

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**STUDY EXAMINES USE OF MEDITATION AND YOGA TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE**

**Volunteers are needed for a study to help determine if mindfulness-based stress reduction is effective for lowering elevated blood pressure**

**TORONTO, ON (February 3, 2010)** – The old adage “mind over matter” is being put to the test at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

Sunnybrook, in collaboration with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, is conducting a study to determine if teaching meditation techniques to people who are in the early stages of developing hypertension is an effective intervention for lowering blood pressure.

Preventing and controlling high blood pressure is shown to be one of the most effective strategies for reducing the incidence of cardiovascular disease and death. Stress has been associated with greater cardiovascular risk and stress management is a recommended intervention for patients with high blood pressure.

Led by Dr. Sheldon Tobe, Nephrologist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, the HARMONY (Hypertension Analysis of Stress Reduction using Meditation & Yoga) study examines a relaxation therapy known as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to see whether it can lower blood pressure and delay or prevent the progression of hypertension. MBSR is a structured program that teaches participants to take charge of their health and well-being and has been shown to alleviate stress and treat certain medical conditions.

“My hope is that this may lead to the day when physicians can refer patients with high blood pressure to trained health practitioners who can deliver standardized, effective lifestyle therapy,” says Dr. Tobe, who is also an Associate Professor in Medicine at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Tobe and his team of researchers are recruiting 70 people over the next year to participate in this research. Participation may be required for up to ten months. During this study period, participants will be asked to come to Sunnybrook for monthly blood pressure assessments and study visits. Also, over the course of nine weeks, participants will attend ten sessions of MBSR in a group setting at Toronto General Hospital. Each session is two-and-a-half hours long. One of these sessions will be a day-long mindfulness meditation retreat that takes place on a Saturday or Sunday. In addition to this, participants will be asked to complete some practice at home.

In order to be eligible for this research study, participants must meet the following criteria:

- Between 20 to 75 years of age
- Have been diagnosed with high-normal or high blood pressure
- Not be taking any medication for elevated blood pressure
- Be willing to participate in the ten sessions (over a period of nine weeks) of Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction

As compensation for each participant’s time in the study, they will receive MBSR therapy and MBSR materials as well as reimbursement for parking costs to attend study sessions.

Please feel free to visit [www.harmonystudy.ca](http://www.harmonystudy.ca) for more information. If you would like to participate, or have any questions regarding your eligibility or if you would like to come in and have your blood pressure assessed, please contact:

**Office of Dr. Sheldon Tobe**

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All queries will remain strictly confidential.

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