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Asian-American Women Live Longest

By Lucy Williams, Ivanhoe Health Correspondent

ORLANDO, Fla. (Ivanhoe Newswire) -- Women in Japan are recognized for having the longest lifespan in the world. But Asian-American women may live even longer.

In 2001, the average life expectancy for women living in Japan was 84.7 years. According to a new study, Asian women in the United States live three years longer than women in Japan.

In the "Eight Americas" study at Harvard University in Boston, researchers divided several race-county combinations into eight distinct groups. The study exposed major health disparities between race-county groups in the United States. The difference in life expectancy between the best-off and worst-off groups was 18 years in 2001. Life expectancy ranged from 68.7 for black males to 86.7 for Asian females.

Asian-American females have achieved one of the highest levels of health expectancy on record, surpassing that of Japanese females. At the same time, some groups in America are experiencing levels of health associated with middle-income or low-income developing countries.

Matthew Edlund, M.D., of the Center for Circadian Medicine in Sarasota, Fla., said Asian-American women live longer because their lifestyles reflect moderation. He suggested people try to remember the acronym "FAR" when practicing healthy lifestyles.

"FAR. Food, activity and rest," Dr. Edlund told Ivanhoe, "In moderation. That's what these healthy communities are doing. It's not sexy or exciting, but that's what is working."

How to Go FAR

- Food. Most Asian-American women in the study had not fully adapted to the standard American diet. Their diets emphasized vegetables, fish and nutritional variety.
- Activity. Lots of ordinary physical activity, like walking, keeps Asian-American women healthy.
- Rest. Regular sleeping patterns contribute to the health of Asian-American women.

Dr. Edlund said Americans should learn from the Asian-American lifestyle to improve their quality of health. "Preventative health is important. If you look at what we're spending on the medical care system, it's mind-blowing."

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SOURCE: Ivanhoe interview with Matthew Edlund, M.D., the Center for Circadian Medicine in Sarasota, FL; *PLoS Medicine*, Sept. 2006