

EXCLUSIVE
By **Hanna Geissler**
Health Reporter

Hidden heart complaint killing 'healthy' women

HEALTHY young women are dying of an under-diagnosed heart condition that cannot be predicted or prevented, a charity warns today.

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection occurs when a tear or bruise develops in an artery supplying blood to the heart.

Charity Beat SCAD is campaigning for greater awareness to ensure the deadly condition is spotted as early as possible.

Often misdiagnosed as anxiety or a panic attack, it can strike at any age. Around 90 per cent of cases affect women and most victims have no risk factors for "classic" heart disease.

Beat SCAD chair Rebecca Breslin, said: "The true incidence of SCAD is unknown but based on cases identified in the UK over the last six years it is estimated that hundreds of healthy women are being affected

'They diagnose panic attacks or anxiety and fail to carry out a simple test'

by these atypical heart attacks each year. The true number is likely to be much higher because a lack of awareness is contributing to misdiagnosis and inadequate reporting."

Around one in 10 cases occurs during or within two years after pregnancy.

SCAD researcher Dr David Adlam, based at Glenfield Hospital in Leicester, said: "SCAD is a significant cause of heart attacks in and around the time of pregnancy causing around a quarter of events in pregnancy and half of events in the first few months afterwards."

The charity, launched in 2015 and largely run by survivors, is calling for more research and specialised clinics to support patients.

Ms Breslin, who suffered a heart attack caused by SCAD in 2012 aged 34, said doctors also need to be more aware of the symptoms.

She said: "Because patients are fit and healthy, when they complain of cardiac symptoms, such as pain in the chest and arm, they are often dismissed by health professionals,



Katie Ratcliffe on holiday with her family in June 2019

My wife, 33, woke with chest pains and died same day

KATIE Ratcliffe died suddenly aged 33 just days after her son's fifth birthday.

Doctors battled in vain to save the mother-of-two after she suffered a sudden coronary artery dissection (SCAD) in July.

She had felt ill during son Henry's party five days earlier. Katie, a primary school teacher in Cheshire, felt achy the next day but assumed it was just a touch of flu.

Her husband John, 35, said: "On Friday morning she woke me up at 6:15 and said she had pains in her chest. An ambulance took her to hospital and an ECG showed an irregular rhythm. They said she'd had a mild heart attack."

John rushed home to feed the couple's daughter Heidi, then eight-months-old, and pack an overnight bag while Katie was transferred to another hospital. When he joined them, he discovered she had suffered a SCAD while having an X-ray.

John said: "Upon arrival, I was told she had a 50/50 chance of surviving. They did a double heart bypass, but couldn't save her. It went from being woken up by her at 6am, to her not coming home that day."

Hundreds of people who knew the "happy, adventurous and wonderful" mum have raised almost £10,000 in her memory.

John hopes Katie's story will help raise awareness of SCAD and the importance of research into such heart conditions.

who diagnose panic attacks or anxiety and fail to carry out or delay simple tests to rule out a heart problem."

There are currently no NICE guidelines for how to manage the condition and huge variation exists in the quality of diagnosis and treatment, the charity said. Beat

SCAD supports hundreds of women who have survived an episode.

Ms Breslin said: "Many of them describe horrific situations where they weren't listened to or taken seriously until they had a Troponin blood test which showed they'd had a heart attack."

"We know of people who have

been sent home mid-heart attack with indigestion medication," she added.

Ms Breslin said that the longer the heart is starved of blood and oxygen, the more muscle dies which will not recover. This then leads to reduced heart function.

Philippa Hobson, of the British

Heart Foundation, said SCAD is a rare condition that usually affects fit and healthy women.

She said: "Being diagnosed can be frightening and may have a major long-term impact on someone's life, so it is important that it's detected and treated as soon as possible."

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection

10% of SCADs are pregnancy related (P-SCAD)

50% of post-partum coronary events are due to SCAD

P-SCAD patients have worse outcomes than other SCAD patients

 **beat SCAD**
Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection

Not a typical heart patient!

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection

Victoria had a life-threatening coronary event soon after giving birth

50% of post-partum coronary events are due to SCAD*



www.beatscad.org.uk



*European Society of Cardiology, SCAD study group Position Paper February 2018 bit.ly/2FkRKmJ.



Photo courtesy Kate Beatty.

THINK SCAD – TEST TROPONIN!