

Women patients still missing in heart research

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Women remain underrepresented in heart disease research, even though

it's the leading cause of death among women worldwide, researchers say.

Women accounted for less than 40% of all people enrolled in cardiovascular clinical [trials](#) from 2010 through 2017, according to a study published Feb. 17 in the journal *Circulation*.

"One woman dies from [cardiovascular disease](#) every 80 seconds. It's the leading killer of all women around the globe, claiming the lives of one in every three women, yet disparities continue to persist when it comes to symptom recognition, treatment times and methodologies, and even lifesaving support measures," said journal editor-in-chief Dr. Joseph Hill, chief of cardiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

For the study, Lijing Yan of the Global Health Research Center at Duke Kunshan University, in China, and colleagues analyzed 740 completed cardiovascular clinical trials. Those trials were reported between 2010 and the beginning of 2018 on ClinicalTrials.gov, a U.S. government site that's one of the largest trial registries in the world.

The [clinical trials](#) included a total of nearly 863,000 adults, aged 25 to 89, with an average age of 61.

Overall, only 38% of the participants were women, the investigators found.

Trials with the highest proportion of women (about 54%) were those sponsored by research institutes. With the exception of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, trials sponsored solely by the government had the lowest proportion of women (16%), likely because most were sponsored by the Veteran Affairs Office of Research and Development, the study authors noted in a journal news release.

Acute coronary syndrome trials had the lowest proportion of women (27%), while pulmonary hypertension trials had the highest (76%). Pulmonary hypertension is high blood pressure in the arteries to your lungs.

Women aged 55 or younger had the highest female representation in trials (50%), while those aged 61 to 65 had the lowest (26%), according to the report.

Trials of devices, procedures and medication had lower representation by women than trials focused on diet and exercise, Yan's team noted.

The study authors believe more needs to be done to boost the number of [women](#) in cardiovascular research, and until that happens, [health care providers](#) need to be aware of gender differences in heart disease symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prognosis.

More information: The U.S. Office on Women's Health has more about [heart disease](#).

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