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## Women Not Treated Equally With Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs

CBS HealthWatch by Medscape

By Jennifer Warner

Feb. 14 (CBSHealthWatch)—Despite proof that cholesterol-lowering drugs could save millions from an early death due to heart attack or stroke, a new study shows that the medications are vastly underused—especially among women patients.

Researchers found treatment rates for both men and women with disease were far too low, but they say the lack of treatment in women is "particularly worrisome."

"The big message is that physicians are biased in treating women heart disease and for cholesterol-lowering [in general], and it's a problem," says Dr. Michael Miller, director of Preventive Cardiology at the University of Maryland Medical Center and lead author of the study.

Heart disease is the top killer of both men and women. Recent research has shown cholesterol-lowering drugs can significantly reduce the risk of heart attack, and the use of these drugs has become part of the standard treatment for heart disease, along with diet and exercise changes.

The study compared the percentage of patients with high LDL, or cholesterol levels who were offered cholesterol-lowering drugs from 1994 to 1997. Researchers found rates for men improved slightly from 54%, but rates actually declined among women from 38% in 1994 to 35% in 1997.

"We can't make any excuses anymore," says Dr. Miller. "Here men came in, they had coronary angiograms, they had the exam

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