

Migraines may be another common risk factor for cardiovascular events

By ACSH Staff — January 16, 2013

Women who have migraines with aura pre-headache symptoms that include visions of flashing lights or zigzag lines, for example may face a higher risk for cardiovascular problems, a new [study](#) [1] suggests.

The study, which will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology meeting in March, included data on close to 28,000 women enrolled in the ongoing Women s Health Study at Brigham and Women s Hospital and Harvard Medical School.

The women, 1,435 of whom reported having migraines with aura, were followed for incidence of major heart disease, including nonfatal heart attack, nonfatal stroke, or death caused by a cardiovascular problem.

The presence of migraines with aura, the researchers found, was significantly associated with the women s cardiovascular disease risk.

After high blood pressure, migraine with aura was the second strongest single contributor to risk of heart attacks and strokes, says study author Tobias Kurth, MD, of the National Institute of Health and Medical Research in Bordeaux, France. "It came ahead of diabetes, current smoking, obesity, and family history of early heart disease.

Doctors definitely should be cognizant of this study albeit preliminary and observational, says ACSH s Dr. Gilbert Ross. Migraine syndrome specifically with aura must now be taken seriously as a possible risk factor for cardiovascular problems. Of course, there is nothing said about reducing its effects, if migraines are truly involved in causation. In fact, the treatments for this disabling and common condition might actually increase heart risk by raising blood pressure, as some do.

He continued, The only thing treating docs can do is be even more attentive to the other, modifiable risk factors, such as lipid levels and smoking.

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