

Women s heart symptoms too often misdiagnosed

By ACSH Staff — October 24, 2012

People even many doctors think of heart attacks as something that strike mostly men, which may be one reason why women who suffer symptoms sometimes get delayed medical treatment, with deadly consequences. [According to a presentation](#) ^[1] at the Acute Cardiac Care Congress meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, women are over twice as likely to die in a hospital from a heart attack than men. Of 5,000 patients hospitalized for heart attacks, 9 percent of women died and 4.4 percent of men, Guillaume Leurent, MD, of the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire in Rennes, France, and colleagues reported.

The reasons for this disparity are several: Women had waited longer to call for medical assistance 60 minutes on average, compared to 44 minutes for the men; they were also older and more likely to have high blood pressure than men. Women also suffered longer delays until acute coronary interventions (angioplasty, for example) were carried out.

In addition, they were less likely to be discharged on recommended therapies such as aspirin and beta-blockers.

ACSH s Dr. Gilbert Ross says this is unacceptable. It seems like an echo of a previous century to point out that women should be treated with evidence-based medicine, just as men are. The traditional wisdom, Dr. Ross says, holds that women s symptoms of a myocardial infarction are vaguer and more diffuse than men s, and include nausea, sweating, a vague sense of impending doom and palpitations. He concludes, While women should be educated to seek treatment as soon as possible, doctors especially in the emergency-room setting need to have their radar up when a woman arrives with perhaps atypical symptoms.

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