

**Women’s Heart Alliance Launches “Be a Force for Change,” a National Awareness Campaign to Educate Women About Heart Disease Misdiagnosis and Encourage Self-Advocacy**

*The national PSA campaign informs women that “heart disease kills a women every 80 seconds,” urges viewers to learn the unique signs of heart attack in women, speak up and get their hearts checked.*

**February 1, 2023**—[Women’s Heart Alliance](http://womensheartalliance.org/) (WHA), a non-profit cofounded by Barbra Streisand focused on the awareness, treatment, and prevention of women’s heart disease and gender equity in cardiovascular research, today launched a [new PSA campaign](https://youtu.be/xXf0-mAnp0U) to educate women about the prevalence of misdiagnosis of women’s heart disease, the #1 killer of women in the U.S. The PSA campaign highlights the symptoms of a heart attack in women, which can differ from those in men and are too often missed or dismissed by health practitioners and patients.

“In one research study, women who had the most serious type of heart attack were almost 60% more likely to have been initially misdiagnosed. When women seek help for chest pain, they wait an average of 11 minutes longer than men in an ER. The status quo is unacceptable, and we must do better for all women. This starts with helping women feel seen and heard, while also educating them about how to advocate for themselves,” said **Dr. Noel Bairey Merz, director of the Barbra Streisand Women’s Heart Center in the Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars-Sinai and WHA scientific advisor**.

The misdiagnosis of heart disease means that women remain dangerously undertreated, leading to worse health outcomes and higher death rates. Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of preventable death among women, killing a woman every 80 seconds. Women die of heart attacks at twice the rate of men, and women of color are nearly 50% more likely to die from heart disease. The national PSA campaign aims to reverse this trend by building awareness of misdiagnosis while empowering women to know the symptoms and speak up for themselves.

“All women must be aware of the prevalence of heart disease misdiagnosis. Heart disease is still the #1 killer of women. My hope is that this campaign will inspire women to learn about heart disease symptoms, ask questions, trust their guts, and speak up again and again, if needed, for the treatment they deserve,” said **acclaimed artist and activist Barbra Streisand.**

The PSA will air on TV and radio stations nationwide. Social media ads will be disseminated on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The WHA website will feature the TV PSA and an educational toolkit with heart health information and resources specifically for women. Among the key tips:

1. **Know your symptoms** and risk factors, especially if you have a history of heart disease in your family. The **six unique signs of a heart attack in women** include chest pain or pressure; extreme fatigue; nausea or vomiting; jaw, throat, back, or neck pain; heartburn or indigestion; and shortness of breath.
2. If you think you’re having a heart attack, **be specific and direct about your symptoms.** If you can, bring a trusted confidante to validate your concerns.
3. **If possible, seek out women** and/or culturally competent doctors who can understand your experience better. Women are more likely to survive when treated by women doctors.
4. **Spread the word and educate other women** in your life about heart disease risks and symptoms.

Women can also download a card to their phones that lists the unique signs of heart attack in women and questions to ask if they think they’re having a heart attack.

“This crisis of misdiagnosis places women in jeopardy and increases the potential for serious harm and even death, as patients may downplay or overlook the gravity of their condition. Healthcare providers have a role to play in combatting this issue. This public service announcement serves as a fervent call to action, urging women and their providers to collaboratively champion women’s heart care as well as timely and accurate diagnoses,” said **WHA Medical Advisor Dr. Holly Andersen, director of education and outreach at Ronald O. Perelman Heart Institute and attending cardiologist at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center**.

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**ABOUT WOMEN’S HEART ALLIANCE**: The **Women’s Heart Alliance** (WHA) was formed to raise awareness, encourage action, and drive new research to fight women’s heart disease. Learn more at www.womensheartalliance.org.