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The
**Menopause
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Contact:

The Menopause Society

Ella Adams (eadams@fallsandco.com)

Phone: (216) 696-0229

Breast Arterial Calcification Could be Warning Sign of Heart Disease

Although calcium buildup in breast arteries is typically benign, new study suggests association with heart disease

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Sept 10, 2024) – Heart disease risk assessment tools specific to women remain lacking, despite the fact cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of mortality in women. A new study suggests that mammograms may pinpoint a key risk factor, demonstrating an association between breast arterial calcifications and cardiovascular disease. Results of the study will be presented at the 2024 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society in Chicago September 10-14.

It is estimated that heart disease is responsible for one in every three female deaths each year in the U.S. Yet, information about how to spot warning signs in women is still unreliable. What has been suggested, however, is that not only does heart disease manifest differently in women than men, but it can also be different from woman to woman depending on their backgrounds.

The results of a new study, though, suggest there could be a common risk factor found through a very routine medical tool—a mammogram. The study, which followed nearly 400 women for 18 years, demonstrates a potential association between breast arterial calcifications (which show up as white parallel lines on a mammogram and are typically benign) observed on mammography and cardiovascular disease. More specifically, women with breast arterial calcifications were more likely to experience atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (a type of heart disease that occurs when plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries to limit blood flow to the organs)—23% in those with breast arterial calcifications compared to 13.9% in those without.

“Prior research has already suggested this type of association,” says Hannah Daley, lead author from Drexel University College of Medicine in West Reading, Pennsylvania. “But this study aimed to assess the longitudinal association between breast arterial calcifications and atherosclerotic heart disease. Based on what we found, we believe the presence of breast arterial calcifications on a mammogram should be routinely reported.”

More detailed results will be discussed at the 2024 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society as part of the presentation entitled “The association between breast arterial calcifications observed on mammography and cardiovascular disease: preliminary results from an 18-year prospective study.”

“Studies like this one are encouraging because they provide information on a tool that healthcare professionals could use to determine the risk of heart disease in women,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society. “In addition, it reinforces that the risk factors for cardiovascular disease in women are different than for men.”

Hannah Daley and Dr. Faubion are available for interviews prior to the Annual Meeting.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit the newly redesigned www.menopause.org.

The Menopause Society (formerly The North American Menopause Society) is dedicated to empowering healthcare professionals and providing them with the tools and resources to improve the health of women during the menopause transition and beyond. As the leading authority on menopause since 1989, the nonprofit, multidisciplinary organization serves as the independent, evidence-based resource for healthcare professionals, researchers, the media, and the public and leads the conversation about improving women's health and healthcare experiences. To learn more, visit menopause.org.