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Metabolic mediators of sex/gender: Do risk factors explain the gender gap in coronary heart disease?

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Abstract Text:

There is overwhelming evidence of a strong sex/gender gap in coronary heart disease (CHD). However, little is known regarding the contribution of cardiovascular risk factors to this sex/gender effect. With the use of a recently developed mediation technique for survival analysis we aimed to assess the specific contribution of risk factors to the difference between males and females regarding CHD outcomes. The sex/gender-specific CHD mortality was examined in the Vorarlberg cohort consisting of more than 170,000 individuals with 3,892 deaths due to CHD during a median follow-up of 14.6 years. The total effect of sex/gender on the risk was decomposed into direct and indirect effects mediated by the four major cardiovascular risk factors systolic blood pressure, total cholesterol (TC), fasting blood glucose, and smoking status. The extent to which these risk factors contribute to the difference between males and females regarding CHD mortality decreases strongly with age. Over the ages of 50 years, the persisting survival advantage of females can be explained in an unexpectedly small part through the pathway of known modifiable risk factors.

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