

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 A.M.
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2019**

Contact:

The North American Menopause Society
Eileen Petridis
Phone: (216) 696-0229
epetridis@fallscommunications.com



Self-Silencing May Lead to Increased Risk of Stroke

Study demonstrates increased plaque buildup in women who do not speak up for themselves

CLEVELAND, Ohio (September 24, 2019)—Expressing your true feelings is not only good for your mental health, but it could also be important for your physical health. A new study associates self-silencing (inhibiting one’s self-expression) with greater carotid plaque buildup which could lead to a stroke and other cardiovascular problems. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Chicago, September 25 to 28, 2019.

Individuals engage in a range of behaviors to maintain close relationships, some of which may be costly to their own health. One such behavior is self-silencing, which is sometimes used to avoid conflict or relationship loss. Although self-silencing has been linked to worse mental and self-reported physical health in women, it has not been previously examined in relation to women’s cardiovascular health.

In this new study of 304 perimenopausal and postmenopausal nonsmoking women, researchers tested whether self-silencing was associated with carotid atherosclerosis. They found that greater self-silencing was related to increased odds of plaque independent of socio-demographics, CVD risk factors, and depression. The results were based on women’s self-reporting on a range of factors such as how often they expressed anger or put someone else’s needs before their own. Ultrasound imaging was used to quantify carotid plaque.

“Given increased public health interest in women’s experiences in intimate relationships, our results suggest that women’s socio-emotional expression may be relevant to their cardiovascular health,” says Karen Jakubowski, PhD, lead author of the study, from the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh.

“Studies like this one are valuable as they highlight the importance of understanding how a woman’s emotional disposition can affect her physical health,” says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director. “These results should encourage healthcare providers to take into consideration socio-emotional factors when outlining a preventive care plan for their patients.”

Drs. Jakubowski and Faubion are available for interviews before the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.