

Transcript Details

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Coronary Heart Disease & Postmenopausal Women: Evaluating Risk Through Research

Dr. Brown:

You're listening to *Heart Matters* on ReachMD. I'm Dr. Alan Brown, and on this program, we're going to hear from Dr. Yvonne Michael, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health. Dr. Michael joins us to talk about preventive measures we can share with patients to help them combat the less traditional risk factors for coronary artery disease. Here's Dr. Michael now.

Dr. Michael:

In their working lives, women often have less decision latitude, less ability to control their activities in the workplace, and at the same time in their private lives, these same women are often responsible for taking care of others – taking care of their children, taking care of their parents if their parents are aging and in need of help, and also taking care of the household. And so it's just important to acknowledge that these responsibilities may create a significant strain on these women caregivers in terms of their physical health.

It's important to look beyond some of the more traditional risk factors for coronary heart disease, things like smoking, diet, and physical activity. Not that these things aren't really important, but when women are experiencing a high degree of stress, they may not have the bandwidth to also pay attention to some of those health behaviors or be able to fully engage in healthy behaviors given all of the multiple levels of stress that they're experiencing. So I think for clinicians and providers to look carefully at the types of stresses that women may be experiencing in their life and include questions about those types of things in their intakes and their annual appointments with women, then point women towards interventions that directly address the stress in their lives, rather than focusing on some of the poor health behaviors that be downstream of that stress. We also need to consider policy levers that would increase support for women that are facing these combined stressors of home and work. So for example, things like paid leave for parental or family care, expansion of tax credits for family caregivers, support for dependent care, like some of the proposals we're seeing now for universal pre-K. These are some measures that would directly address some of these key sources of stress.

Dr. Brown:

That was Dr. Yvonne Michael from Drexel University talking about strategies for combating the less traditional risk factors for coronary artery disease. For ReachMD, I'm Dr. Alan Brown. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit ReachMD.com/HeartMatters, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks very much for listening!