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Physician's Medical/Legal

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Physicians Helping Attorneys Helping People™

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Newsletter

September 2023

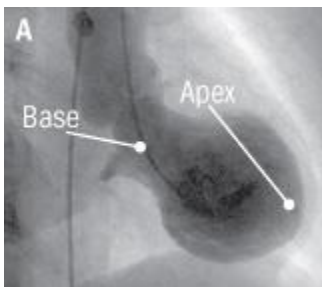
This Month's Question

Can acute physical or emotional stress (for example, from a motor vehicle crash or work accident) cause congestive failure in persons without pre-existing cardiac disease, even when there is no direct trauma to the heart?

Our Response:

One of the more interesting phenomena in cardiovascular medicine that was described for the first time and was given its name by a Japanese cardiologist in 1990 ---“Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy”. A takotsubo is a narrow-necked pot with a globular base, and it has been used for centuries by Japanese fishermen to trap octopus, a popular food in Japan (figure).

Apical ballooning and the takotsubo



Dr. Sato saw the resemblance between the takotsubo pot and the appearance of the heart --specifically its main pumping chamber, the left ventricle – in a puzzling group of patients.

The common feature in their stories was that in virtually every case, these patients had recently experienced significant psychological trauma, though not direct trauma to the heart.

These people, mostly women and all without cardiac histories, presented like typical heart attack patients but had no coronary blockages on cardiac catheterization. They had the typical chest pain and ECG changes, but their coronary arteries were “clean”.

What they DID have was a deformity of the left ventricle, the main pumping chamber of the heart, that made it look like the octopus trapping pot. In about 20 percent of the cases, heart dysfunction was enough to cause overt heart failure symptoms.

Research has revealed little about how this issue occurs. Suffice it to say that the exact mechanism, no doubt biochemical, remains to be discovered. Nevertheless, the medical literature clearly supports a causal link between psychologically traumatic events and this form of heart dysfunction.

The condition is most often transient and most who suffer it recover eventually. Despite being sometimes referred to as “broken heart syndrome”, it is rarely fatal. Even so, many patients need acute therapy directed at heart failure, and all patients with Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy require follow up with a cardiac specialist until resolution is complete, a process that generally takes months.

Obviously, this bizarre but not uncommon condition can result in increased settlement demands if the psychological trauma is caused by a motor vehicle crash or other traumatic event. If a client is experiencing shortness of breath and/or chest pain following a motor vehicle crash, even one that did not cause direct trauma to the chest, the diagnosis of Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy should be considered and the appropriate cardiac evaluation is not only justified, but is in fact also highly recommended in the medical literature.

Let Us Know How We Can Help You

- Medical Summary Reports
- Help with strategies to promote medical theories
 - Interpretation of meaning, or lack thereof, of medical reports & records
 - Attendance at IME's
 - Reviews of IME Reports
 - Independent Record Reviews
 - Assessment of case validity regarding medical issues
 - Referral to appropriate expert medical witnesses
 - Medical Research
 - Facilitation of communication with clients, families, professionals and service & governmental agencies
 - Case Coordination
 - Facilitation of communication with treating doctors
 - Table-side deposition assistance or deposition question preparation

As you know, **we have purposefully kept our fees exceptionally low; a fraction of typical expert witness fees** allowing you the opportunity to have us review your cases early in your representation while controlling your expenses.

CONTACT US for information or fee schedule.

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P.S. ---Please pass this Newsletter along to your colleagues.