

Women less likely to have a stroke after mini-stroke

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30 days after a transient ischemic attack, women are 30 percent less likely to have a stroke than men, according to researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and Yale University. The analysis, including hospitalization records for more than 122,000 patients aged 65 and older, could help improve prevention and heart-related care for both men and women.

The findings underscore the need to continue researching gender differences in disease prevention and follow-up care.

Data show 30 days after a transient ischemic attack (TIA), women are 30 percent less likely to have a stroke, 14 percent less likely to have heart-related problems and 26 percent less likely to die than men of the same age, the researchers said. TIAs are called mini-strokes because they produce stroke-like symptoms but rarely cause lasting damage.

The study appears online in the journal *Stroke* and was presented at the American Stroke Association International Stroke Conference in San Diego.

"We know that many TIA patients show up at medical centers with heart problems within a month of the first event, and even more show up within a year," said Virginia Howard, Ph.D., an associate professor in the UAB School of Public Health and a study co-author. "Now we're seeing that warning signal may mean differing things for different people depending on gender, age and many other factors."

Besides the post-30-day period, the study authors analyzed the one-year-period after TIA and found women were 15 percent less likely to have a stroke, 19 percent less likely to have a cardiac event and 22 percent less likely to die than men.

Researchers reviewed the records of more than 122,000 patients aged 65 and older who were hospitalized for a TIA in 2002.

TIAs occur when a blood clot temporarily blocks an artery and a part of the brain fails to get needed blood. Most strokes are not preceded by a TIA, but more than a third of TIA patients will later have a stroke, according to the American Stroke Association.

While additional research is needed to better understand the reasons for the gender-related difference in health outcomes, the findings could help improve prevention and heart-related care for both men and women, said Judith H. Lichtman, Ph.D., an associate professor at Yale School of Public Health and the study's lead author.

"Identifying opportunities to improve primary and secondary stroke prevention is increasingly important as our population ages and is at greater risk," Lichtman said.

Source: University of Alabama at Birmingham

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