

Pulmonary Heart Disease



Background:

- ♥ Pulmonary heart disease is also known as “Cor Pulmonale”, or “right-sided heart failure”.

- ♥ According to the National Institute for Health, Pulmonary Heart Disease is failure of the right side of the heart caused by prolonged high blood pressure in the pulmonary artery and right ventricle of the heart.

- ♥ Typically, the left side of the heart is responsible for pumping blood throughout the entire body, and therefore will have higher blood pressure. The right side of the heart is responsible for pumping blood through the lungs, which would yield a much lower blood pressure. However, when there is any condition in the lungs that would cause the right side of the heart to pump harder than normal, it puts a strain on the right side of the heart. When the right ventricle is unable to properly pump against these high pressures, or fails to pump completely, it results in cor pulmonale (NIH, 2008).

- ♥ Any of the following chronic lung diseases or conditions can cause Pulmonary Heart Disease: Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, sleep apnea, mountain sickness, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary hypertension, pneumoconiosis, interstitial lung disease, as well as any other lung disease.

- ♥ The current symptoms of pulmonary heart disease are:
shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, swelling of the feet or ankles, inability to exercise, discomfort in the chest, bluish color in the skin, distension of the neck veins, abnormal fluid in the abdomen, enlargement of the liver, ankle swelling or abnormal heart sounds.

- ♥ Treatment for pulmonary heart disease is mostly aimed at the underlying lung issues that cause the heart to beat harder. Oxygen may also be prescribed to increase oxygen levels in the blood. Additionally, calcium channel blockers can be used to treat if it is still in the early stages. Prostacyclin may be given through injection or inhalation. Bosentan or sildenafil may also be given orally. Blood thinning medications may also be prescribed. In extreme cases, heart and lung transplants may be necessary (NIH 2008).

- ♥ While all heart disease is serious, pulmonary heart disease is much less common than coronary heart disease due to the fact that this disease is caused by diseases of the lungs, which are less common than overall heart problems.

Statement of the Problem:

- ♥ According to Healthy People 2010, the leading cause of death in the United States is Heart Disease.

- ♥ “Heart disease not only attacks our hearts; it places a burden

on our health care system. It accounts for 29 percent of all hospitalizations, more than a third of all nursing home care, and 23 percent of hospice care. It also affects our chances of longevity. If we could eliminate heart disease, the life expectancy of the average American would increase by five years. Therefore, we need to commit ourselves to prevention strategies” (Healthy People 2010),

- ♥ Healthy People 2010 states that due to things such as cigarette smoking, Pulmonary heart disease will not go away. Cigarette smoking leads to lung problems (emphysema, wheezing, lung cancer), which can then put a strain on the heart and cause pulmonary heart disease.

Epidemiological Picture:

- ♥ In 2002, there were 15,668 deaths and 260,000 hospital visits among persons with pulmonary hypertension, the start of Pulmonary heart disease (CDC 2008).
- ♥ “Among 807,000 patients hospitalized with pulmonary hypertension as one of the diagnoses between 2000 and 2002, 61% were women and 34% were younger than age 65” (CDC 2008)
- ♥ “It is unclear whether pulmonary hypertension is truly rare or whether pulmonary hypertension is undetected and under-reported. At present there are no statistical data to determine how many people currently have pulmonary hypertension in

the United States or how many new cases are diagnosed each year” (CDC 2008).

- ♥ “Increases in hospitalizations for persons with pulmonary hypertension and increases in death rates for women, African-Americans, and the elderly with pulmonary hypertension during the past two decades may reflect an increase in physician awareness of the disease rather than a growing epidemic of pulmonary hypertension.” (CDC 2008).

Solutions:

- ♥ **Center for Disease Control**

www.cdc.gov/cvh/state_program/index.htm

The CDC currently has programs in 32 states in an attempt to develop a way to reduce the burden of cardiovascular diseases and other risk factors associated with the diseases. They focus on heart healthy policies and emphasize physical and social environmental changes in order to have heart disease awareness. The CDC aims to reduce disparities in treatment, risk factors and disease, delay of onset of disease, postpone death from cardiovascular disease; and reduce disabling conditions. (CDC 2008).

- ♥ **Pulmonary Hypertension Association**

www.phassociation.org/about/

“The mission of the Pulmonary Hypertension Association to find a way to prevent and cure pulmonary heart disease, and to provide hope to the pulmonary hypertension community

and through the support, education, advocacy and promote awareness”

♥ **American Heart Association**

www.americanheart.org

The mission of the AHA is: “building healthier lives free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke”. Their main goal is to reduce heart disease by 25% by 2010. The American Heart Association creates awareness in heart disease and promotes healthy living habits (not smoking, eating healthy, exercising) they also conduct research and work towards reducing the overall effects of any and all cardiovascular diseases.

Additional Internet Resources:

♥ **National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute**

www.nhbi.nih.org

♥ **Pulmonary Heart Disease**

www.wrongdiagnosis.com/p/pulmonary_heart_disease

♥ **American Lung Association**

www.lungusa.org

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♥ Class Handout ♥

What is Pulmonary Heart Disease?

♥ Pulmonary heart disease develops from a lung disease. Typically, the left side of the heart is responsible for pumping blood throughout the entire body, and therefore will have higher blood pressure. The right side of the heart is responsible for pumping blood through the lungs, which would yield a much lower blood pressure. However, when there is any condition in the lungs that would cause the right side of the heart to pump harder than normal, it puts a strain on the right side of the heart. When the right ventricle is unable to properly pump against these high pressures, or fails to pump completely, it results in pulmonary heart disease.

How can you prevent Pulmonary Heart Disease?

♥ Living a healthy lifestyle is the best defense against pulmonary heart disease. Because this disease stems from lung issues, it is important to avoid things that can affect your lungs. This means not smoking, and exercising regularly.

♥ Because lung problems are sometimes unpreventable (like sleep apnea, or cystic fibrosis, for example) it is important to monitor yourself for symptoms of pulmonary heart disease if you know you suffer from any lung complications.

What are the symptoms of Pulmonary Heart Disease?

♥ If you are experiencing these symptoms, it is important to contact a doctor immediately: bluish tint to the skin, swollen feet or ankles, coughing, wheezing, inability to exercise, heart palpitations, abnormal fluid in the abdomen, enlargement of liver or erratic heart beat.