

New evaluation of the Heart Truth professional education materials released

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Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States. Yet historically, women have been less likely than men to receive evidence-based medical care for both the prevention and management of heart disease. In 1999 the American Heart Association (AHA) published the first clinical recommendations for the prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD) in women. This was soon followed by the implementation of The Heart Truth® campaign for consumers in 2002 by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), which was expanded in 2004 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office on Women's Health to target healthcare providers. Since the initial AHA publication, the clinical guidelines have been updated three times, most recently in 2011.

The HHS Office on Women's [Health](#), in collaboration with the AHA and NHLBI, updated its series of online professional education materials designed to improve clinical ability to better prevent, diagnose, and treat [heart disease](#) in women. The updates were implemented with assistance from the Jacobs Institute of Women's Health at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services (SPHHS), guided by an expert Advisory Committee. The lecture slide-sets, which provide basic and advanced clinical training for healthcare providers, including physicians, mid-level providers, nurses, and students, are available at <http://www.womenshealth.gov/heart-truth/clinical-education/lecture-materials.cfm>.

A team of researchers, led by Deborah B. Ehrental, MD, MPH of

Christiana Care Health System in Newark, Delaware, and Suzanne G. Haynes, PhD, Senior Science Advisor in the HHS Office on Women's Health, published a study in the March 2013 *Women's Health Issues* evaluating the education campaign on provider knowledge of heart disease as it affects women. They studied the delivery of The Heart Truth Professional Education Campaign across three states to diverse audiences of healthcare providers. All of the healthcare providers showed improved knowledge on women and heart disease after participating in the lectures, according to the authors.

"Through the Heart Truth Professional Education Campaign, we can make providers aware of the most up-to-date and evidence-based recommendations that are used for the prevention and management of heart disease," Dr. Ehrental said. "Providers can bring those treatments to the women they see to help them live healthier lives."

Providers with the lowest baseline knowledge improved the most after participation in the educational campaign, including obstetricians and gynecologists. That finding is important because these physicians provide a lot of primary care—are not trained intensively in this subject—and could play a key role in the prevention of cardiovascular disease in women, said the authors.

The study also found that tailoring the lectures to non-physicians, who also provide a lot of primary care, might be beneficial. And they noted that more emphasis is needed on the appropriate use of drugs called statins, which can combat heart disease in women and men.

"These Heart Truth professional educational materials are tools that can translate medical evidence into practice," said Susan F. Wood, PhD, Executive Director of the Jacobs Institute of Women's Health and an associate professor of health policy at SPHHS. "This study demonstrates that health professionals need this information and can use the

knowledge gained to provide better care to their patients."

Nancy C. Lee, MD, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health-Women's Health, said: "The Office on Women's Health is committed to improving the heart health of women. By keeping the Heart Truth provider education materials updated with the latest information, we can help health care providers improve the prevention and treatment of heart disease for [women](#)."

More information: The published article, "Evaluation of The Heart Truth Professional Education Campaign on Provider Knowledge of Women and Heart Disease," is available without charge in the March 2013 issue of Women's Health Issues at www.whijournal.com/issues

Provided by George Washington University

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