

Dallas Heart Study Reflects on 25 Years and Expands Reach

The Dallas Hearts and Minds Study will explore the impact of heart health and aging on brain health among diverse Dallas residents.

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Twenty-five years since its inception, the Dallas Heart Study (DHS) is expanding its reach to explore the [brain](#) in addition to the [heart](#), according to a [UT Southwestern news release](#).

[Heart disease](#) remains the leading cause of [death](#) among Americans. In Dallas County, mortality is even more significant among Black adults.

In 2000, a team of physicians from UT Southwestern was awarded a \$24 million grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation to launch the Dallas Heart Study (DHS), which has gathered data on the heart and metabolic health of a cross-section of [Dallas](#) residents.

The study has resulted in more than 230 research papers and produced major findings on cardiovascular disease, [high blood pressure](#) ([hypertension](#)) and [heart failure](#) treatments.

“The Dallas Heart Study [DHS] has had a tremendous impact nationally and internationally on the way we understand heart disease,” said James de Lemos, MD, a professor of internal medicine and chief of the division of cardiology at UT Southwestern and one of the study’s principal investigators, in the release.

For example, DHS data showed that 27% of Black men involved in the study had hypertension but that most were not being treated, emphasizing the need for [regular primary care visits](#) among Black adults. In response, researchers initiated a pilot study in barbershops for which UT Southwestern medical students measured customers’ blood pressure and shared reports with their doctors. Those who were treated experienced significantly lower blood pressure levels. The outreach strategy has since become a national intervention and has been adapted to other awareness programs, including [diabetes](#) and [prostate cancer](#) screenings.

The latest round of research, titled the Dallas Hearts and Minds Study, will examine the impact of aging on about 1,500 diverse participants. The cohort will undergo a series of tests to evaluate heart and cognitive function, including cardiac ultrasounds, brain and full-body MRIs, cardiopulmonary exercise tests and more.

Researchers plan to measure how risk factors affect healthy aging or the ability to avoid disease and maintain good physical and mental function.

“The future of cardiovascular research, particularly at UT Southwestern, is incredibly bright,” de Lemos said. “The DHS and now the Dallas Hearts and Minds Study provide a pathway for how collaborative teams can work together to address health challenges as people get older.”

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