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Heart Attacks and Type A Behavior

Overview

There is so much abundant data on medical studies of “Type A Behavior” and heart attacks that rather than cite each instance, a summary will be presented. As early as 1974, two pioneer researchers (Dr. Friedman and Dr. Rosenman) published the best seller “*Type A Behavior And Your Heart*,” which coined the phrase Type A behavior as it relates to coronary heart disease.

After being acknowledged by the prestigious National Institutes of Health, further research was done (on thousands of subjects) by many medical professionals leading to the long-standing conclusion (by the Review Panel on Coronary-Prone Behavior and Coronary Heart Disease in 1981), that, “Type A coronary prone behavior has now been unequivocally established as an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease, *as significant as any other known entity.*”

The Most Dire Characteristics of Type A Behavior

Hard-driving Temperament

- Self-imposed personal code that is overly ambitious and is vigorously pursued in a rigid, inflexible manner.
- Emotional need to sustain productivity to maintain respect and a sense of guilt while on vacation or relaxing.
- Possessing a persistent urge for recognition or power
- Fostering a competitive ethic, creating challenges even when none exist.

Uncompromising Attitude

- Emotionally driven, always needing to control situations and others around them.
- Feel pressured by emotions to succeed (unacknowledged panic).
- Do many things at once, preoccupied with tasks; tend to have few interests outside their work.
- Lacking in interpersonal relationships. Type A’s are usually self-centered and poor listeners, possessing an attitude of bravado about their own superiority.

Hostility

- Harsh judgment on them selves, react to minor stress with harsh criticism.
- Angered or frustrated if their wants aren’t granted or their goals are not achieved.
- Impatient with others – interrupt or finish a sentence; nod or mutter agreement or use laughter to signal others their point has been made, now the chief can take over.
- Increased muscular activity – gestures, motions, grinding of the teeth, tensing jaw muscles, fidgeting, tapping the feet, leg shaking, or playing with a pencil.

Physiological Consequences

- Type A behavior can become a self-perpetuating lifestyle due to stress-induced adrenaline addiction.
- It is possible that other stress-related secretions such as serotonin, dopamine or beta-endorphin also have the potential for inducing addiction.

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Physiological Consequences - continued

- Research shows Type A can cause biochemical injury to heart muscle, accelerated atherosclerosis and coronary occlusion associated with elevated cholesterol, triglycerides and free fatty acids, increased fibrinogen, blood platelet adhesiveness, accelerated blood clotting, along with coronary vasospasm (spasm of the heart's blood vessels).

Exceptions to the Rule

Many people with Type A behavior appear to lead long, healthy, productive lives. Studies of personalities resistant to stress suggest that these people are in calm control of their activities, have a strong commitment to their pursuits, and enjoy challenges, versus being overwhelmed by them.

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Sources: **Type A Behavior And Your Heart** *Knopf* 1st edition (March 12, 1974) ISBN-13: 978-0394480114 **Perfectionism and the Cortisol Response to Psychosocial Stress in Men** *Psychosomatic Medicine* 69:249-255 2007 **Type A Behavior and Mortality from Coronary Heart Disease** *Journal of the American Medical Association* Volume 318:65-69 January 14, 1988 Number 2 **Type A Behavior as a General Risk Factor for Physical Disorder** *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 1988 Jun 11(3):201-26 **Type A Behavior and the Ten Year Incidence of Coronary Heart Disease in the Framingham Heart Study** *Activitas Nervosa Superior* 1982;Suppl 3(Pt 1):57-7