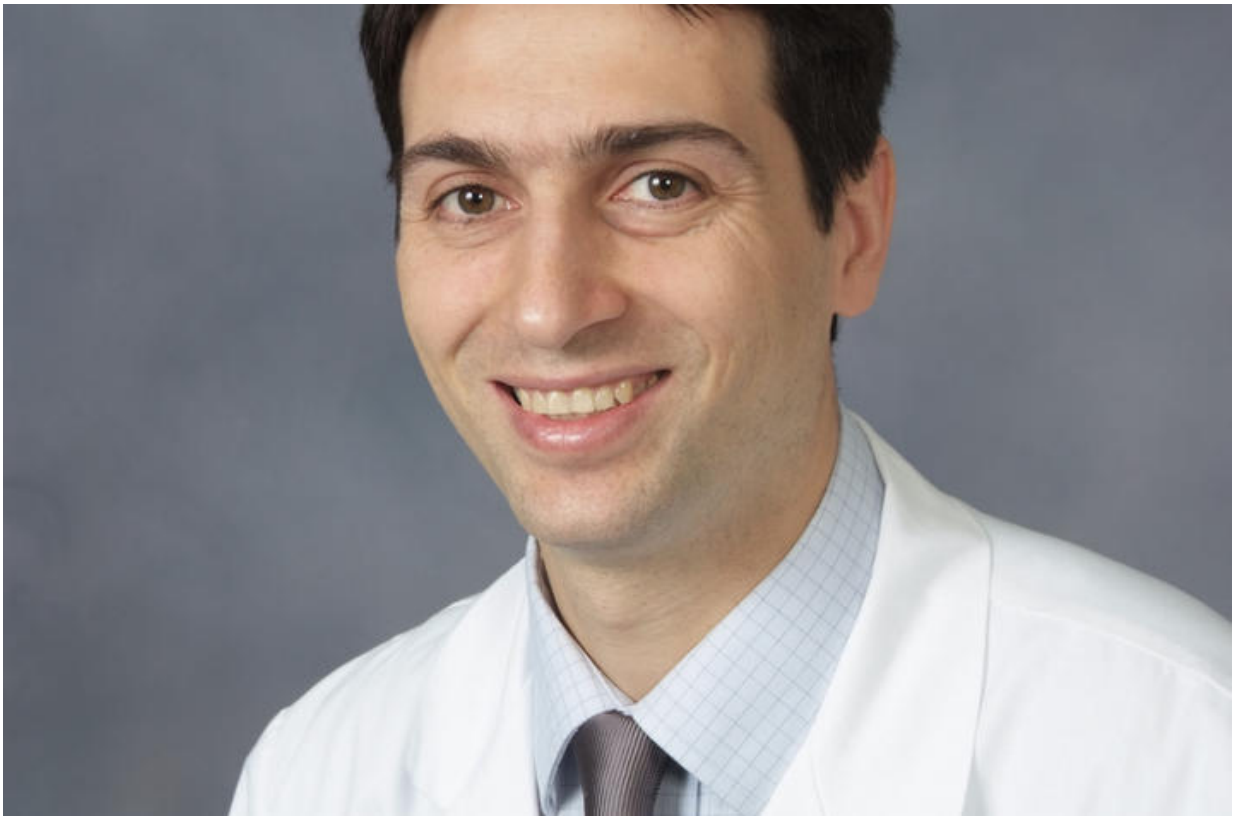


'Broken heart syndrome' is real medical diagnosis

February 23 2017, by Allison Perry



Credit: University of Kentucky

The sudden loss of a job, divorce, or the death of a loved one or even a family pet are things that cause us to experience overwhelming emotions. The term "broken-hearted" is often used to describe these

reactions, but it's rarely thought of as life-threatening

However, [broken heart syndrome](#) is a real diagnosis, also known as stress-induced cardiomyopathy. The condition is fairly new to researchers, but the recent deaths of a celebrity mother and daughter just one day apart—actresses Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher, respectively—has shed new light on the [heart](#) condition.

Broken heart syndrome is a disruption of the heart's normal pumping process that leads to heart muscle failure. The condition is thought to be triggered by a surge of hormones.

This surge of hormones can be caused by stressful events such as an unexpected death of a loved one, news of a serious medical diagnosis, domestic abuse, losing or winning a large amount of money, loss of a job or even a divorce.

The most common symptoms include chest pains and shortness of breath. These symptoms are similar to those of a heart attack, and the two are difficult to tell apart based solely on symptoms.

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart is cut off due to clogged coronary arteries. However, unlike a heart attack, the broken heart syndrome is not related to clogged arteries. Instead, part of the heart temporarily enlarges and is not able to pump efficiently, putting more strain on the other parts of the heart.

To determine what is causing the [chest pain](#) and shortness of breath, doctors may order a chest X-ray, electrocardiogram (ECG), blood test, coronary angiogram or a [magnetic resonance imaging](#) (MRI). Once the chest X-ray and MRI verify the condition of the arteries, the doctor will likely ask if you have experienced any recent [stressful events](#) or life occurrences.

Women and individuals with head injuries or seizure disorders are more likely to be affected by broken heart syndrome. There is no clear reason why, as research is still ongoing. Other risk factors include sexual activity, neurological conditions and psychiatric disorders.

Treatment for the condition is similar to that of patients experiencing a [heart attack](#). Patients are kept in the hospital during recovery and are prescribed angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors or diuretics that reduce the workload of the heart.

Broken heart syndrome is rarely fatal and patients typically recover within a month. There are no long lasting effects and reoccurrence is possible but highly unlikely. However, if you've experienced a traumatic event and have noticed any of these symptoms, check in with your doctor immediately.

Provided by University of Kentucky

Citation: 'Broken heart syndrome' is real medical diagnosis (2017, February 23) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-02-broken-heart-syndrome-real-medical.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.