

Heart Health Survey making the rounds

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An eastern Ontario health agency wants to peer into the cardiovascular health of the citizens of S, D and G.

The Champlain Community Heart Health Survey is designed to assess the health of residents of the Champlain district - an area of eastern Ontario that's home to about 1.2 million people, including the City of Cornwall.

In the district, some 2,400 people die each year of heart disease - a number that's in line with provincial expectations, said Sophia Papadakis, program leader for the Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network (CCPN), the organization distributing the surveys.

But once the City of Ottawa is factored out, the mortality rate exceeds the provincial average. Leeds-Grenville, Prescott-Russell, and the Renfrew area are the "hot spots," said Papadakis, but deaths from cardiovascular disease are also higher in S, D and G, she added.

The CCPN has just begun sending the surveys to random households outside Ottawa this month, said Papadakis. Those who agree to take part will be booked for a medical appointment and be asked to fill out questionnaires about what they eat, how much they smoke and drink, and how often they exercise.

It's the first time the CCPN has collected hard data about cholesterol levels, blood-glucose levels, blood pressure, height, and weight from the community-at-large, said Papadakis.

"These are all the risk factors that are associated with the trends that we're seeing," she said.

The CCPN hopes to collect 1,500 surveys, a "representative sample for this region," and use the data to make decisions on prevention programming, said Papadakis.

So far, about 500 people, all from the Ottawa area, have filled out the surveys. The CCPN hopes to wrap up the research by August, and promises all information will be kept confidential.

People willing to undergo a bit of poking and prodding won't come away empty-handed, said Papadakis. Participants will be mailed a personalized "risk-factor profile" that will include their body-mass index within two weeks of their medical visit.

They'll also get an educational package with tips on reducing the chances of developing heart disease, she said.