
Study Shows Young Women Ignore Symptoms of Heart Attack



New research led by the Yale School of Public Health finds that younger women ignore or dismiss early symptoms of an impending heart attack such as pain and dizziness. They also delay seeking emergency medical care. That is why death rates of young women as compared to similarly aged men are much higher. The research has been published in the journal *Circulation Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*.

The research examines the experiences of women within the 30 to 55 years age group who were hospitalised with acute myocardial infarction. The nine member research team conducted in-depth interviews with the young women to explore how they responded during the crucial period when their first symptoms manifested and they decided to seek medical care.

The researchers found that the women's initial symptoms varied widely in duration and nature. Patients inaccurately assessed their personal risk of heart disease and their decision to seek emergency health was sometimes influenced by external factors such as work and family. Many of the patients did not receive a complete or prompt workout for their AMI symptoms and also did not access primary care routinely.

"Young women with multiple risk factors and a strong family history of cardiac disease should not assume they are too young to have a heart attack," said lead researcher Judith Lichtman, associate professor and chair of the Department of Chronic Disease Epidemiology. "Participants in our study said they were concerned about initiating a false alarm in case their symptoms were due to something other than a heart attack. Identifying strategies to empower women to recognise symptoms and seek prompt care without stigma or perceived judgment may be particularly critical for young women at increased risk for heart disease."

The study researchers note that the findings suggest the need to educate women about the symptoms of a heart attack and to change the way both women and healthcare providers respond to their symptoms. More than 15,000 women under the age of 55 die from heart disease each year in the US. It is one of the leading causes of death within this age group. By promoting knowledge about heart disease and by making women understand the importance of seeking prompt care, preventive heart care within this population could be improved.

Source: Yale University

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