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Risk factors of Cardiovascular Diseases: knowledge among the population of United Arab Emirates

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Aim: Recognition of Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) risk factors is an important first step in preventing heart attack and stroke. We aimed to elucidate the level of knowledge about CVD risk factors among the population of United Arab Emirates.

Methods: Cross sectional questionnaire based survey which included:

1. Questions on knowledge of CHD & stroke (to be answered by ticking – I knew this/ I didn't know this).
2. Factors that increase risk of CVD (identifying from a list).

Results: Total of 1367 Arab and expatriate population of UAE participated. 35% and 45% knew the definition of CHD and stroke respectively. While majority (84%) identified tobacco smoking as risk, but only half knew the risk of regular exposure to second hand smoke. They identified high blood cholesterol and blood pressure (81%), obesity/overweight (78.7%), stress (73%), unhealthy diet (72.5%), physical inactivity (67%), family history (64.5%), increasing age (47.6%) and being male (26.8%) as factors that increase the risk for CVD. Less knew about high risk in female smokers using oral contraceptives (34.4%) and post-menopausal women (22.6%). Knowledge about Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) and that "people who had TIA have a high risk of stroke" was less (21.6%). Only 36.8% knew that clot dissolving medicines given within 3-4 hours can significantly reduce the effects of stroke and permanent disability.

Conclusion: Knowledge regarding some of the risk factors is high, many areas still need improvement. This information can help in development of programs devoted to public health education.

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