

SPECIAL TOPICS

ORIGINAL RESEARCH: FEATURED ABSTRACT FROM THE  
19TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

## Awareness of Cardiovascular Disease Risk in American Indians

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PEER REVIEWED

### **Track: Methods and Surveillance**

Although cardiovascular disease (CVD) has become the leading cause of death in American Indians, little is known about how Indian communities perceive their risk.

In 2003, a telephone survey was conducted among adult American Indians living on or near Montana's seven Indian reservations. Respondents were asked about awareness of heart disease risk; history of cardiovascular disease (CVD) such as heart attack, angina, or stroke; and risk factors for CVD.

The prevalence of CVD and risk factors among men and women aged 45 years and older (N = 516) was high: CVD (26% in men and 15% in women), diabetes (24% in men and 26% in women), high blood pressure (48% in men and 46% in women), high cholesterol (34% in men and 40% in women), smoking (28% in men and 33% in women), and obesity (37% in men and 46% in women). Men with a history of certain medical conditions were more likely to be aware of their risk for heart disease than men without these conditions: CVD (87% with vs 46% without), high blood pressure (70% with vs 44% without), high cholesterol (71% with vs 53% without), and obesity (67% with vs 52% without). The same was true of women: CVD (98% with vs

58% without), diabetes (74% with vs 60% without), high blood pressure (73% with vs 56% without), high cholesterol (72% with vs 60% without), and obesity (74% with vs 55% without). Neither men nor women associated smoking with their own risk for heart disease.

The prevalence of CVD risk factors was alarmingly high in this population. Awareness of risk for heart disease was associated with most modifiable CVD risk factors, except smoking.

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