
Abstract

Spouse correlations in cardiovascular risk factors were investigated using data on 2,836 spouse pairs collected in the Busselton Population Health Surveys over the period 1966-1981. The risk factors considered were systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, body mass index, triceps fatfold, cholesterol, and forced expiratory volume (1 second). Statistically significant positive correlations (p < 0.01) were found for all (age-adjusted) variables. There was a statistically significant decreasing trend in the correlations for systolic blood pressure with marriage duration (trend p < 0.01). Although no other variables showed statistically significant trends, the correlations for diastolic blood pressure (p = 0.29), body mass index (p = 0.14), and forced expiratory volume (p = 0.16) also decreased with marriage duration, and correlations for cholesterol (p = 0.61) and triceps fatfold (p = 0.99) increased with marriage duration. These results suggest that there is spousal concordance in cardiovascular risk factors. The lack of consistent increasing trends in the correlations with marriage duration suggests that assortative mating may be a more likely explanation than the sharing of a common environment.