

+ NEW YORK CITY HEALTHCARE PROFILES

Women's Hearts in Good Hands



PHOTO BY LYNN SAVILLE

COLUMBIADOCTORS CARDIOLOGISTS: (L TO R) NATALIE BELLO, MD, MPH; ELAINE WAN, MD, FACC, FAHA; JENNIFER HAYTHE, MD; MARWAH ABDALLA, MD, MPH; SONIA TOLANI, MD

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the U.S. This forward-thinking team of Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) heart experts is on a mission to address women's unique cardiovascular needs.

"Traditionally, heart disease was portrayed as a men's disease, so much of the research and outreach excluded women," notes Dr. Jennifer Haythe. "The fact is that women are affected equally, but many women don't discuss heart disease because of its associated stigma."

ColumbiaDoctors Cardiology is breaking down those barriers and bringing attention to this prevalent issue. ColumbiaDoctors Cardiology, a part of the faculty practice of CUMC, is a worldwide leader in evaluating risk, innovating treatment, and advancing education concerning heart disease.

ON THE FOREFRONT

"Women's cardiovascular issues are often misdiagnosed. Columbia has made a huge effort to include women in scientific studies to gain perspective into critical health issues," says Dr. Marwah Abdalla, who is currently studying hypertension, elevated out-of-office blood pressure, and the risk for heart disease.

Dr. Elaine Wan seeks to understand how abnormal heart rhythms, like atrial fibrillation, uniquely affect women and can lead to stroke, heart failure, and dementia: "Atrial fibrillation is associated with higher mortality in women than in men. Knowledge is power, and we're making this information accessible so women can learn the risks."

Collaborating to study hypertension and peripartum cardiomyopathy, a weakening of the heart muscle that can result from pregnancy, Dr. Natalie Bello and Dr. Haythe are researching genetic predispositions that contribute to prognosis and are counseling women on appropriate therapy to reduce complications.

"It's important moms-to-be take care of themselves," says Dr. Bello. "Our multidisciplinary, accessible team means that if your child is born with congenital heart disease, or if you need valve replacement or a heart transplant after childbirth, those issues can be dealt with by a leader in the field."

EDUCATION FOR ALL

The Center for Women's Cardiovascular Health is providing new resources for women to become "their own health advocates," says Dr. Sonia Tolani, who focuses on preventive care. "Women may not know to ask their physicians to conduct a stress test or measure their blood pressure, so they don't learn their risks. We want to put an end to that."

A yearly symposium on women's cardiovascular disease brings together the world's leading experts for a comprehensive day of education, while mentorship programs help advance the next generation of female physicians.

Launching in the fall of 2016, My Heart is a mobile health app that allows women to calculate their risk for heart disease and guides them on lifestyle changes to improve heart health. Says Dr. Tolani, "We take exemplary care of our patients, and through research, outreach, and education, we're taking heart health initiatives global."

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To learn about clinical trials with Dr. Abdalla at the Center for Behavioral Cardiovascular Health, call **212-342-4492**.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Bello, call **212-305-3956**.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Haythe, call **212-305-9268**.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Tolani, call **212-326-8920**.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Wan, call **212-342-1775**.