

Sex-related trends of cardiovascular risk perception and prevention behaviors: results from the Italian society of cardiovascular survey

A. Polimeni¹, S. Sorrentino¹, P. Crea², C. Spaccarotella¹, A. Mongiardo¹, S. De Rosa¹, S. Zangara³, G. Bruschi³, M.J. Lopera Quijada³, C. Cenci⁴, G. Mercuro⁵, C. Indolfi¹

¹Magna Graecia University of Catanzaro, Division of Cardiology, Catanzaro, Italy; ²University of Messina, Messina, Italy; ³Abbott, Rome, Italy;

⁴Senior Partner Eikon Strategic Consulting, Rome, Italy; ⁵University of Cagliari, Division of Cardiology, Cagliari, Italy

Funding Acknowledgement: Type of funding source: Private company. Main funding source(s): Abbott

Background: Recent reports evidenced gender differences in the knowledge, perception and awareness of cardiovascular risk factors and cardiovascular diseases.

Purposes: To evaluate trends in awareness of cardiovascular risk, as well as knowledge of symptoms and preventive behaviors related to cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Methods: As part of *Vivi con il Cuore* (campaign with the goal of raising awareness about women's heart disease) a nationwide survey was conducted. Standardized questions on awareness of CVD risk, as well as prevention behaviors and barriers, were provided through a computer-assisted web interviewing platform to a large sample of Italian citizens ranging from 40 to 70 years old. The sample was representative of the population by age, sex, and area of geographical residence.

Results: A total of 1,000 subjects were included in this survey, of which 511 (51%) female. About 60% of women indicated cancer as the leading cause of death among female sex, while only 22% indicated cardiovascular disease. Similarly, when the same question was asked to men, 44% indicated cancer and 21% cardiovascular disease, observations that were consistent across age categories. Although a well sizable part of the population (90%

of the interviewees) have consulted the general practitioner in the last year, only 45% of women and 56% of men declared to receive information about CVD risk. Almost 84% among men and women, recognized the importance of knowing how to understand the symptoms of a heart attack due to the possibility of survival. An additional survey was conducted among young cardiologists under 40 years old, including a total of 200 young cardiologists, similarly distributed among men and women (47% and 53% respectively). About 24% of young cardiologists indicated breast cancer as the leading cause of death in women, while only 70% reported cardiovascular diseases. Furthermore, 35% of participants reported that they did not have adequate training on the risks of heart disease in women.

Conclusions: In this survey, only 22% of women were aware that cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women. Likewise, a well sizable part of young cardiologists (30%) does not recognize cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death in women. These data should inform public health campaigns to focus on evidence-based strategies to prevent CVD and to help target messages that resonate and motivate women to take action.