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The National Institutes of Health has selected 24 additional centers (list attached) to carry out its Women's Health Initiative (WHI), a \$628 million, 15-year commitment to advancing biomedical research on chronic diseases that affect women.

From a large field of highly-qualified proposals, the NIH has chosen these 24 sites to join the existing 16 centers (list attached) and the WHI coordinating center at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington.

"The WHI is seeking scientifically valid information to help women and their physicians to improve overall health and to promote longer life," explained Ruth L. Kirschstein, M.D., NIH Deputy Director. "With these new centers, the WHI covers most of the nation. Women have been very enthusiastic in their interest in the original 16 centers which were announced in Spring 1993. These locations have carried out 52,000 screening visits and have entered 4,500 women in the clinical trial."

Recruitment continues at the original centers. To be considered for participation at a WHI center, postmenopausal women (aged 50 to 79), who plan to live within the community where they now reside for at least three years, may call their nearest center or (toll-free) 1-800-54-WOMEN. Telephone lines are open now, and full operations at the new centers will begin in February 1995.

"I am particularly pleased that, at 14 of the 24 new sites, the principal investigator, in charge of the study, is a woman," Dr. Kirschstein added.

Two primary WHI goals are to recruit 63,000 postmenopausal women (aged 50 to 79) for a clinical trial and another 100,000 postmenopausal women (aged 50 to 79) for an observational study.

The clinical trial will seek answers to the question of whether low fat dietary patterns prevent breast cancer, colon cancer, and heart disease; whether hormone replacement therapy prevents heart disease and osteoporotic fractures; and whether calcium and vitamin D prevent osteoporotic fractures and colon cancer.

The observational study will seek estimates of the influence of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors on health and disease. This study will also identify new biomarkers--such as biochemical tests and DNA markers--that predict the development of heart disease, cancer, and osteoporotic fractures.

Studies at the additional centers will allow the WHI to reach an even more diverse population of women, especially minority women including African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans. A goal for the WHI is to assure that at least 20 percent of the participants are minority women in order to make the results of the study applicable to all women.