

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE  
RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

**Community Resources, Social Isolation, &  
Cardiovascular Disease  
Mortality  
Christopher J. Mooney**

**Background**

The relation between social support and health has long since been confirmed. Research has shown that social isolation, a form of low social support, is associated with all-cause mortality, as well as increased risk for suicide, depression, and cardiovascular disease (CVD). In CVD-free samples, for instance, socially isolated adults have been shown to have 1.5 to 3 times the risk for CVD mortality than those who are more socially integrated. Health behaviorists have theorized that self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to pursue and accomplish a goal) operates as a causal mechanism through which social isolation influences health. Thus, interventions designed to promote self efficacy in adopting health behaviors may modify the observed association between social isolation and CVD mortality.

**Objective**

This study proposes to examine whether the association between social isolation and CVD mortality is moderated by a community-based intervention designed to promote self-efficacy in adopting CVD risk reducing behaviors (smoking cessation, weight loss/control, and exercise).

**Methods**

Utilizing information collected within the framework of a controlled community experiment, the Pawtucket Healthy Heart Program (PHHP), this study will incorporate both inferential and descriptive statistics to examine the association between social isolation and 25-year CVD (1980-2005) mortality among a population-based sample of 2,442 adults.

**Significance**

Apart from providing information on the causal mechanism underlying the relation between social isolation and disease, insights gained from this research could potentially assist clinicians in reducing the risk of CVD in socially isolated patients. Further, the implications of these findings hold public health significance via the improved understanding of how interventions designed to promote confidence in sustaining health promoting behaviors (self-efficacy) can increase cardiovascular health at the population level.

**Committee Co-Chairs:  
Nancy Chin, MPH, PhD  
Robert Gramling, MD, DSc**

**Committee Members:  
Kathi Heffner, PhD**

**Wednesday, March 3, 2010  
12:30PM – 1:00 PM  
Helen Wood Hall, Room 4W301**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME**