

Risk factors and coronary artery disease for asymptomatic women using electron beam computed tomography.

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BACKGROUND: Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. In 1995, 58,200,000 people were estimated to have the disease, claiming 960,592 lives, while 481,287 people died of coronary artery disease (CAD). Most people are unaware they have CAD, and death is often quite sudden. With more women surviving to old age, the absolute number of women dying from CVD exceeds that of men. **METHODS:** The study is cross-sectional. Electron beam computed tomography (EBCT) was employed to measure the amount of coronary artery calcium (CAC), a marker for CAD, in a population of patients referred to the Spokane Coronary Artery Center. A questionnaire was administered at the time of the patient's visit, when exposure to traditional risk factors was assessed. The effect of traditional risk factors on CAC was then determined. **RESULTS:** The effect of past smoking on CAC was evident, the effect of total cholesterol on CAC was moderate, while a history of hypertension appears to have an effect on the disease for older women. **CONCLUSIONS:** EBCT measurements of CAC can detect the effect of traditional risk factors on CAD and can be used to manage the disease in women.