COPD After Heart Attack Poses Double Whammy

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CHICAGO — Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a lethal comorbidity for myocardial infarction patients, and its deadly punch has grown over time, according to a community-based review of more than 3,000 patients.

In addition, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) has become increasingly common in patients with a myocardial infarction, affecting 16% of patients who had an MI during 2000-2005, compared with 8% in 1979-1985, Dr. Francesca Bursi and her associates reported in a poster at the annual meeting of the American College of Cardiology.

The deadly impact of coexisting COPD was so strong it negated an overall temporal trend toward fewer patients dying post MI. The risk of post-MI death in patients with COPD, compared with those without COPD, rose from a 21% increased risk in 1979-1985 to a 2.6-fold increased risk during 2000-2005, said Dr. Bursi, a cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Although the Mayo Clinic researchers had no explanation for the increased impact of COPD on post-MI mortality, they said their findings underscored the need to enhance therapy and follow-up for patients who face this double whammy.

They reviewed data collected on 3,259 residents of Olmsted County, Minn., who had an MI during 1979-2005 and were monitored through the clinic's county-based community surveillance program. During an average follow-up of 4.8 years, 1,436 (44%) of these MI patients died.

For the group overall, the confluence of MI and COPD boosted the risk of death by a statistically significant 38%, compared with patients without COPD, in an analysis that adjusted for several differences including age, gender, smoking, hypertension, medications used, and revascularization treatment. ■