

Humor, healthy hearts linked

By The Associated Press

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BALTIMORE — A good laugh may be good for the heart.

A team of Maryland medical researchers found that people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in humorous situations than those with healthy hearts.

But it is uncertain whether humor helps prevent heart problems or if people with heart problems tend to lose their senses of humor.

"That question would be more interesting, but it would also be much harder to answer," said Dr. Rose Marie Robertson, a Vanderbilt University cardiologist and president of the American Heart Association.

The study of 300 people — half of

whom had histories of heart problems — used questionnaires to gauge how healthy people and those with heart disease differed in their responses to situations where humor was expected.

The people with heart disease were much less likely to even recognize humor. They also laughed less, even in positive situations, and generally displayed more anger and hostility than people with healthy hearts.

"The ability to laugh . . . may have important implications in societies such as the U.S., where heart disease remains the No. 1 killer," said Michael Miller, director of the Center for Preventative Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center.