

Lifewire: Metabolic syndrome points to heart health

by Ven_Griva

The case for combating metabolic syndrome is growing in the world of health science.

Now a study finds that metabolic syndrome might also be associated with compromised heart structure and function, according to a paper published in the online journal BMC Cardiovascular Disorders.

While some questions exist whether the metabolic syndrome is a byproduct of obesity, more and more scientists are accepting it as disease with many symptoms. Now a study shows that metabolic syndrome increases the risk of heart failure and heart disease in an unexpected way.

According to the American Heart Association, metabolic syndrome is characterized by a group of metabolic risk factors in one person. They include:

- Abdominal obesity: excessive fat tissue in and around the abdomen.

- Blood fat disorders: high triglycerides, low HDL, or good cholesterol and high LDL, or bad cholesterol.

- High blood pressure, or hypertension.

- Insulin resistance or glucose intolerance: victims' bodies are unable to properly use insulin or process blood sugar.

Ana Azevedo and colleagues from the University of Porto Medical School in Portugal investigated the link between the risk factors of metabolic syndrome and structural and functional heart abnormalities.

Their study investigated whether the links found were independent of coronary heart disease risk as predicted by the Framingham risk score, a standard tool from the Harvard University Framingham Study used to predict the probability of future heart disease.

Azevedo and her study co-authors investigated a group of urban Portuguese adults who were invited to a full

screening interview including questionnaires, blood tests for cholesterol and glucose levels, and an EKG measurement.

Azevedo's investigation, including follow-up interviews and tests, found that symptomatic heart failure and severe cardiac structural and functional abnormalities rise progressively with increasing degree of metabolic syndrome, regardless of symptoms.

This link was independent of the 10-year predicted risk of coronary heart disease determined by the Framingham risk score. What made the results of the Portuguese study unique, was that the link found between metabolic syndrome and heart disease was not fully explained by blood pressure levels, the authors suggest.

"Metabolic syndrome may help predict an increased cardiovascular risk beyond that predicted by the more frequently used Framingham risk score," Azevedo says.

ALZHEIMER'S RISING

More than 26 million people worldwide were estimated to be living with Alzheimer's disease in 2006, according to a study led by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

What's more, the Johns Hopkins researchers predict that number of people with Alzheimer's disease will grow to more than 106 million by 2050.

By that time, 43 percent of those with Alzheimer's disease will need high-level care, equivalent to that of a nursing home.

The findings were presented June 10 at the Second Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Prevention of Dementia held in Washington, D.C. and are published in the journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia*.

"We face a looming global epidemic of Alzheimer's disease as the world's population ages," said the study's lead author, Ron Brookmeyer, professor in Biostatistics and chair of the Master of Public Health Program at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins.

"By 2050, 1 in 85 people worldwide will have Alzheimer's disease," Brookmeyer said. "However, if we can make even modest advances in preventing Alzheimer's disease or delay its progression, we could have a huge global public health impact."

According to the study, Asia will suffer the most from the increase. Forty-eight percent of the world's Alzheimer's cases are in Asia.

The number of Alzheimer's cases there is expected to grow from about 13 million in 2006 to 63 million in 2050. By then, 59 percent of the world's Alzheimer's cases will be in Asia.

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