

Diabetes takes a toll on women's hearts

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Studies find up to a 40 percent greater risk of coronary problems in females.

(HealthDay)—Diabetes may be harder on women's hearts than it is on men's.

Two new studies have found an increased risk of heart problems, such as heart attack and chest pain, in women with diabetes compared to men with the blood sugar disorder. In one of the studies—a review that included almost 11 million people—the risk was about 40 percent higher.

"We should avoid sexual prejudice in cardiovascular disease, take all necessary steps to diagnose it early, and control risk factors comprehensively to guarantee the most suitable treatments and best possible outcomes in female patients," wrote study author Dr. Xue Dong, of the Affiliated ZhongDa Hospital of Southeast University in Nanjing, China and colleagues.

However, it's important to note that both studies could only find an association between diabetes and a higher risk of heart disease in women than men. Neither study was designed to prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

Diabetes is a known risk factor for heart troubles. But, it hasn't been clear if the heart risk is greater for women or men, the Chinese researchers said.

Dong and colleagues reviewed 19 previously conducted studies done between 1966 and 2014. Combined, the studies had nearly 11 million people from North America, Europe and Asia. Among these people, more than 106,000 fatal or non-fatal heart attacks or chest pain (angina) events occurred, the study said.

The researchers found that women with diabetes had a 38 percent greater risk of heart attack or angina than men with diabetes did.

The second study included data from hospitals across the Tuscan region of Italy. The information was collected between 2005 and 2012. The study included more than 3 million people, the researchers said. Forty-seven percent were male.

The Italian researchers, led by Dr. Giuseppe Seghieri of the Regional Health Agency in Florence, found that women with diabetes had a 34 percent greater risk of heart attack than men with diabetes. And, women with diabetes had a higher risk of heart attack than men regardless of age, the study found.

The study found a similar risk for congestive heart failure or stroke in people with diabetes of both sexes.

Neither group of researchers offered possible explanations as to why these gender differences might exist.

And neither study specified whether the participants had type 1 or type 2 diabetes, although the vast majority of cases are type 2.

Both studies were scheduled to be presented on Monday at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes, in Stockholm, Sweden. Findings presented at meetings are generally viewed as preliminary until they've been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: Learn more about preventing

diabetes complications, such as heart disease, from the [U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](#).

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