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Groundbreaking Chicago-Area Heart Screen Study Identifies 1,000 + Abnormal ECGs in Teenagers

- Abnormalities can indicate life-threatening heart conditions that can lead to sudden cardiac death
- Study of 50,000+ teenagers confirms the importance of ECG screening in identifying young adults at risk for sudden cardiac death
- First study of its size, scope presented today at 2011 Heart Rhythm Society's Scientific Sessions

OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. (May 6, 2011) – The sad stories abound each year as an estimated 2,000ⁱ young adults die from sudden cardiac death (SCA) in the U.S. – in many cases, star athletes dying on the court or field during games and sporting events. But today, a new study indicates that a cost-effective ECG (electrocardiogram) screening may hold the key to identifying students at risk for SCA to prevent such tragedies.

Findings from a four-year study of more than 50,000 young adults found that large scale ECG screenings can identify potentially life-threatening heart conditions.

At this week's 2011 Heart Rhythm Society's Scientific Sessions, Joseph Marek, MD with Midwest Heart Foundation, presented a study based on a cost-effective screening model to identify young adults at risk for sudden cardiac death which has been implemented across the suburban Chicago area since 2006.

“Large scale screenings often mean high costs and low efficiency,” said Marek. “By training and utilizing community volunteers and implementing strict quality controls, we can screen more young people efficiently and cost-effectively.”

Of the 50,665 high school students screened between September 2006 and November 2010 at thirty-two suburban schools in the Chicago area, 2.16 percent (1,096 students) had ECG abnormalities which required further evaluation and could be associated with sudden cardiac death.

Screenings were performed on all physically active students on a voluntary basis, not just limited to school athletes. About 30 percent of those screened were participating in organized sports at the time of the screening.

“Our results demonstrate that large-scale standardized screening in the U.S. is feasible to identify “at risk” young adults for potentially life threatening heart conditions,” said Marek. “By identifying these potential risks, lives can be saved.”

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About Midwest Heart Foundation

Midwest Heart Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity organization committed to improving cardiovascular health through education, screening, research and community leadership.

One of our primary initiatives is identifying and preventing the loss of life from Sudden Cardiac Arrest, a leading cause of death in the U.S. Our programs are designed to educate, screen for risks and help increase survival rates through improved access to life saving resources.

ⁱ Atkins, et al. Epidemiology and Outcomes From Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest in Children: The Resuscitation Outcomes Consortium Epistry–Cardiac Arrest; Circulation. 2009;119:1484-1491