



**St. Elizabeth's Hospital  
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**ST. ELIZABETH'S CARDIOLOGY DEPARTMENT ENROLLING  
PATIENTS IN YALE UNIVERSITY HEART DISEASE STUDY**

*BELLEVILLE, IL* – Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in women 55 years and younger. Women in this age group are twice as likely to die in the first year after their heart attack than men. To join in the fight against heart disease in women, St. Elizabeth's Hospital Cardiology Department and Cardiology Consultants Ltd. are taking part in a nationwide, \$9.7 million Yale University study named VIRGO.

VIRGO stands for Variation in Recovery: Role of Gender on Outcomes of Young Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI) patients. The study, funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health, will examine predictors of a broad range of early and 1-year outcomes including demographic, lifestyle, psychosocial, clinical, physical, biochemical and hormonal characteristics as well as genetic risk factors and processes of care.

Since initiating involvement in mid-2008, St. Elizabeth's has enrolled seven of the 85 patients currently participating. Approximately 2,000 women and 1,000

men (as a comparison group) will be enrolled nationwide as it continues through August 2012. Of the 120 study sites throughout the country, St. Elizabeth's is one of only two in the metro area taking part – the other is Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

“We have been more successful than any other site at actually getting the patients enrolled,” said Anil Shah, M.D., Cath Lab Medical Director and VIRGO site investigator. “The patients are to be thanked for their willingness to take part for the greater good of women everywhere.” He also notes the time and effort put forth by co-investigator Atul Shah, M.D. and site coordinator Bonita Schnieder, MS, RT.

VIRGO bridges disciplines from basic biology to clinical sciences to psychology and health services research. Dr. Judith Lichtman, co-principal investigator from Yale, notes that the question of what accounts for premature heart disease in women and why do they experience worse outcomes than similarly aged men with heart attacks is a major focus. There have been no large, prospective studies of this population, even though the death toll is comparable to that from breast cancer.

Since actual symptoms of a heart attack differ in women, they often have a slower response in seeking help. The ‘Hollywood heart attack’ seen in movies and TV does not always apply. For example, of the five area women enrolled by St. Elizabeth's, none of them had chest pain when they had their heart attack – one had finger cramping, one had right shoulder pain, and another thought she was having an anxiety attack.

“Our goal for both the VIRGO study and other upcoming public events is to educate women on the differences between men and women when it comes to

acute heart disease,” said Schnieder. “We are committed to improving outcomes for women as well as men, and are proud to take part in this prestigious study.”

In conjunction with National Heart Month in February and the national Go Red for Women campaign of the American Heart Association, a special evening event is also planned at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. It will be on **Thursday, February 5** from **6-8 p.m.** in the Southern Illinois Heart Institute building at the back of the hospital. The evening will include tours of the state-of-the-art Cath Lab, presentation by Cardiologist and Cath Lab Medical Director Dr. Anil Shah, educational materials on the VIRGO study and heart disease in women, refreshments and more.

Additional resources: [www.virgostudy.com](http://www.virgostudy.com)  
[www.goredforwomen.org](http://www.goredforwomen.org)

**About St. Elizabeth’s Hospital** St. Elizabeth’s Hospital is accredited by the [Society of Chest Pain Centers](#), a professional organization focused on improving care for patients with acute coronary syndromes and teaching the public to recognize and react to the early symptoms of a possible heart attack. We maintain a Gold Seal of approval from the Joint Commission. The hospital was founded by the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in 1875. Today, we continue their mission: to provide care for the sick and needy with a spirit of respect, care, competence and joy. For more information please contact Kelly Barbeau at 618.234.2120, extension 1270.

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