It is commonly believed that stress is a risk factor for heart disease, but has this been scientifically proven? What do we mean by stress, and why should it put us at risk?*



Allamanda Faatoese

Stressful conditions contribute to a higher frequency of harmful health behaviors, such as poor diet and smoking. In addition, stress has direct physical effects on the body, which include activation of stress hormones that increase blood pressure, increased clotting factors in the circulation and greater risk of an irregular heartbeat. Increasing our stress hormones can be helpful in a “fight or flight” situation, but can have harmful effects when the release of these hormones is sustained. In addition, our blood vessels are not able to “relax” as well when we are under stress, leading to stiffer arteries, higher blood pressure and a greater risk of blood clots forming.

There is scientific evidence that depression, anxiety, personality factors, social isolation, and long-term life stress all increase our risk of coronary heart disease, the common form of heart disease that can result in heart attacks.

An accumulation of stressful life events over many months, such as the death of a spouse, divorce, or loss of a job, is associated with a greater risk of heart attack or sudden cardiac death. This effect is most apparent immediately after bereavement - both men and women are at a much greater risk of a fatal heart attack following the death of a loved one. Heart disease rates

are also increased in the immediate aftermath of other acute life stressors, such as earthquakes and terrorist activities, a fact that many of us in Christchurch will identify with!

Other stress factors include

- Low socioeconomic status
- Job stress, especially in jobs with high work demands and low rewards
- Anxiety disorders
- Hostility and anger personality traits

While we can't always eliminate stressful life conditions or events, there are ways we can minimise the effect they have on our health.

Some simple things anyone can do to relieve stress include eating well and making sure you get enough exercise, fresh air and restful sleep.

In addition, having access to social support such as the presence of close family, friends, and the participation in group activities tend to protect a person from coronary heart disease. Furthermore, social support tends to influence the extent to which individuals engage in high-risk behaviors such as smoking, fatty diet, and excessive alcohol consumption.

**A note for our Christchurch Participants from Karen Tikao-Mason, Study Co-ordinator**

We have moved to our new permanent home at 45 Cambridge Terrace, near the boat sheds. We expect to have clinics all set up and running smoothly by the time you receive this newsletter. We'd like to apologise to those participants who had appointments booked and who we were unable to contact immediately after the earthquake. We know some of you made the effort to come in and see us only to find our building closed due to damage. We appreciate your patience and understanding. We are currently contacting the last of our participants who have yet to be seen for their second year follow up. We know it's a busy time of year, and for many the earthquake has added to this. We are more than happy to work around your schedule as much as possible and can even do a home visit if necessary. This follow up appointment takes approximately 20-30 minutes.

**Please call us on 0800 428672 to book an appointment.**

**Eat Well, Stress Less**

If you're feeling stressed out, eating well can really help reduce the effects of stress and help you cope better when stressful events occur. Here are some common foods that are known to be good stress busters:

- Oranges
- Broccoli
- Almonds (unsalted)
- Avocado
- Asparagus
- Salmon
- Spinach
- Turkey
- Apricots
- Kumara