

Understanding the Misdiagnosis Crisis in Women's Heart Disease: A Fact Sheet



Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women, yet it remains underdiagnosed, undertreated, and often mismanaged. Many women experience diagnostic and treatment delays or errors, leading to worse outcomes compared to men. Understanding facts about these challenges is the first step toward ensuring women receive equitable and timely care.

- **Clinical trials often do not include enough women** to properly report sex-based differences in medication side effects, outcomes and more.
- Although risk factors like **diabetes and obesity** are more common in women, they are **less likely to get treatments** that meet **recommended guidelines**.
- Women may be as likely as men to benefit from a **pacemaker or a defibrillator**, but they are **less likely to receive these treatments**.
- One study examining patients at various hospitals over a 19-year period found that when **heart attack patients and their providers** are the **same gender**, the patient's **probability of survival increases**.



- Only **22% of primary care** providers and **42% of cardiologists** reported being **well prepared** to assess **cardiovascular disease risk in women**.
- Compared to men, women are seen **less frequently** in the hospital by **cardiovascular specialists** because their symptoms are often **dismissed or misunderstood**.
- Women and men both commonly experience **chest pain** during a heart attack, and women often have **additional symptoms that are less obvious**. However, both women and their healthcare providers were **less likely to attribute their symptoms to heart disease** compared with men.
- Women have a **50% higher chance** than men of receiving the **wrong initial diagnosis** after a heart attack.

SOURCES:

1) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5867082/>
2) <http://www.escardio.org>
3) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5502480/>

4) <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11936-019-0753-0>
5) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5822747/#:~:text=Women%20presented%20with%20a%20greater,heart%20disease%20compared%20with%20men.>

6) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2048872616661693?journalCode=acca>
7) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4834856/>