Cardiac Rehabilitation for Women: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Solutions

My name is Marta Supervia and I am a Research Fellow in the Department of Cardiovascular Diseases on Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Mayo Clinic. I am here to talk to you about a systematic review that we carried out, entitled “Cardiac Rehabilitation for Women: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Solutions.” Although we know Cardiac rehabilitation is class 1 recommendation for patients with cardiovascular disease, cardiac rehabilitation utilization remains low, particularly among women. An important part of our systematic review was the identification of studies that evaluated the barriers to cardiac rehabilitation participation for women. Additionally, we identified and ranked the potential solutions to these barriers.

The first take away message is that fewer women than men participate in cardiac rehabilitation due to a complex and unique array of demographic, socioeconomic, medical, and societal challenges faced by women. The second take away message is that systematic approaches to referral, enrollment, and completion, have been shown to improve participation and are recommended to help overcome the gender gap in cardiac rehabilitation participation.

Our study is the first to provide a practical summary of evidence-based solutions to cardiac rehabilitation barriers for women. Clinicians and policy makers can use the results of our study to implement strategies to reduce the gender gap. Since cardiac rehabilitation participation reduces hospital readmission, recurrent cardiovascular disease events, and mortality, systematic approaches can have a large impact on patient outcomes.

While we identified several studies on the cardiac rehabilitation participation gap for women, this issue is still under-studied. Many questions need to be answered, including the following: Would a more flexible scheduling system help to reduce barriers in cardiac rehabilitation participation for women? Would a cardiac rehabilitation program that combines a center-based program with smartphone-based tools help improve participation and outcomes in women as much or more than for men? Would public awareness campaigns, similar to the Go Red for Women campaign, also help to improve cardiac rehabilitation participation for women?

Thank you for watching this video. We hope this study helps to increase awareness about cardiovascular disease among women, along with increasing cardiac rehabilitation participation.

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