



Broken hearts: cardiac risk in men and women

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GENDER STUDIES IN CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Débora Tajer presentó su libro *Heridos Corazones. Vulnerabilidad coronaria en varones y mujeres* [Broken hearts: cardiac risk in men and women], published by Editorial Paidós. From a multidisciplinary viewpoint, in which different disciplines –like gender studies, social psychology, psychoanalysis, social epidemiology, and clinical cardiology– are crossed, this book critically analyzes the differences in cardiac risk between men and women, and argues that a new approach to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and cardiac rehabilitation in women is necessary.

What is pointed out at the beginning is that, even getting over the preconceived notion of the purely biological origins of heart disease, certain generalizations still persist and, while considering general psychosocial factors, these generalizations do not take into account the differences between men and women.

This is why one of the key starting points for the analysis is detecting the presence, in the social imaginary, of certain reductionistic “masculinization” of women undergoing heart disease, that is, the idea that only women “who look like men” are at risk. This results in most women underreporting coronary disease.

Once awareness is raised, it is necessary to analyze, on the basis of the gender studies, how the building

of female subjectivity has been evolving, in order to understand that risk in women is very different from risk in men.

Through extensive field research, bibliography, and critical reflections, the author poses a new and acute interpretation of the tendency to self-imposed pressures that contemporary women go through nowadays.

Indeed, if traditional male subjectivity is based on exerting power, and that is reflected in coronary risk, then the process in female subjectivity is different: the pressure consists of the mandate to multiply, and it is that multiplicity of tasks –all of them performed at a high level of excellence– what characterizes this new process of female subjectivity. That is why it becomes clear that the cause of heart disease in women is not only mere stress due to work, but also emotional situations, family problems or self-esteem conflicts –both in the professional and the aesthetic fields– are significant variables that should be taken into account for their prevention and diagnosis.

In this regard, *Heridos Corazones* is a valuable and original contribution not only to cardiology and psychology, but also to women’s awareness about their own risks for heart disease.

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