

Metabolic and Life-style Risk Factors for Coronary Artery Disease: Age variation in gender gaps

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Introduction: Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) is the leading cause of death in postmenopausal women. In women <55y, the incidence of CAD is one-third that of men, but by 75y this gender gap disappears.

Aim: To characterize the metabolic and life-style risk factors for CAD in women at different age groups compared with age-matched men, to identify age-specific risk factors for CAD among women. **Methods:** 768 patients, 452 men and 316 women, were divided into 2 age groups: Group1 included 449 subjects aged 56-64; Group2 comprised 319 patients aged 65 and over. All were hospitalized in Hadassah hospitals during 1990-1995 with confirmed CAD diagnosis. Data on blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol levels were retrieved from medical records. Life-style information was collected by telephone interview. Gender comparison within each age group was carried out by a chi-square test.

Results: In Group1, all risk factors studied were significantly more prevalent in women compared with men, with the exception of sedentary behavior and smoking. In Group2 there were only two significant gender differences: hypertension was more prevalent among women and heavy smoking among men. Similarly, only 7% of Group1 men had all risk factors compared with 23% of women. Males' risk factors profiles hardly changed throughout life; proportion of women with no risk factors for CAD almost doubled, from 7.3% (Group1) to 13.2% (Group2).

Conclusion: The risk factors profile of women with CAD varies significantly with age, compared with no change in men. Gender- and age-specific therapeutic strategies should be examined.