

Sex differences in psychosocial predictors of depressive mood upon entry into a cardiac rehabilitation program

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Objectives Symptoms of depression are prevalent in newly diagnosed cardiac patients and are a significant predictor of recurrent cardiac events within the first year after a myocardial infarction (Bush et al., 2001). Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the differential influence of psychosocial predictors on depressive mood prior to beginning cardiac rehabilitation (CR) among men and women.

Methods Participants referred to CR were mailed a questionnaire assessing depressive mood, perceived stress, and three types of social support: emotional, tangible and belonging. Demographic information was collected from patient medical records. Participants (men¹/₄129, women¹/₄38) returned the questionnaire at an introductory CR orientation session prior to beginning the rehabilitative program.

Results Two regression analyses were used to separately examine the influence of the psychosocial factors on depressive mood for men and women. Results showed that perceived stress and social support accounted for significant variability in depressive symptoms among both men (R^2 adj ¹/₄0.50, $p < 0.001$) and women (R^2 adj ¹/₄0.49, $p < 0.001$). For men, being younger, having less tangible support, and reporting more stress were significantly related to depressive mood. Among women, a lack of belonging support and stress were significantly related to depressive mood.

Conclusions Results support previous research on the occurrence of depressive mood in cardiac patients. However, this study highlights the importance of examining stress and different types of social support in both men and women prior to attending CR. In furthering our understanding of depressive mood following a cardiac event, tangible support may be particularly important for men and belonging support for women.