In ER, Women and Black Adults With Chest Pain Waited Longer to Be Evaluated

Women of color waited 15 minutes longer than white women, and men of color waited 10 minutes longer than white men.

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More than 6.5 million ER visits annually are attributed to chest pain, but women and people of color wait longer to be medically evaluated, according to a new study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association.

Chest pain is the most common symptom of heart attack in both men and women. The American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology introduced new guidelines specifically for chest pains to help doctors identify people at higher risk for heart attack, thereby reducing the amount of nonessential testing.

“Young women and young Black adults have poorer outcomes after a heart attack compared to men and white adults” said Darcy Banco, MD, MPH, lead author of the study and chief resident for safety and quality in the department of medicine at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine in New York City, in a news release. “Whether or not the differences in chest pain evaluation directly translate into differences in outcomes, they represent a difference in the care individuals receive based on their race or sex, and that is important for us to know.”

Researchers evaluated more than 4,000 patient records representing more than 29 million ER visits for chest pain among adults 18 to 55 years old between 2014 and 2018. The analysis included symptoms such as pain, discomfort, pressure or tightness in the chest. Participants were divided by race: white and people of color, 89% of whom identified as non-Latino Black.

Researchers found that women waited 48 minutes to be seen by a health care professional, while men waited 37 minutes. Women were also less likely than men to have an electrocardiogram or to be admitted to the hospital or an observation unit.

Furthermore, non-white women waited 58 minutes for their initial evaluation, while white women waited 43 minutes. Similarly, non-white men waited 44 minutes for an initial evaluation, while white men waited 34 minutes.

To learn more, read “Blacks and Latinos Less Likely to Receive CPR Outside Hospital.”

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