

(Racial/Ethnic Differences continued)

women due to experiences of lifelong stress and stressful events such as racism and discrimination, resulting in greater morbidity. This concept of stress age is similar to the weathering effect or allostatic load, which suggests that African-Americans experience negative health consequences at an earlier age. African-American women have been shown to have the highest levels of allostatic load, potentially explaining increased health disparities, such as cardiovascular disease and negative birth outcomes. One theory is that stress age can be measured by the ratio of cortisol / dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) and cortisol / dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate (DHEA-S) since chronic elevated cortisol is associated with adverse health conditions such as decreases in inflammatory and immune response, hypertension, disruption of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, while DHEA/DHEA-S are thought to counteract chronic cortisol elevations.

The proposed study aims assess whether cortisol / DHEA and cortisol / DHEA-S ratios are associated with high levels of stress as measured by validated self-report questionnaires, and determine if there are racial / ethnic differences in these measures between African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic healthy women. A total of 105 women 20 – 40 years of age will be recruited to complete stress related questionnaires and have blood drawn. Study recruitment will begin in February 2010.

DR. SUSAN FRANKS BEGINS STUDY

PROJECT TITLE: Psychophysiological regulation of stress-related eating behavior and food intake following a psychological stress challenge in obese women.

SUMMARY

Obesity has become a world-wide epidemic, yet little advances have been made in understanding obesity as a function of the complex interactions between biological and behavioral factors that regulate appetite and eating behavior. Stress-related eating has been identified as a major problem affect-

-ing the weight loss efforts of more than 60% of obese people and may be a key reason why weight loss interventions are largely unsuccessful for a substantial proportion of the target population. Recent studies have suggested that the stress hormone cortisol may increase the appetite regulating hormone ghrelin, influencing various emotions and behaviors involved in eating and food selection under conditions of stress. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the effect of psychological stress on relationships among cortisol, active ghrelin, psychological states, eating behavior, and food intake in obese women who identify themselves as stress-induced eaters. Results from this study will be used to advance our understanding of the stress-eating phenomenon in obesity. This will then provide a foundation for related research that will lead to the eventual development and testing of evidence-based interventions to effectively promote sustained weight loss and reduce obesity-related diseases. Study recruitment will begin in February 2010.

Famous Quote:

“The reward of work well done
is the opportunity to do more”.
.....Jonas Salk