

Heart attacks jump in young Italian women

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The incidence of acute myocardial infarction in Italy sharply increased, particularly among young women, between the years 2001 and 2005, according to a comprehensive study funded by the Human Health Foundation (HHF), a nonprofit Italian charity for biomedical research and health education in Spoleto, Italy. The results were published in *Aging Clinical Experimental Research*.

"The study suggests that more information on measures to reduce risk factors for [heart failure](#) should be directed towards young women," says Antonio Giordano, MD, PhD, President and Founder of the Sbarro Health Research Organization for Biotechnology (SHRO), located in the College of Science and Technology at Temple University in Philadelphia and the Founder and Director of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the HHF.

The study shows that the total number of acute myocardial infarctions were over 118,000 (of which 75,000 were men and 43,000 women) in the year 2005 against 96,000 in 2001.

"The increase was 17.2% in men and 29.2% in women," says lead author Prisco Piscitelli, MD, an epidemiologist at the ISBEM (Euro Mediterranean Biomedical and Scientific Institute) in Brindisi, Italy, SHRO and HHF. "The greatest number of hospitalizations for heart failure was recorded in men aged 45 to 64 years (29,900 cases in 2005) and in women over 75 years of age (26,500 cases). In the later age group women overtook men, who had 24,000 admissions in 2005."

Across the board, the increase in the number of hospitalizations for heart failure from 2001 to 2005 was found to be higher in women in all age groups examined, reaching peaks of 36% in women over seventy five years but with an impressive +22% (compared to a nearly stationary +8% men) found in younger women aged between 45 and 64 years.

"In our earlier HHF and SHRO survey on [breast cancer](#), we also found that younger women in particular had an increased risk of disease," notes Dr. Giordano. "We must do much more to protect and better educate female patients in their forties and fifties on their risk factors for both breast cancer and heart failure."

According to Alessandro Distanto, MD, PhD, the Scientific Director of ISBEM and the only Italian to have received the prestigious Award of the American College of Cardiology, "So rapid and large an increase in admissions for heart attacks in younger women may be the first visible consequence of the radical change in women's lifestyles over the last forty years, with the growth of exposure to cardiovascular risk factors like cigarette smoking."

Noting the increased numbers of heart attacks in women over 75 years, the study confirms the importance of the loss of the protective effect of menopause in a country characterized by a continuous increase in the number of older people and particularly older women.

The costs of hospitalizations and hospital treatment of heart attacks in Italy (including angioplasty and bypass) widened from 305 to 370 million euros for the years 2001 to 2005. Increased costs of rehabilitation post-cardiac events rose from 349 million to 424 million euros over five years.

"Remembering always that a proportion of patients still die without reaching the hospital, the annual cost for [acute myocardial infarction](#) for

those who come to the hospital amounted to 800 million euros in 2005 with an average cost of 3115 euros per patient. Today, it's very likely that sum has exceeded one billion euros per year, " says Dr. Piscitelli.

Provided by Sbarro Health Research Organization

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