

PRODROMAL SYMPTOMS IN MEN AND WOMEN WITH CHD: DO THEY DIFFER?

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Purpose: Our research indicates that 95% of women with coronary heart disease (CHD) retrospectively report experiencing early warning prodromal symptoms (PS) prior to a myocardial infarction (MI) but it is unknown if men experience similar, different or no PS. Therefore, we recruited a small sample of men to explore the comparability of the PS reported by men and women who had experienced a MI.

Method: A convenience sample of 21 men who had experienced a MI, as indicated by ICD-9 code, completed the McSweeney Acute and Prodromal Myocardial Infarction Symptom Survey (MAPMISS) 4-6 months after experiencing a MI. This time frame allowed men to recognize symptoms that had recently appeared or had increased in frequency and/or intensity prior to their MI and reverted to previous levels after the MI. We then compared the frequencies of PS in the male sample with an existing data set of 515 women who met the same inclusion criteria as the male subjects and completed the MAPMISS in the same designated time frame. Since the MAPMISS had only been previously validated with women, men were provided the opportunity to add any additional symptoms or symptom descriptors.

Findings: The sample of men was 48% Caucasian (n=10), 48% African American (n=10), and 5% (n=1) Hispanic. The women's sample was 93% Caucasian (n=481), 6% African American, and 1% Native American (n=2). The men were younger (mean age of 54, \pm 14.6) than the women (mean age of 66 \pm 12; $p < .001$). Men's most frequently occurring PS were unusual fatigue (71%), shortness of breath (62%), sleep disturbance (57%) and vision changes (47.6%), followed by difficulty breathing at night (42.9%), heart racing (42.9%), and indigestion (42.9%). Women's most frequent PS were unusual fatigue (71%), sleep disturbance (48%), shortness of breath (42%) and indigestion (39%), followed by anxiety (36%), heart racing (27%), and arms weak or heavy (25%). Individual men reported three PS not reported by women: irritability, feeling bad and night sweats. The mean number of PS for men was 7.05 \pm 4.8 compared to 5.71 \pm 4.36 for women (0.17). Men had a mean PS score (presence of PS x intensity x frequency) of 76 (\pm 60.7) comparable to 58.5 (\pm 52.8) for women ($p = .13$).

Discussion: Both groups reported experiencing PS, with unusual fatigue as the most frequent symptom for both groups. The overall prodromal experience appears comparable for men and women. Further research is needed with larger equivalent groups.