

McPherson Hospital  
Heart Health Proposal  
Katie Sawyer  
Purdue University

**Women's Heart Health: The Unknown Killer**

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the number one cause of death among females both in Kansas and nationwide. However it is one of the least discussed and identified health issues for most women. The disease can affect the young and the old and is found in all races and nationalities. Data from the American Heart Association indicates an average of 10 women die from heart disease every day in Kansas. Women are far less likely to survive their first heart attack than men and 90 percent of all women possess at least one risk factor for developing heart disease (Facts About Heart Disease in Women.).

Awareness and understanding of heart disease is on the rise but still lags behind many major causes of death in both education and prevention. As the largest healthcare providers in McPherson County, McPherson Hospital is well positioned to become a champion for women's heart health through public education and preventative efforts using the hospital's existing healthcare resources and partnerships with community businesses.

**Local Action Needed**

McPherson Hospital has served the healthcare needs of McPherson County residents for more than 125 years. The hospital has grown in size and capacity and continues to be the foundation for all community healthcare initiatives and investments.

In the 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment heart disease was one of the most frequently identified areas of concern for members of the public (Russell, Hess, Monical, Van Der Wege & Johnson, 2016). The hospital currently offers cardiac rehabilitation services but does not have more preemptive services to help women in the

community better understand the causes, symptoms and signs of heart disease. However, new hospital staff and services, coupled with existing providers, presents an opportunity to engage the public in a heart health campaign focused on females and designed to not only educate the public on the disease but provide services to reduce women's risk factors.

The Center for Disease Control has identified obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure as leading risk factors for heart disease in women. The campaign will focus on these three health issues, making women with these conditions target audiences. The following are specific steps to reach each risk group.

1. Diabetes (Women of all ages with diabetes): Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women with diabetes, making them two times as likely to have a second heart attack and four times more likely to have heart failure when compared to women without diabetes (Coronary Heart Disease). The hospital's OB/GYN, general practice and corporate health services all interact with diabetic women and can address their heightened risk one-on-one during appointments. Women can be given suggestions and recommendations on ways to reduce their risk for heart disease.

2. Obesity (Obese women in the workplace): Obesity often causes women to develop other conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. According to the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (2015), nearly 38 percent of the county's female population is obese, and that percentage continues to grow. Through the promotion of physical activity and refined eating habits, women can realize both weight loss and a decrease chance of heart disease. The hospital's corporate health services can partner with local employers to promote physical activity and the maintenance of a

healthy weight to decrease chances of a heart attack. Many local employers have employee wellness programs in place and emphasizing women's heart health can be coupled with existing health education efforts in those businesses.

3. High blood pressure (Women age 50 and over): The American Heart Association notes that the onset of menopause can put women at a greater risk for high blood pressure. By adopting a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, healthy eating and regular physical activity, a woman can lower her blood pressure and therefore her risk of heart disease (Facts About Heart Disease in Women). Women in this demographic can be reached through the hospital's corporate health program and partnerships with gyms and recreation centers throughout the county, each offering classes and programs that encourage a healthy lifestyle.

For those women not in the workforce or regularly seen by a member of the hospital staff, additional educational resources can be distributed to the hospital's healthcare partners, which include the county health department, general practice physicians and the two critical access hospitals, located in Moundridge and Lindsborg. The hospital can also engage in a traditional media and social media campaign to emphasize women's heart health and encourage all women to understand risk factors for the disease.

## **References**

Coronary Heart Disease. (n.d.). Retrieved July 08, 2016, from <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/women/coronary-heart-disease.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

Facts About Heart Disease in Women. (n.d.). Retrieved July 08, 2016, from <https://www.goredforwomen.org/home/about-heart-disease-in-women/facts-about-heart-disease/>

Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. (2015). County Profile: McPherson County, Kansas. Retrieved from [http://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/county\\_profiles/US/County\\_Report\\_McPherson\\_County\\_Kansas.pdf](http://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/county_profiles/US/County_Report_McPherson_County_Kansas.pdf)

Russell, C., Hess, F., Monical, R., Van Der Wege, L. & Johnson, D. (2016). 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment for McPherson County, Kansas. Retrieved from <http://www.mcphersonhospital.org/sites/default/files/2016%20Community%20Health%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf>

Women and Heart Disease - Texas Heart Institute Heart Information Center. (n.d.). Retrieved July 08, 2016, from <http://www.texasheart.org/HIC/Topics/HSmart/women.cfm>