



NEVER IGNORE CHEST PAIN

Last month a man in his 60's told me he had a vague R sided chest pain while cycling. He thought it was just because he was in the cold wind. He only came because his wife made him come to see me. The short story is that he ended up having a critical narrowing in his main coronary artery and had an emergency stent put in his coronary the same day. If he had not seen me, he could have dropped dead on his bike the next day of a heart attack.

Most people don't want to bother doctors with vague chest symptoms thinking that for it to be a cardiac pain, it has to be really significant and severe – wrong!

The heart attack that you or a loved one is most likely to die of is the first one! This means that there can be no warning and the person can just drop dead.

In addition, cardiac symptoms can come in all sorts of vague forms. The chest pain is classically central, pressing and tight and can move up to the neck and down an arm. But sometimes it can feel like indigestion, or be very vague just like the man in his 60's. Some people have 'silent heart attacks' which is where it is seen on an ECG later on – the person never had any symptoms.

In addition to vague sorts of chest symptoms or none, people can just feel vaguely unwell, short of breath, sweaty or have a few palpitations.

Admittedly, some of these symptoms can end up being due to stress, which are so common these days. But it is critically important to rule out a serious cause before assuming stress. This is what the doctor or your local accident and emergency centre is for. You and your family must let the experts decide.

So, the next time someone you know has any sort of chest discomfort, or feel vaguely unwell and are over 40 years of age, take them to the nearest doctor to be checked out and you could end up saving their life!