

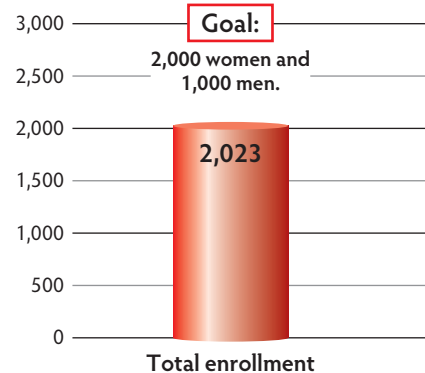


Sharing stories that touch the heart

More than one in three female adults has some form of heart disease.¹ Behind the statistics are real people who want to share their stories. This issue of VIRGO At Heart shares time with patients and health care providers who have been directly touched by heart disease. Last month, VIRGO welcomed its 2,000th participant. “Our goal here at VIRGO is to ensure that the lessons of your stories may help us to make a

difference in the lives of young people that suffer from heart disease,” said Dr. Harlan Krumholz. “Our team enjoys talking with you and listening to your stories - we can call you for your follow-up interview during the day, evening or weekend as we know your time is valuable,” said Amy Browning, Coordinator of Yale Follow-up Center. To share your story, please contact us toll free 1-866-203-0617 or 1-866-219-0887.

VIRGO Enrollment
(9/2010)



When the Doctor Becomes the Patient – Making a Change For the Better

Being a frequent jogger in reasonably good health, a heart attack was the last thing on Nina’s mind. “I was busy working full time and [taking care of] the kids, and thought it was anxiety... and then the pain just got worse” says Nina, a 49 year old cardiologist who hopes to inspire others to contribute to our knowledge of heart attacks in younger

Often people affected by heart attack aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Women are more likely to experience symptoms particularly shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and back or jaw pain.²

women by sharing her story. In 2009, at a holiday party celebration, Nina was overcome by an unusual sensation. Nina tried to compose herself in the kitchen but when the nausea and dizziness progressed to a strange pressure in her chest - a friend dialed 911 for help. Nina’s symptoms had stopped as the ambulance arrived but returned ten minutes later as she arrived

at a local hospital. In the emergency department, she was diagnosed with a heart attack, and within forty minutes she was rushed to the cardiac catheterization lab to restore the blood flow to her heart. “When it comes to a heart attack, minutes count,” says Nina.

As a pediatric cardiologist, Nina is confident she received the best care possible, preventing permanent damage to her heart but as a patient despite knowing what to expect her recovery was not easy. Returning home was not easy either and the first few weeks were plagued with anxiety and embarrassment. “I’m learning to manage it...and [I know] most of the time it’s going to get better. I’ve started exercising again for 30-45 minutes everyday... I don’t eat processed foods and I’ve changed my diet including lowering my sodium [intake].”



Nina's advice to young women:

- Don't ignore or overlook symptoms if you don't feel well.
- Make sure you have regular check-ups with a health care provider.
- Don't overlook the importance of emotional recovery after discharge. Support seems to be particularly effective when you can share your fears and burdens with other heart attack survivors.

1-American Heart Association, Women and Cardiovascular Diseases - Available at www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200026 [Accessed 15 July 2010]

2-American Heart Association, About Heart Disease & Stroke. Available at www.goredforwomen.org/about_heart_disease_and_stroke.aspx [Accessed 6 May 2010].

Nina considers herself lucky, "I didn't have jaw or left arm pain, and so I didn't spend time thinking about a heart attack". Nina is certain that had she been home, she would have probably tried to get some rest and wait for the nausea to pass instead of seeking medical attention.

"One in four patients develop clinical depression after suffering a heart attack. Without appropriate treatment, depression can negatively affect recovery, quality of life and even the motivation to adopt a healthier lifestyle to prevent future attacks", says Dr Basmah Safdar, Medical Director for Yale-New Haven Hospital Women's Heart Program. Our study will include understanding the effects of anxiety, depression and support systems on patient recovery.

Now through her experience, Nina wants women to know that heart disease can happen to anyone, healthcare providers and patients alike at anytime in their lives. She encourages women to always listen to what their bodies are telling them and to take action by living a heart-healthy lifestyle.

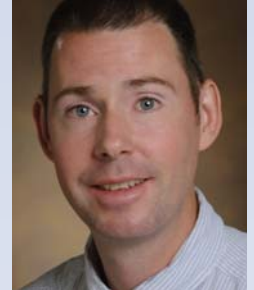
Risk Factors – High Blood Cholesterol

Learn more about heart disease by recognizing risk factors. High blood cholesterol can contribute to 'clogging' of the blood vessels supplying the heart, brain and other parts of the body. Some people may need medication to lower their blood cholesterol levels as well as making lifestyle changes so it is important to have your cholesterol levels checked regularly. Ask your doctor about lifestyle changes that will help to lower blood cholesterol levels like choosing foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and enjoying at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most or all days of the week. To learn more about valuable prevention and treatment information on risk factors like high blood cholesterol, visit http://www.goredforwomen.org/heart_healthy_at_any_age.aspx.

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please email your details to VIRGO@yale.edu



60 Seconds with... Researcher Dr. Thomas Morgan



"I am interested in finding out why, in the prime of her life, a young woman would have a heart attack. We know that heart attacks generally tend to strike women later than men. So, why do they happen to certain young women? Is there a genetic explanation? If so, how can this information help women and members of their families?"

"Blood samples collected in VIRGO are important because they will allow researchers to use powerful new genetic technologies to explore DNA in greater detail than ever before." "VIRGO may help to discover genes that increase the risk of heart attacks. With the benefit of such discoveries, researchers may be able to identify women at high risk, and possibly, to design safe new medications to prevent and treat heart disease in young women."

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Privacy Statement: This newsletter is sent to participants to inform you about progress of our research project supported by the NHLBI. Please contact us if you wish to be deleted from the mailing list.

MOVING? Please let us know us know so we can update your contact details: 1-866-203-0617 or 1-866-219-0887.

Remember, we can schedule interviews during the evening hours or weekends to fit into your busy week or we can also mail the interview questionnaire to your home along with a stamped return envelope.

1. Go Red for Women High Blood Cholesterol and Triglycerides Fact Sheet. Available at http://www.goredforwomen.org/heart_healthy_at_any_age.aspx [Accessed 24 August 2010]