

High blood pressure may mask potentially deadly heart condition

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New research published in *Psychophysiology* finds a relationship between increased blood pressure and decreased pain perception in a variety of circumstances, including among individuals with heart disease. This phenomenon extends to those who typically suffer chest pain during exercise, and may be correlated with a potentially deadly heart condition.

The new study draws on data collected from over 900 patients undergoing exercise stress testing to diagnose possible myocardial ischemia (MI), a condition where oxygenated blood is prevented from reaching the heart because an artery has become blocked or constricted.

Generally, exercise should produce pain in these situations; however some patients experience “silent” cases of MI in which no pain is felt. Previous studies have suggested that high blood pressure and silent ischemia may be correlated, and this new research provides further validation.

“This has implications for several areas, such as the effects of stress, non-adherence to treatment and silent myocardial ischemia,” says Bianca D’Antono, author of the study. “Further research will be needed to better understand the relationship between blood pressure, pain perception and heart disease.”

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

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