

*T Hemmingsson et al. International Journal of Epidemiology (2006) Vol.35 p 616 to 622*

**Is the association between low job control and coronary heart disease confounded by risk factors measured in childhood and adolescence among Swedish males 40–53 years of age?**

Links between heart disease and psychosocial job characteristics were found to entirely explicable by teenage risk factors.

This was a prospective study of 49,323 males surveyed repeatedly up to the age of 54. The results found an association between low job control and increased risk of objectively determined heart disease; Hazard Ratio = 1.6 (95% CI 1.3 to 1.8). When corrected for risk factors measured at age 19 this association vanished into insignificance. The relevant teenage risk factors were smoking, heavy alcohol consumption and overweight (BMI > 25).

Job control was not actually measured but was estimated from job titles. The method has been validated.

**Comment**

Risk factors for heart disease were more common among those teenagers who later took jobs with low control. There was no independent association with low job control in middle age.

In this study, job control was the only work characteristic that was associated with heart disease. Demands, social support and job strain were also analysed but no associations were found. Critics would say that usually heart disease is more strongly associated with high job demands and that control was not always a significant predictor.

In our view, tests of association between heart disease and current job characteristics are probably meaningless unless corrected for a lifetime's history of exposure to the more well-established risk factors.

