

## **Analysis of Signs and Symptoms Module from 2003 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System**

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an on-going, state-based, random digit-dialed telephone survey of the non-institutionalized civilian population age 18 years and older. The state of Florida fielded the signs & symptoms module for the first time in 2003. The 2003 data will be used as baseline data for planned media campaigns. The module is being repeated in 2005. The following narrative illustrates the key findings from this module. Detailed tables are available upon request.

### **Heart Attack Signs & Symptoms**

Most people recognized the following symptoms as someone having a heart attack:

- chest pain or discomfort (91.7%);
- pain or discomfort in the arms or shoulder (81.4%); and
- shortness of breath (81.0%).

Less recognized as heart attack symptoms were:

- pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back (44.5%) and
- feeling weak, lightheaded, or faint (60.9%).

Only one third (39.4%) recognized that trouble seeing in one or both eyes is not a symptom of a heart attack. About 89% of persons indicated that they would call 911 if they thought that someone was having a heart attack or stroke.

Recognition of most symptoms of a heart attack was comparable by gender; however, women were more likely than men to recognize pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or back (50.0% vs. 38.5%) and pain or discomfort in the arms or shoulder (84.6% vs. 77.9%) as heart attack symptoms. Recognition of heart attack symptoms was generally greater among non-Hispanic whites and those with at least a high school education. Those age 45-64 years were generally more likely to recognize the symptoms of a heart attack than those age 65 years and older.

Overall, 29.0% of Florida adults recognized all of the symptoms of a heart attack and only 4.1% recognized no symptoms. Only 10.4% recognized all of the symptoms of a heart attack and recognized the decoy symptom as not being a symptom. Approximately 26% knew all of the symptoms of a heart attack and indicated that they would call 911 if they thought someone was having a heart attack or stroke. Recognition of all symptoms and knowledge to call 911 were similar by gender; and greater among non-Hispanic whites, those age 45-64 years, and those with more education.

### **Stroke Signs & Symptoms**

Most people recognized the following symptoms as someone having a stroke:

- sudden confusion or trouble speaking (82.4%);
- sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side (90.7%); and
- sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance (80.2%).

Less recognized as stroke symptoms were:

- sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes (63.8%) and
- severe headache with no known cause (58.7%).

Only one third (32.9%) recognized that sudden chest pain or discomfort is not a symptom of a stroke.

Recognition of most symptoms of stroke is comparable by gender and is higher among non-Hispanic whites, those age 45-64 years as compared with those age 65 years and older, and those with at least a high school education.

Overall, 39.8% of Florida adults recognized all of the symptoms of a stroke and only 4.5% recognized no symptoms. Only 15.7% recognized all of the symptoms of a stroke and recognized the decoy symptom as not being a symptom. Approximately one third (36.3%) knew all of the symptoms and indicated that they would call 911 if they thought someone was having a heart attack or stroke. Recognition of all symptoms and knowledge to call 911 were similar by gender; and greater among non-Hispanic whites, those age 45-64 years, and those with more education.