



Low: 15; High: 44

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Mon Yough seniors focus of long-range medical study

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A region with some of the oldest demographics in the country will be the focus of a long-range medical study by University of Pittsburgh researchers.

Pitt's Mon Yough Healthy Aging Team researchers said their upcoming five-year study is aimed at improving understanding of healthy aging, particularly of the mind, by identifying factors which cause some elderly to remain healthy while others develop health problems.

Dr. Mary Ganguli, professor of geriatric psychiatry at Pitt, is principal MYHAT investigator.

"She's been studying Alzheimer's disease for many, many years," Kathryn McMichael, R.N., said. "She did a study prior to this for five years (and) a study in the Mon Valley for 15 years beginning in 1987."

Ganguli's work determined many seniors will have a slower thought process without suffering dementia or other permanent problems.

Census figures indicate Allegheny County has the second oldest demographic in the U.S., after Dade County, Fla., while McKeesport and White Oak have the oldest demographics within Allegheny County.

Those figures helped Pitt

secure funding through 2010 for the study from the National Institute on Aging, one of the National Institutes of Health.

While University of Pittsburgh Medical Center has a hospital in this area, McMichael said UPMC McKeesport is not involved in the study.

Over the next two weeks, Pitt researchers will send letters and other mailings to randomly selected seniors in Clairton, McKeesport, West Mifflin, Glassport, Duquesne, Liberty, Dravosburg and White Oak.

The survey is voluntary, and seniors who agree to participate will be offered what Pitt officials called "a small monetary token of appreciation for their time."

Those who do not want to participate can call a toll-free 800 number to be taken off the list.

After the list is compiled, researchers will go to homes in Clairton. After that, they will go "to McKeesport, then West Mifflin, then we haven't determined where to go. We will move into each district (then) we will have to go through each town again. The recruitment will go for two years."

The study has a staff of eight for its first year, including coordinator McMichael, as well as a data entry clerk, an office manager and five nurses. McMichael said the staff will be increased in year two, with six more nurses and maybe another data entry clerk.

MYHAT will be based at offices in Parkside Building II, 3027 Jacks Run Road, White Oak.