African-American Infants More Likely to Suffer Cardiac Arrest

Race and other factors may be to blame for the higher incidence of heart failure among Black children compared with kids from other groups.

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Findings of a recent study presented at the American Heart Association's (AHA) Resuscitation Science Symposium 2018 suggest that Black infants may face higher cardiac arrest rates than Hispanic and white children, reports AHA.

Cardiac arrest is the abrupt loss of heart function in individuals—regardless of whether they have been diagnosed with heart disease, according to the AHA.

For the study, researchers reviewed 911 records of nontraumatic out-of-hospital cases of cardiac arrests for children under age 18 between 2002 and 2017 in Houston. Scientists sorted the information by race and ethnicity and compared these findings with data from the city's census.

Investigators found 598 incidents of pediatric cardiac arrest—57 percent of which occurred in boys—at a median age of 10 months. In addition, 60 percent of cardiac arrests occurred in children under age 2.

Interestingly, Black children, who represented 22 percent of the child population in Houston, accounted for 50 percent of all pediatric cardiac arrests.

When researchers compared these findings to Hispanic and non-Hispanic white children—42 percent and 18 percent of Houston's population, respectively—they noted that Hispanic kids accounted for 35 percent of cardiac arrests, while white kids accounted for only 12 percent.

"This disparity in pediatric cardiac arrest among children in Houston is disturbing, but equally disturbing is the fact that studies looking at cardiac arrest at a national level do not show any difference between races; so, it is unclear if this is a regional issue or if this finding also applies at a national level," said Christina Y. Miyake, MD, MS, a pediatric cardiologist at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston and the lead author of the study.

But studying pediatric cardiac arrest on a national level is a serious challenge because doctors aren't required to report these cases, so the true incidence is unknown.

According to researchers possible reasons for the disparity include genetic differences in risk based on race, environmental or socioeconomic factors, or a combination of factors—all of which are slated for future study.

Click here to learn how obesity and other factors may place kids at greater risk for sudden cardiac arrest.

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