

LABORPRESS

Eye Opening Data Reveals The Importance of a Cardiovascular Screening

April 25, 2013

by Marilyn Martinucci

Heartscan Service's preventative wellness and screening program has been utilized by many members of the public and private sector labor unions in the tri-state area for the past four years. To date, over 6,172 union members have taken advantage of our life saving programs to assess their risk for heart disease, stroke, peripheral arterial disease, thyroid nodules and weight loss.

The data identifies the importance of preventative screenings to the organization as well as a lifesaving benefit to its members. In short, early detection saves lives and money.

Of the 6,172 union members screened, a staggering 2,468 needed some form of follow up. This represents 40 % of all members who participated in the screening. Here is a summary of some of the findings. 70% had an abnormal echocardiogram or a cardiac related issue. Why is this so important? A routine physical does not include this type of preventative screening because most insurances require a symptom, in order to pay for the test. Heart disease is a silent killer and usually the first symptom is the heart attack or stroke. These two diseases are preventable if identified early. Many members had Stage I or Stage II Hypertension, and were unaware. Long term hypertension has been shown to cause irreversible changes to the heart as well as increased risk for stroke. Many members benefited from our unique thyroid nodule screen. Thyroid cancer in the early stages has a very high cure rate. We are credited with identifying multiple cases of suspicious thyroid nodules that were later identified as cancerous.



This eye opening data reveals that early detection saves lives. Identifying and treating risks and diseases early will be beneficial to the union member as well as the organization in the long run.

Understanding the risk factors for heart disease is the first step toward prevention.

Heart disease risk factors include:

- **Your age** Simply getting older increases your risk of damaged and narrowed arteries and weakened or thickened heart muscle, which contribute to heart disease.
- **Your sex** Men are generally at greater risk of heart disease. However, the risk for a woman increases after menopause.

- **Family history** A family history of heart disease increases your risk of coronary artery disease, especially if a parent developed it at an early age (before age 55 for a male relative, such as your brother or father, and 65 for a female relative, such as your mother or sister).
- **Smoking** Nicotine constricts your blood vessels, and carbon monoxide can damage their inner lining, making them more susceptible to atherosclerosis. Heart attacks are more common in smokers than in nonsmokers.
- **Poor diet** A diet that's high in fat, salt and cholesterol can contribute to the development of heart disease.
- **High blood pressure** Uncontrolled high blood pressure can result in hardening and thickening of your arteries, narrowing the vessels through which blood flows.
- **High blood cholesterol levels** High levels of cholesterol in your blood can increase the risk of formation of plaques and atherosclerosis. Plaques can be caused by a high level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, known as "bad" cholesterol, or a low level of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, known as "good" cholesterol.
- **Diabetes** Diabetes increases your risk of heart disease. Both conditions share similar risk factors, such as obesity and high blood pressure.
- **Obesity** Excess weight typically worsens other risk factors.
- **Physical inactivity** Lack of exercise also is associated with many forms of heart disease and some of its other risk factors, as well.
- **High stress** Unrelieved stress in your life may damage your arteries as well as worsen other risk factors for heart disease.