

February 7, 2019

Women deserve an equal chance

Facts drawn from “(Dis)connected: How unseen links are putting us at risk”

Heart & Stroke published [heart report](#) and a [stroke report](#) in 2018 demonstrating that women in Canada are under-researched, under-diagnosed, under-treated, under-supported during recovery and under-aware of their risks for heart disease and stroke.

In this report, where we expanded our examination to focus on additional conditions of the heart, brain (stroke) and mind (vascular cognitive impairment), we again discovered notable differences between men and women, showing that women are at even greater risk than we previously knew. This reinforces the inequities highlighted in 2018 and strengthens our resolve to reduce the impact of all heart, brain and mind conditions on women’s lives.

- In 2016, 12% more women than men died of heart conditions, stroke or vascular cognitive impairment.
- Twice as many women than men died of causes related to vascular cognitive impairment in 2016.
- 23% more women die of heart failure than men.
- Women with heart failure have a six-times increased risk of atrial fibrillation (Afib); a 25% higher risk than men.
- Women are disproportionately affected by stroke: 45% more women die of stroke than men in Canada, and because they live longer, more women are living with the effects of stroke.
- Women with stroke related to Afib have worse outcomes than men.
- Women with heart valve disease have a three times increased risk of Afib (50% higher risk than men).
- More women with a diagnosis of a heart condition, stroke or vascular cognitive impairment also have hypertension.

Heart & Stroke is working to ensure women in Canada have the knowledge to recognize and reduce their risks and advocate for the care they deserve. We are investing in research that addresses sex/gender inequities to close the research gap so that we can better understand why heart conditions, stroke and vascular cognitive impairment affect women disproportionately. And, we are calling on all people within the health system — researchers, funders, healthcare workers, system leaders, governments, organizations like Heart & Stroke, and the community — to band together to level the playing field so all women in Canada have an equal chance to survive and recover.

“Women need to take health into their own hands. In this day and age, there shouldn’t be different treatment for men and women. Women need to be strong. If you get dismissed,

you need to go back to the hospital or back to the doctor. If you have family history, get checked and if you have an event, go to rehabilitation,” says Cheryl Mackenzie, who had a first mild stroke at age 22, a second at 37 and a heart attack at 48.