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WOMEN'S HEALTH EDITION

Gender Bias in the Healthcare System

Did you know that women have a lot more trouble than men in getting proper medical care? Women are not only less likely to receive treatment when diagnosed with pain; they're also more likely to have their pain dismissed as "emotional" or "not real."

A National Institutes of Health study found that women are made to wait an average of 16 minutes longer than men when seeking treatment for pain in the ER, and are 13–25 percent less likely to receive pain medications once they are examined.

Heart disease: Women have a 50 percent higher chance of getting an incorrect initial diagnosis, even after having a heart attack.

Stroke: Women are 30 percent more likely than men to have symptoms of a stroke misdiagnosed and be erroneously sent home from the emergency room.

Autoimmune diseases: Many autoimmune diseases are more common in women. Overall, 75 percent of Americans with autoimmune diseases are women.

Why are there delays and misdiagnoses of women's health issues?

- **Health education.** Doctors and other health professionals are educated in a unisex fashion.
- **Different symptoms.** In some cases, women and men have different symptoms when they have the same condition, and doctors are more used to recognizing the male version.
- **Lack of research.** For decades, the male body was the standard for medical research on health and disease.

WHAT CAN WOMEN DO?

- Trust your instincts and what your body is telling you.
- Keep records.
- Prepare to see your doctor.
- Ask questions.
- AND most importantly, get a second opinion. If a doctor dismisses you and your symptoms—find a new doctor.

If your symptoms have been ignored by a medical professional, call us. We may be able to help.

New York's Wrongful Death Law Provides Little Help for a Mother's Loss

According to the U.S. National Center for Health, each year over 50,000 children die. And studies prove that mothers suffer most acutely and for longer periods of time than other relatives, including fathers. Despite this, New York State has not amended its wrongful death law to take into account the plight that parents, and especially women, face when their children die. The joy, fulfillment, love, and affection that a child may have given has no significance in New York State. Instead, New York limits monetary recovery to "pecuniary loss" (meaning quantifiable monetary loss, like wages and ownership of property). This 1847 law, written before the emancipation of women in the United States, only took into account the value of monied, propertied men.

This failure in the law most adversely affects women, who are not fully or properly compensated when their children die as a result of negligent wrongdoing. We have seen firsthand the painful impact the loss of a child has caused our female clients.

It's time New York State recognized the impact that our loved ones' deaths have on our lives and change the law to fully compensate New Yorkers for our losses.

BREAST CANCER and the Importance of EARLY DETECTION

In New York State, the law requires that health insurance companies provide coverage for mammography. This testing is a crucial step in ensuring the early detection of breast cancer in women.

Since early breast cancer usually does not cause any symptoms, breast cancer screening is critical. According to the New York State Department of Health, breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women. The American Cancer Society has screening guidelines for women at average risk for breast cancer, and for those at high risk for breast cancer. Mammography screening, breast self-examination, and examination by your healthcare provider improve your chances of early detection.

Some of the symptoms to look out for include:

- Swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no lump is felt)
- Skin dimpling, redness, discharge, pain
- Swollen lymph nodes

For more information, contact the American Cancer Society Helpline at **800-227-2345**.

If you or a loved one were the victim of a late (or delayed) diagnosis or a misdiagnosis, contact us for additional information.



Pregnancy and Your Medical Care

Complications of pregnancy are health problems that occur during pregnancy. They can involve the mother’s health, the baby’s health, or both. Some women have health problems that arise during pregnancy, and other women have health problems before they become pregnant that could lead to complications.

It is very important for women to receive healthcare before and during pregnancy to decrease the risk of pregnancy complications. Prenatal care is healthcare that a woman gets while pregnant.

- Regular care lets doctors find and deal with any problems as soon as possible. During your checkup, your weight and blood pressure are usually recorded. The size and shape of

your uterus may also be measured to see whether the fetus is growing and developing normally.

- Prenatal tests can help healthcare providers find things like a birth defect or a chromosomal problem in the fetus.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

It is important to take especially good care of yourself during your pregnancy. Follow these basics:

- Don’t smoke, drink alcohol, or take drugs.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Get enough rest.
- See your doctor regularly and follow all instructions.

Over-the-counter medicines are generally considered off-limits. Be sure to discuss any questions about medicines with your doctor.

Have you or your baby suffered an injury due to a medical error committed while you were pregnant or during your delivery? Call us, we can help.



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Heart Disease—Know the Facts

In medical surveys, women report that their physicians never talk to them about heart disease, even though it is the leading cause of death for women in the United States. Sometimes physicians don’t recognize the signs and symptoms of heart disease in women, mistaking them instead for signs of panic disorder, stress, and even hypochondria.

What are some of the signs and symptoms you should be aware of?

- Angina (dull, heavy, or sharp chest pain or discomfort)
- Pain in the neck, jaw, or throat
- Pain in the upper abdomen or back
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue

First things first: What can you control to help reduce your risk for heart disease?

- Don’t smoke.
- Control high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- Be more active.
- Eat healthfully.
- Reduce stress and treat depression.



If you have been misdiagnosed—call us, we can help.