Women and CVD Policy + Recommendations

Red Alert for Women’s Hearts
Women and CVD: Facts

- Cardiovascular disease has been a central theme of women’s health studies and promotion efforts since the early 1990s.

- Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death of women in the European Union.

- More women die from cardiovascular disease than from all cancers combined.

- Women remain largely unaware of their risk of developing cardiovascular disease.
Women and CVD: Gender differences

Significant gender difference exist in relation to CVD:
• Women are less likely than men to identify their risk factors.
• Mortality from CVD is higher in female smokers than in male smokers.
• Women with diabetes have an increased risk for coronary artery disease and stroke than men with diabetes.
• CHD develops later in women’s lives than men’s lives.
• CVD diagnosis delay can be life-threatening to women.
• CVD treatment and care may be consequently less effective for women.
Women and CVD: Gender differences in Research

• Women are under-represented in CVD clinical trials, particularly in the fields of:
  • Cholesterol-lowering therapy
  • Ischaemic heart disease
  • Heart failure

• Safety and efficacy of several drugs have been evaluated mainly in male populations

• Scientific guidelines do not provide specific recommendations for prevention and treatment of women.
Women and CVD: Stroke

• Stroke kills more women than men, although more men have strokes. Stroke is a significant cause of mortality and morbidity in postmenopausal women.

• Gender differences exist in the presentation and outcome of stroke. In a European Biomed study involving over 4,000 stroke victims, female patients were significantly older than male patients. A history of hypertension was more frequent in women than in men, as were comas, paralysis, problems swallowing, and urinary incontinence in the acute phase.

• Gender differences exist in clinical management following acute stroke. However, information on the differences in management of stroke patients by gender is scarce.
Women and CVD: Risk factors associated with risk of cardiovascular events

- **Biological**: raised blood pressure, raised blood sugar, raised blood cholesterol, overweight, and obesity,

- **Lifestyle determinants**: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, alcohol abuse, physical inactivity.

- **Broader Determinants (fixed)**: age, sex, genetics, and ethnicity.

- **Broader Determinants (modifiable)**: income, education, living conditions, and working conditions.
Women and CVD: Healthy lifestyle

- Lower socio-economic class, especially in children, is a significant determinant for cardiovascular disease later in life.

- Girls participate less in physical activity than boys; girls often perceive of sport as a male activity.

- Obese women are 12 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than women of a healthy weight.

- Pregnant women who suffer from hypertension while pregnant are at greater risk of developing CVD in later life.