

Erectile dysfunction - a warning of future heart attacks

Published on : Tuesday 09 Feb 2010 14:17 - by IANS

New York, Feb 9 : Beware! Erectile disorder (ED) could be a grim warning of future heart attacks, stroke, atherosclerosis and congestive heart failure.

These findings are based on 12-year research study conducted by the New England Research Institutes, (NERI) in collaboration with San Francisco General Hospital and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

However, while ED is significantly related to cardiovascular disease (CVD) independent of traditional risk factors, it does not improve the prediction of who will and will not develop CVD beyond these risk factors. Men with ED showed a 40 percent higher risk of developing CVD compared to men without ED.

"This is an important study because it is the first to explicitly test whether ED can predict the future development of CVD beyond a predictive tool called the Framingham risk score," said Andre Araujo, director of epidemiology at NERI who led the study.

"Although the answer is no, this is not necessarily surprising given how strongly the Framingham risk score is related to CVD," said Araujo. "Our data indicate that ED is as strongly related to the development of CVD as the Framingham risk score."

The study followed 1,057 men (aged 40-70) from the Massachusetts Male Aging Study (MMAS) - a prospective observational study of aging, health, and endocrine and sexual function - over an average of 12 years.

These men were free of diabetes and CVD at the start of their study participation. However, during the follow-up years, 261 new cases of CVD occurred. ED predicted the development of CVD, independent of age, traditional risk factors, and Framingham risk score.

According to data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, ED affects approximately 18 million men aged 20 years or older in the US. ED and CVD share a number of risk factors like smoking, obesity, and high blood pressure.

Physiologically, the link between ED and CVD can be explained by the fact that the penis and the heart are both vascular organs that are subject to atherosclerosis or thickening of the arteries, said a NERI release. Since atherosclerosis affects the entire body, the small arteries in the penis can become blocked sooner than the larger arteries in the heart. Blocked arteries reduce blood flow which can result in a reduced ability to have an erection.

These findings were published in the January issue of the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. Copyright Indo Asian News

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