



Heart Disease Decline Rate Slowing In Women

An analysis by researchers at Oxford and Liverpool Universities suggests that death rates due to heart disease might be on the rise in women under the age of 50 on account of rising obesity and diabetes levels. The findings have been published in the BMC Public Health journal.

Death rates among women in the 50 age group were in continuous fall since the 1970s. However, data from the new study suggests that the trend might be slowing down. Led by Peter Scarborough, the research team studied all deaths in England and Wales from 1931 to 2005. They found that rates of deaths due to heart disease increased for all age groups until the 1970s.

Thereafter there was a steady decline in heart disease death rates on account of better treatments and reduction in the number of people smoking. But for women under the age of 50, the rate of decline has started signs of slowing down in recent years in comparison to the drop seen in older women. For women in the 45-49 age group, the rate dropped to 15 deaths per 100,000 between 1986 to 1995, which is nearly half that of the rate between 1976 to 1985.

However, from 1996 to 2005, the rate fell only to 12.5 deaths per 100,000. Describing this as disturbing, Scarborough said, What we may be seeing with the figures for women is a plateauing and in the future it may even rise. It seems to me that the increased rates of obesity and diabetes are playing a role in this and if this pattern is emerging in women then it is quite likely we will see the same in men in the future.

The researchers also drew attention to the increasing levels of obesity and diabetes and dropping levels of physical activity in younger age groups over the last 10 years. At the same time, they expressed the inability to draw accurate conclusions for younger age groups as the number of deaths was relatively small.

Professor Peter Weissberg, medical director for

the British Heart Foundation, which helped to fund the study, said the findings were worrying. It's a common misconception that heart disease is a male problem, yet cardiovascular disease is the biggest cause of premature death in women. Heart disease should be a very real issue for all women, and younger generations must take action now to cut down their risk, he said.