

FRAMINGHAM

THE FRAMINGHAM HEART STUDY

We traveled north from Philadelphia in June 2008 to visit colleagues in Boston and participate in a panel discussion at the Drug Information Association (DIA) in Boston. The DIA is the main association for pharmacy industry professionals in the world. It is a global organization which is also interested in pharmaceutical industry professionals in Africa. MJOA will describe the DIA in a later article.

We were very excited at the thought of driving past Framingham because of the studies that have come out of this small town in Massachusetts. We have been hearing stories about these studies since first we heard about clinical trials and about health and disease: the link between smoking and heart disease came out of these studies, as did the links between cholesterolemia and premature death from cardiovascular disease and hypertension and stroke.

According to the site Framingham.com:

"Fifty years of data collected from residents of Framingham have produced over 1,000 scientific papers, identified major risk factors associated with heart disease, stroke and other diseases, paved the way for researchers to undertake singular clinical trials based on Framingham findings, created a revolution in preventive medicine, and forever changed the way the medical community and general public view the genesis of disease."

FRAMINGHAM MASSACHUSETTS

So here we have a small town in Framingham whose population has changed the lives of Americans, to whom we can be grateful for their help in discovering the genesis of disease. No wonder we were excited, wanted to see what Framingham looked like and shake the hands of the study participants and thank them. Especially since one of us (SJD) had just become an American citizen on 06 June.

Well, we tried. We drove through Framingham and took pictures, and all we saw was a town with no visible industry or major medical centers with a small and stressed-looking community hospital. We see from the website that the Perini Corporation has a building off Main Street.

On the main street into Framingham we stopped a car coming out of a chain donut and coffee shop and asked the lady wearing a neck brace and her adult daughter where we could find the Framingham Heart Study. They looked at each other and said that maybe it was in a church somewhere, we could ask at the library, but they really did not know.

We report asking several locals at various times during work at Boston hospitals (MW) and never finding a single local who had ever heard of the study.



We find this shocking. Exploitation of poor humans in America for the benefit of other Americans? Have any of the locals been told about the study? Are the locals aware they are in a study? Do the locals live in Framingham? Were we just exceedingly unlucky in not finding a single Framingham human who had heard of the study? Why does Framingham not have a huge medical center devoted to caring for and studying the citizens of Framingham? Why has Framingham not benefited greatly from the study?

**By SJ Dodgson BSc(Hons), PhD and
Macharia Waruingi MD, DHA**