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Spousal concordance for cardiovascular risks consisting of chronic diseases and health-related lifestyle in Korea

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Background: Cases of family clusters regarding cardiovascular disease have been studied in many countries. However, only little has been done in Korea even though Korea is considered to be 'ethnically homogenous' which may reduce the effect of 'assortative mating'. Thus, this study was conducted to address the spousal concordance for cardiovascular risks in Korea.

Methods: The FACTS (FAMily CohorT Study in Primary Care) was established to investigate the relations between familial environment and health. Subjects (as a couple) aged 40-75 years were recruited among people who visited 22 family physicians from 2009 to 2011. To evaluate the spousal concordance, we performed McNemar tests and logistic regression analyses adjusted for age, education and income.

Results: All the risks we examined (smoking, risk alcohol drinking, low physical activity, irregular diet, skipping breakfast, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, depression) have statistically significant spousal concordance. As a result of multiple logistic regression analysis, the odds ratios of husbands' having a particular risk factor when their wives had same risk were as follows : low physical activity (OR = 2.47, 95% CI 1.54-3.96), irregular diet (OR=4.30 , 95% CI 2.26-8.20), skipping breakfast (OR= 6.84 , 95% CI 3.75-12.48), obesity (OR = 1.73, 95% CI 1.14-2.63), hypertension (OR = 1.88 , 95% CI 1.23-2.86), dyslipidemia (OR = 2.41, 95% CI 1.60-3.64), depression (OR = 5.54, 95% CI 2.19-13.96). The significant spousal aggregation inferred from the odds ratios of wives' having risks when their husbands did were still observed on the same risk factors (low physical activity, irregular diet, skipping breakfast, obesity, hypertension, dyslipidemia and depression, OR from 1.72 to 5.14)

Conclusions: Spousal concordance for cardiovascular risks seems to exist in Korea. Therefore, primary physicians who evaluate patients for cardiovascular risks need to examine their spouse and encourage them to participate to prevent cardiovascular disease.