TuSalud

Mexican American Women Less Likely to Take Stroke-Prevention Meds

Female stroke survivors in general are more likely to skip taking stroke prevention medications compared with men.

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Women who have had a stroke, particularly Mexican American women, are less likely to take stroke prevention medications as prescribed, according to a report published in the Journal of the American Heart Association.

Stroke is the second leading cause of death in the world and the fifth in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each year, more than 795,000 people in the United States have a stroke. Of those individuals, about 23% will suffer a second stroke.

Researchers note that following a stroke, women face a higher risk for death, more severe disability and more recurrent strokes compared with men.

For those recovering from a stroke, it is essential to keep high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes under control by taking medications as prescribed.

“Our findings point to concerning disparities between men and women’s reports on taking stroke prevention medications routinely as prescribed, especially among Mexican Americans,” said senior study author Lynda Lisabeth, PhD, MPH, a professor of neurology and epidemiology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, in an American Heart Association news release. “Clinicians might consider screening for these factors and discussing the importance of not missing doses when prescribing these medications to patients to help reduce their risk of having another stroke.”

For the study, researchers analyzed more than 1,300 stroke survivors ages 45 or older, according to the news release. At 90 days post-stroke, researchers questioned participants about how often they took their secondary stroke prevention medications as prescribed.

The study included antihypertensives to lower blood pressure, statins to reduce cholesterol and antiplatelets and anticoagulants to reduce blood clotting—common types of stroke prevention medications.

About 11.5% of participants reported not taking their stroke medications as prescribed. Women were more likely to report missing doses of cholesterol-lowering medications and blood-clotting medications but not medications to lower blood pressure, compared with men. Women who were older or married were also more likely to report missing doses of stroke prevention medications compared with men.

What's more, Mexican American women were about three times more likely to report not taking cholesterol-lowering medications as prescribed compared with Mexican American men.

"Our analysis reveals potential factors that may be exacerbating these disparities. For example, women in general and Mexican American women in particular are more likely to be caregivers for other family members. As a result, they may be less able to prioritize and manage their own health, which may contribute to a higher likelihood of medication nonadherence," said study coauthor Chen Chen, a PhD candidate in epidemiology at the University of Michigan.

This research supports previous observations that show a higher rate of nonadherence to secondary stroke prevention among women.

"Addressing factors that contribute to sex-associated disparities in stroke care, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities, should be a top priority for a society that seeks to eliminate social inequalities and inequities," said Fernando Testai, MD, PhD, a professor of neurology and rehabilitation at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago.

To read more, click #Stroke or #Caregivers. There, you'll see headlines such as "Spanish Language Website to Boost Stroke Awareness in Latinos," "Study to Test Efficacy of Text Message Support for Latino Caregivers" and "Long-Term High Blood Pressure Increases Stroke Risk in Latinos."

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