

Rise in heart disease among women

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► Patients in Malaysia younger than those in Thailand, Singapore: Wan Azizah

KUALA LUMPUR: More Malaysian women are suffering from heart disease, which is the nation's number one killer.

The prevalence of heart ailments among women has increased by 2% between 2014 and 2017.

"The disease, which is traditionally associated with men, has a few different characteristics among women," Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was quoted by *Bernama* as saying.

"The usual chest pains associated with a heart attack such as pain in the centre of the chest and pain on the shoulder spreading towards the neck and heart may not usually occur for women who are experiencing a heart attack," she said in her speech at the official launch of MySTEMI Foundation yesterday.

Wan Azizah, who is also Women, Family and Community Development minister, said when women have a heart attack, they are usually 10 years older than their male counterparts and less likely to be treated aggressively with percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI).

PCI is a non-surgical procedure to place a small structure called a stent to open up blood vessels in the heart that have been narrowed by plaque buildup.

Women victims of heart attacks are also more likely to develop complications and severe diseases, Wan Azizah said.

Other countries have also observed these differences but to date, no one can identify the cause, she said.

"I am made to understand that in 2017, 13.9% of Malaysians died from heart disease, with the majority in their prime, and living in urban areas."

She said it was alarming to learn that people who suffer from heart disease in Malaysia were younger than those in neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Singapore.

By 2040, she said it is estimated that the population of Malaysians aged 65 and above will exceed six million, making up 14.5% of the population.



Wan Azizah at the MySTEMI Foundation launch yesterday. – **BERNAMAPIX**