Difficulty breathing, chest pain, and cough key symptoms for embolism

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Difficulty breathing, chest pain, and cough may sound like symptoms of a heart attack; however, new research shows that these are the key symptoms for pulmonary embolism (PE), a potentially fatal blockage in the lung.

A research team from Saint Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport, Connecticut, retrospectively reviewed the clinical features, risk factors, and ECG findings in 334 patients with confirmed PE.

Results showed that dyspnea or difficulty breathing, chest pain, and cough were present in 72%, 38%, and 19% of the patients, respectively, and dyspnea was the only presenting symptom in 29%.

Cancer was the most common risk factor present in 27%, followed by prior history of deep vein thrombosis or PE, immobilization, and surgery in 19%, 15%, and 15%, respectively.

This study was presented during CHEST 2012, the annual meeting of the American College of Chest Physicians, held October 20 – 25, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Provided by American College of Chest Physicians

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