What you can do for yourself:

• Review the Convening summary, keeping in mind some of the more common reasons women are misdiagnosed:
  
  - Symptoms of heart disease and heart attack can be different in women than men and therefore, both women and their doctors may not recognize the risk to their health.

  - Time pressure in the clinic can lead to the omission of relevant information in a patient’s history, an incomplete physical exam, or to a breakdown in trust between the patient and clinician.

  - Implicit or explicit bias based on a patient’s age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity or appearance, or beliefs about women’s stress or anxiety, that may discount heart disease as a possible diagnosis.

• Pay close attention to your health — learn your family health history and track any symptoms you may experience.

• If you develop new or different symptoms, see your provider, and push for more information if you feel that your questions are not being answered.

• Consult WomenHeart’s resources on signs, symptoms and risk factors for different types of heart disease — go to your appointments informed.

What you can do for fellow patients:

• Spread the word to your friends and family that heart disease is the number one killer of women. Raising awareness can help empower people with knowledge and combat misdiagnosis.

• Support and encourage women experiencing symptoms to advocate for themselves and seek additional opinions if they are being dismissed. If you are a woman living with heart disease, consider volunteering to become a WomenHeart Champion.

• For anyone trying to navigate a diagnosis, point them to the Patient Toolkit for Diagnosis.

What you can do to improve healthcare for women:

• Join your local hospital or health system’s Patient Family Advisory Council, or PFAC, and suggest addressing the issue of misdiagnosis of heart disease in women.

• Share your story of misdiagnosis with WomenHeart (email patientsupport@womenheart.org) or the Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine’s Patient Storybank.

• Sign up to receive WomenHeart’s call to action alerts to email your members of Congress and advocate for policies to support women with heart disease.

• Sign up to be a PCORI Ambassador and find opportunities to partner in heart disease-related diagnostic research.

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