

Overcoming the Challenges: Helping Women With Heart Valve Disease



WOMENHEART
THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR
WOMEN WITH HEART DISEASE

Supported by Edwards Lifesciences Foundation

WHAT IS IT?

Heart valve disease (HVD) is also called valvular heart disease (VHD). With HVD, a patient's heart valve function gets progressively worse unless it's treated.

HVD includes a narrowing of the heart valve (called **stenosis**) or a leaking heart valve (called **regurgitation**).

WHAT DO HEART VALVES DO?

ONE WAY

ONE WAY

Each of the four chambers of the heart has a valve at its exit. The **mitral valve** and the **tricuspid valve** control blood flow from the **atria** to the **ventricles**. The **aortic valve** and the **pulmonary valve** control blood flow out of the ventricles. The valves keep the blood flowing one way through the heart with no backward leakage.

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE HVD?

As many as

11.6 MILLION AMERICANS

Approximately **1 in 50 women of all ages**

1 in 13 women age 65–75

1 in 10 women age 75 and up

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF HVD?

♥ **Aortic stenosis**

affects **1 in 4 women** over the age of 65

♥ **Aortic regurgitation or insufficiency**

affects approximately **8% of women**

♥ **Mitral regurgitation or insufficiency**

may affect **2%-3% of women**

♥ **Mitral stenosis is three times**

more common in women than men



WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO DIAGNOSIS?

- Women often ignore their symptoms and delay seeing their health professionals.
- Once they do see a health professional, women are less likely to be diagnosed with HVD, which can lead to greater damage to the heart.
- HVD affects each woman differently depending on her age, physical conditions, emotional well-being, and the disease severity, making diagnosis complicated.

OTHER BARRIERS ARE:

- Lack of access to care.
- Not receiving timely referrals to specialists.
- Lack of trust, understanding, and clear communication between health professionals and African American patients.
- Socioeconomic factors, which could include work experience, occupation, income, and education.
- The combination of the cost of care and access to care.

HOW ARE AFRICAN AMERICANS AFFECTED?



45% of African American women age 20 and older have high blood pressure.



Chronic high blood pressure increases the likelihood of heart failure, one of the main risk factors for HVD.



Another contributing factor is untreated **strep throat**, which can lead to **rheumatic fever**. Rheumatic fever can damage heart valves. This is most common in African Americans and women.

HOW IS HVD TREATED?



In the past the standard treatment was open heart surgery. Today, **transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR)** or **transcatheter mitral valve repair** is commonly used. With these treatments, women often fair worse than men because their disease has progressed further when they get treatment.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO TREATMENT FOR MINORITIES?

- Minorities have **earlier onset** of HVD, which hinders their daily activities or ability to earn income.
- Hospitals and facilities where minorities typically seek treatment also tend to be ones that **don't conduct** transcatheter procedures.
- **90%** of TAVRs in the United States are done in urban teaching hospitals; **78%** of patients served by these hospitals are in higher income zip codes.
- Minorities and underserved patients are referred for TAVR **less often** than white patients.
- Minorities are at **increased risk** for poor outcomes because HVD strikes earlier (ages 65-70), they have more health factors that complicate treatment, and they have a higher risk of dying from the condition.

RESOURCES

1. Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. (2017). ABC Roundtable: Addressing Disparities in Contemporary Care of the Minority Patient with Valvular Heart Disease Summary Recommendations. Retrieved from http://abc cardio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ABC-Summary-Recommendations_Addressing-Disparities-in-Valvular-Heart-Disease.pdf.
2. Alliance for Aging Research, (2018). Chronic Disease and Medical Innovation in Aging Nation: The Silver Book: Valve Disease.
3. Alliance for Aging Research, (2015). Valve Disease in Women: Detecting & Treating Heart Valve Problems. Retrieved from http://www.livingwithvalvedisease.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Valve-Disease-in-Women_Brochure.pdf.
4. Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc. (2017). Association of Black Cardiologists Roundtable: Improving Health Care Access for Minority and High-Risk Populations Summary Recommendations. Retrieved from http://abc cardio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Summary_of_Recommendations.pdf.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

- ♥ Increase education and awareness about HVD.
- ♥ Simplify the prior authorization process.
- ♥ Advance telemedicine and telehealth to improve access to care.
- ♥ Promote pharmacy programs that improve patient access.
- ♥ Increase the number of community health workers who can help patients overcome challenges.

