Women and Cardiovascular Disease: MISSISSIPPI

Frances Lucas, Mississippi Survivor

Dr. Frances Lucas of Long Beach, Miss., can be proud of many accomplishments. Rising to the top of her profession quickly, Frances was the president of Millsaps College at age 42 and the devoted parent of two children. She led a healthy lifestyle, was a nonsmoker and exercised. She had only taken one sick day during her presidency until she felt pressure in her chest one day while exercising.

Instead of dismissing the discomfort, Frances thought of a 50-year-old female friend who had recently died unexpectedly of heart disease. Frances immediately contacted her doctor, who examined her and found that her left front coronary artery was 98 percent blocked, putting her in danger of a heart attack.

She had angioplasty the next day and a stent was placed in her artery to keep it open where it had been blocked. A few days later, Frances was able to oversee graduation events. "That is a testament to the incredible successes of the new heart procedures and the care [I received]…," Frances said.

Frances’ experience helps to show why the American Heart Association and its volunteers are advocating for more research, education and screening to help prevent and cure heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases, the No. 1 killer of women in Mississippi and the United States.

FACTS

Heart Disease Rates, All Women, Ages 35+, 2000-2006

Heart disease and stroke account for 33.0% of all female deaths in Mississippi.

On average, nearly 13 women die from heart disease and stroke in Mississippi each day.

Heart disease alone is the leading cause of death in Mississippi, accounting for 3,732 female deaths in 2009.

Stroke is the No. 3 cause of death for females in Mississippi, accounting for 842 female deaths in 2009.

Nearly 65.0% of women in Mississippi are obese and overweight.

In Mississippi, 19.7% of women smoke cigarettes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Mortality data based on WISQARS Leading Cause of Death Reports, 2009; state maps from the Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention; risk factor data from the BRFSS, 2010.

* Overweight is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 25.0-29.9 kg/m² and obese is defined as having a BMI of 30.0 kg/m² or greater.