



Clinical Update

For Telephone Triage Nurses

February 2008

Page 1 of 2

In this Issue:

- American Heart Month
- Heart Attack Symptoms
- Influenza Activity February 2008
- Inhaled Exubera for Diabetes

Key Point: While chest pain is the most common symptom of a heart attack, some where between one quarter and one third of all heart attack patients do not experience chest pain.

Dear Nursing Colleague:

Since 1963, Congress has designated February as **American Heart Month**.

What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack that everyone should know? Here is how the American Heart Association describes them:

Sign

- ◆ *"Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.*
- ◆ *Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, the neck, jaw, or stomach.*
- ◆ *Shortness of breath. Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort.*
- ◆ *Other symptoms. May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness."*¹

Some Notes for the Triage Nurse

This is the most common symptom of a heart attack. However, approximately 27% of men and 37% of women can experience a heart attack and have no chest pain.

Take a look at the SHOULDER PAIN, NECK PAIN, and ABDOMINAL PAIN – UPPER guidelines. Note that there are heart attack—relevant triage questions.

Patients with new onset or worsening shortness of breath require more urgent evaluation.

Be especially suspicious in a patient with risk factors who has unexplained nausea and sweating.

Unfortunately, many people in your community will not recognize a heart attack when it happens. A recent telephone survey of over 70,000 people revealed that while 92% knew that chest pain was a symptom of a heart attack, only 31% were aware of all of the heart attack symptoms. Approximately 27% of the population knew all of the heart attack symptoms and knew that the correct thing to do was to call EMS 911. African-Americans, Hispanics, men, and persons with a lower level of education were significantly less likely to be aware of heart attack warning signs and symptoms and less likely to call 9-1-1.²

Thanks for being there and guiding callers to the safest decision.

Regards,

David Thompson, MD, FACEP

**Schmitt-Thompson
Clinical Content**

