



Genes May Cause Heart Disease in Scotland

Fig. 1. Drinking isn't the only cause of high heart disease in Scotland



Edinburgh University findings have shed light upon the much referenced predisposition of the Scottish population to suffering heart disease. The reason flies in the face of the general finding which attributes the problems to poor diet, high smoking levels, and low exercise. The finding is that an unidentified genetic factor may well be at play in causing the much elevated risk of heart disease in the region.

Researchers reported that even after accounting for the other environmental factors, there still remained a marked difference in the heart disease probabilities. This leaves one of two options: the first is that there is another environmental factor which is not yet identified; or that there is a genetic predisposition within the Scottish population as a whole.

Dr. Richard Mitchell, principal investigator, acknowledged that Scottish persons are far more likely to smoke, drink, and not exercise, however, he stated

that these factors alone do not account for the near twofold increase in heart disease risk north of the border. Previous work has focused upon healthy living, improving diet, encouraging exercise, and lifting the quality of life. Dr. Mitchell went on to explain that although his work has shown that there are other factors involved, there was still value in continuing these health improvement campaigns.

A genetic factor would, with the current state of medicine, be difficult to treat within a large population, such as the Scottish peoples. HeartZine editorial team suggest that it would perhaps be an extension of the study to compare those persons living in Scotland but born of English parents, or those living within England but born of Scottish parents. Although such analysis will not remove all environmental influences it may shed further light on the issue.