As our readers know, stroke affects many Americans, and unfortunately most of those are women. For example, even though stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the US overall, it is the third leading cause of death in women. Why might this be? We often think that the risk of heart attack and stroke is greater in men than in women and this is true for younger adults; however, as we get older, the risk of stroke in women becomes higher than men, and because women tend to live longer than men, women end up having more strokes.

Several important stroke risk factors are either more common in women than men, or unique to women. For example, migraines, the abnormal heart rhythm atrial fibrillation, diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression are more common in women. Several risk factors are exclusive to women including pregnancy, preeclampsia, diabetes during pregnancy, hormone therapy, and contraceptives. Thus it is important to ask about these conditions when understanding a woman’s stroke risk.

Although clot-dissolving medication and clot removal devices can reverse stroke symptoms, most people can’t get these therapies because they don’t reach the hospital early enough. For unclear reasons, women tend to reach the hospital later than men. This may be because women are more likely to experience non-traditional symptoms of stroke, such as confusion and pain, and this may lead to a delay in recognition of stroke. Also older women are more likely to be widowed and not have a live-in partner to call 911 for them. We can do more to educate women and their families on these unusual symptoms of stroke, and to call for emergency help right away.

In conclusion, as providers we need to consider women-specific stroke risks to reduce the rising tide of stroke affecting women in this country.
Health Disparities in Stroke Rehab for Hispanic Patients

By the Numbers

56.6 million Hispanics is our largest minority group by far.

Hispanic Heart Health in the U.S.

...that's 17.6% of our nation's population

Despite this, one of the fastest growing minorities is facing a major HEALTH CRISIS.

Roughly 40.6% of Hispanics suffer from Cardiovascular Disease.

The four contributors to Cardiovascular Disease in Hispanics are lack of awareness, diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure.

Awareness

56%

56% of Hispanic women are unaware that heart disease is their greatest risk.

Diabetes

55.5% 37.5%

More than 55.5% of Hispanic, men and 37.5% of Hispanic women have diabetes or pre-diabetes.

Obesity

80.1% 76.3%

Among Hispanics age 20 and older, 80.1% of men and 76.3% of women are overweight or obese.

High Blood Pressure

28.8% 25.9%

28.8% of Hispanic men and 25.9% of Hispanic women have high blood pressure.

How can we make a difference?

Change begins with YOU. You can lower your risk of cardiovascular disease and help others in your family and community do the same by increasing healthy living behaviors. EmPOWERED To Serve has the volunteers, tools, and resources to meet you where you are and help you move toward better health. Join EmPOWERED To Serve today and build a sustainable culture of health.

Join the movement at empoweredtoserve.org

Sources: empoweredtoserve.org/hhm-infographic

What are the signs of stroke?

Take Our Stroke Quiz