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MEN AND HEART DISEASE

As a cardiologist for over thirty years, it's been a privilege to be a part of the treatment of cardiovascular disease. The past thirty years have seen revolutionary technology and diagnostic advances that far outweigh the options we could offer our patients in the past: better medications, fewer overall complications from procedures, and increased longevity for patients. More than ever before, patients can look forward to longer, more satisfying lives due to medical advancements.

Men are at special risk for cardiovascular disease in certain ways. The onset of heart attack and stroke is younger for men. The classic presentation of heart attack is much more likely in males (chest pain that feels like "an elephant is sitting on my chest," shortness of breath, pain that radiates through the neck and arms). Many men still suffer with symptoms and only seek treatment when it is an emergency. And by then, it can be really dire. There are many ways to avoid this outcome through prevention and early detection.

Often the male patients I see are prodded into coming in to the doctor's office by their loved ones, especially the women in their lives. Many men have been taught to "play through" what hurts them, and try to live/work through pain or health changes. Seeking medical advice and treatment is always best earlier than later, and treatment options for heart disease are continuously improving.

One trend I see in the male population (and in society as well), is a trend toward obesity and living a sedentary lifestyle. Research shows that 'men over 300 lbs' is one of the fastest-growing populations in our country today. This means an extraordinary number of men are at risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, metabolic syndrome and early mortality. Even men who exercise often and watch their nutrition can sometimes be at risk. Genetics can play a huge role in the development of disease, and risk factors should be identified and addressed. Mostly physicians look first at hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, and heart rhythm problems (like mitral valve prolapse) in the patient and the patient's family history as the beginning of the road map to wellness. Every man 40 or older (or 30 and older, if there is family history of heart disease) should speak with their physician about their weight, blood pressure, diet and cholesterol. A few simple lab tests can tell a doctor a lot about what's going on with you.

As a man myself, I know it can seem like a hassle to see the doctor, and it can be nerve-wracking as well. But getting a yearly check-up, taking the tests that are recommended for men your age, and trying diligently to protect your health, needs to become crucial to your routine.

I learn so much every day from working in this ever-dynamic field of medicine that I will do what I can to sustain a healthy quality of life. Though we cannot change certain things, we can make many lifestyle

changes that improve our daily functioning and, literally, increase happiness as well. This means, literally, taking your health to heart.

Listen to Dr. Galichia's Radio Show – "Take Your Health to Heart" every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to

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