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Survival rates of women with heart disease

By Tim Friend
USA TODAY

NEW ORLEANS — Women found with early heart disease are more likely to survive if they control their cholesterol and don't have diabetes.

New data, out Wednesday at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions, is among the first looking at specific predictors of cardiovascular disease deaths in women.

The study involved 140 women, in their mid-50s, tested in the 1970s, says Dr. Michael Miller, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore.

Fifteen years later, about half are still living. Results show women with:

▶ Heart disease and diabetes were four times more likely to die than non-diabetics.

▶ HDL (good) cholesterol levels below 45 were three times more likely to die than those with levels above 45.

▶ HDL/LDL (bad) cholesterol ratio above 5.5 were 3.5 times more likely to die than those with a ratio below 5.5. Ideal: 3.5.

▶ No diabetes and triglycerides greater than 150 were 2.5 times more likely to die than non-diabetics — the first time these blood fats predicted death in women.

Survivors were thinner and non-smokers.

▶ More heart news, 6D

Cardiac risks of obesity, low blood pressure

Also out Wednesday:

▶ Obesity is a bigger risk factor than high blood pressure for an enlarged heart, shows a new study of 682 men with hypertension.

Until now, high blood pressure was considered the most serious risk for an enlarged left ventricle, a predictor of cardiac death.

The finding, made by measuring heart size with sound waves, means obesity should be more aggressively treated, says Dr. John Gottdiener, Georgetown University Medical Center.

▶ Lowering blood pressure too much in older people with an enlarged heart raises the risk for deadly irregular heart beats.

That may help explain the J-curve phenomenon in which heart deaths increase when diastolic blood pressure (lower number) drops below 85 after treatment.

Dr. Brent Egan, University of South Carolina, says the study of 135 patients found irregular beats occur more often when diastolic pressure falls below 85.

Socks on the prowl for a piece of history

By Robin DeRosa
USA TODAY

Future first cat Socks makes his mark as the first feline in the White House since Amy Carter's Siamese.

Though animals have had their run of the mansion since President John Adams, some have left more lasting im-

