The November 8, 2007 edition of the Washington Examiner carried the following article on heart disease in women, featuring an interview with HeartHealthyWomen.org Medical Advisor Dr. Alexandra Lansky:

More women die from heart attacks

Robin Tierney, The Examiner
2007-11-08 08:00:00.0

WASHINGTON -

Quick, who's at greater risk of fatal heart attacks — men or women?

Women. Every minute, more than 16 women worldwide die of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke. Each year, it claims more women's lives than cancer, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria combined.

Over the last 20 years, the toll has declined in men while steadily increasing in women, said Dr. Alexandra Lansky, who directs the New York-based Women's Cardiovascular Health Initiative at the Cardiovascular Research Foundation.

Misperceptions cause women to excuse away symptoms that would compel them to rush husbands or sons to the emergency room. “As caretaker, a woman puts herself last in the queue,” Lansky said. Yet early intervention saves lives of women experiencing a heart attack or unstable chest pain — and reduces risk of future attacks.

Awareness is an issue for physicians, too. “They are so preconditioned to think of heart disease as a disease of men,” Lansky said, and that they tend to attribute the same symptoms in women to other conditions.

For a 55-year-old patient reporting sweats, heart palpitations and shortness of breath, “I would not assume it's just menopause,” Lansky said. She would assess the individual's risks, take a family history and conduct diagnostic tests.

Barely a third of cardiovascular clinical trial patients are female. Confusion grows, Lansky said, when media coverage focuses on small “underpowered” studies instead of large-scale research showing the value of early interventions, such as angioplasty, for preventing heart attacks and deaths in women.

So what's a woman to do?

Among Lansky's recommendations:

» Don't hesitate to ask your doctor whether symptoms may indicate heart disease. The Web site, hearthealthywomen.org lists specific questions.

» Take preventive measures now: Exercise daily, eat nutritious foods and maintain a healthy weight.

» Begin cardiovascular screening at age 20 — since disease starts in the teens and develops over decades.

» Parents, train children's palates from the start. “I'm stunned by the lunch menus in schools,” Lansky said, a mother herself. Over-reliance on fast, packaged and processed foods establishes bad habits early on and leads to disease down the road.

» Act fast when experiencing any symptoms.

“It takes women 15 or 20 minutes longer to get to the emergency room than men,” Lansky said. “The sooner they go, the greater the benefits ... from quality of life to life itself.”

What's your risk?

Misperceptions cause women to excuse away symptoms, so do yourself or someone else a favor and use the risk calculator to get prevention, testing and treatment facts online at hearthealthywomen.org

Examiner
SEO by AceSEF