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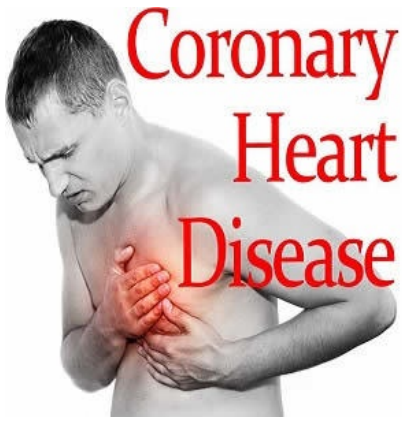
Male General Practitioners Consider Heart Disease a 'Man's Issue'



According to a study of 52 general practitioners (GPs) and more than 2200 patients, male GPs are more likely to consider heart disease a "man's issue" and neglect to assess cardiovascular risk in female patients. The study is published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology* .

Lead author Dr Raphaëlle Delpech, a general practitioner at Paris XI University and INSERM U1018 in Paris, France explains that death from cardiovascular disease has been decreasing in developed countries but the decrease in mortality has been more in men as compared to women. That is mainly because men receive better cardiovascular care and secondary prevention after a first event.

During this study, the investigators examined the influence of GP and patient gender on cardiovascular risk assessment. The GPs and patients included in the study completed a questionnaire about their personal characteristics including their age, gender, office hours, educational level etc. Patient gender, age, history of diabetes and information about standard cardiovascular risk factors was also collected.

Based on the information in the patient's medical files, the researchers assessed their risk by using the French sore which estimates cardiovascular risk as low, moderate or high depending on the factors present or the SCORE scale which predicts the probability of a cardiovascular event in the next ten years based on the cardiovascular risk factors.

Since information about smoking, blood glucose and cholesterol were reported less often in female patients, cardiovascular risk scales could be assessed less frequently in female patients as compared to male patients.

According to Dr. Delpech, "Guidelines recommend screening for cardiovascular risk factors in men and women but it appears that GPs are more attentive to these factors in their male patients. This could be because CVD is more frequent among men, who have historically been more likely to adopt risky habits like smoking."

Less disparity in gender risk assessment was found among female GPs as compared to male GPs. But overall, the least well-assessed patients for cardiovascular risk were women who were seen by male GPs. Female GPs were found to follow guidelines more routinely as compared to male GPs. Dr. Delpech highlights the need for a government media campaign targeted at physicians to help raise awareness and stimulate change. She also suggested introducing performance-related pay for GPs based on their assessment of patients' cardiovascular risk.

Dr Delpech concluded: "Assessment of cardiovascular risk in all patients regardless of their gender is another step towards reducing mortality from this disease in both men and women."

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