OBSTETRICIANS/GYNECOLOGISTS AND HEART HEALTH: UNTAPPED ALLIES IN THE FIGHT ON CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Moderated Poster Contributions
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Background: For many women their Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OB/GYN) may be their sole access to preventative health care. We sought to quantify the proportion of women who view their OB/GYN as their primary care physician (PCP) within our diverse, urban region. We sought to determine what preventative heart health measures women receive at an OB/GYN visit.

Methods: A 33-question survey was administered to women (age 18 and older) at 5 OB/GYN offices affiliated with a large urban academic hospital center.

Results: 498 questionnaires were completed. When given the option of seeing only one doctor annually, 47.1% reported they would see an Internist (IM), 8.0% Family Medicine (FM) and 44.1% OB/GYN. In the 18-40 year old group, more chose OB/GYN (56.0%) than IM (35.0%) (p<0.001). Women over 41 more often chose IM (68.0%) than OB/GYN (27.0%) (p<0.001). White women preferred IM over OB/GYN (55.7% v. 38.6%) more often than Hispanic, Black and Asian women (41.4% vs 50%, 46.9% vs 44.9%, 35.7% vs 50% respectively). 39.4% reported medical morbidity (i.e. diabetes, hyperlipidemia, obesity) and 30.9% reported history of pregnancy related disease such as a hypertensive disorder of pregnancy or gestational diabetes. When asked if their OB/GYN discusses heart health, 66.8% responded “no”. When asked if they felt their OB/GYN takes care of all their health needs, 80.1% responded “no”. Lifestyle choices were not discussed by OB/GYNs with regards to weight (44.5%), smoking (40.4%), exercise (50.0%), diet (55.9%).

Conclusions: Young, non-white women are more likely to see an OB/GYN for their health care annually. Yet OB/GYN visits are currently inadequately providing the necessary preventive measures for cardiovascular disease in women. Highlighted in this study is the high prevalence of pregnancy related disease, diseases which place women at a higher lifetime risk for heart disease as emphasized in the 2011 AHA guidelines for the prevention of cardiovascular disease in women. Ob/Gyns as the caretakers of women in their reproductive years have the opportunity to play a vital role in preventing chronic diseases in women.