[IMAGE]

Taking it to Heart

The term "broken-hearted" may be as literal as it sounds. Subclinical depression (characterized by persistent negativity, irritability, easy anger, and a general dissatisfaction with life), often goes undiagnosed and/or untreated, posing an increased risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Recently, A Women's Health Initiative (WHI) observational study followed 93,676 older or postmenopausal female subjects for an average of 4.1 years to gauge depression.

Approximately 16 percent of the subjects showed depressive symptoms; those individuals had a 50 percent greater risk for heart disease (or death from it) compared to women without depressive symptoms. For depressed women, the risk of death from any cause was shown to be 30 percent higher than nondepressed women. Does that mean that heart disease and depression are connected?

Lead author of the study, Dr. Sylvia Wasserthiel-Smoller, speculated, "It could be that people really have some kind of subclinical disease [and] maybe the first place it manifests itself is in the depressed mood," suggesting that a depressed mood itself may influence other variables that lead to disease.

Regardless, neither heart health nor depression should be taken lightly. For more information, visit the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3017091 and the American Psychological Association at www.apa.org/ppo/issues/pwomenanddepress.html.

Reference

Wassertheil-Smoller S, Shumaker S, Ockene J, Talavera GA, Greenland P, Cochrane B, Robbins J, Aragaki A, Dunbar-Jacob J. Depression and cardiovascular sequelae in postmenopausal women. *Arch Intern Med* 2004:164, pp289-298.

For more information about women's health issues, go to www.chiroweb.com/find/tellmeabout/women.html.

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