

Gender difference of socioeconomic risk factor of metabolic syndrome in Korea

Bo Hyun Kim, MD, PhD

Department of Internal Medicine

Pusan National University Hospital, Busan, Korea

The prevalence of Metabolic syndrome (MetS) is increasing worldwide and is a serious health problem globally. The incidence of MetS is also growing quite rapidly in concert with improvements in the standard of living and lifestyle. In Korea, recently rapid socioeconomic growth has resulted in profound lifestyle changes that have led to an increase in MetS. Patients with MetS are more susceptible to type 2 diabetes mellitus (DM), cardiovascular disease (CVD), and some cancers, which are leading causes of death, particularly in developed countries. In addition, MetS not only burdens the individual with MetS but also economic and social aspects of society. Therefore, the identification of social and economic characteristics associated with MetS is essential for the success of primary prevention.

Environmental and social factors were regarded as risk factor for MetS. Social factors such as education level, occupation, household income, and marital status may influence MetS. Several researchers have reported the association between socio-economic status (SES) and the risk of MetS. Lower SES presented more frequently MetS. Furthermore, gender also influenced the association of SES with MetS.

In view of this, we examined the relationship between SES and the prevalence of MetS in 4,689 Korean adults aged 20 to 79 years who participated in the 2013 Korean National Health Examination and Nutrition Survey. Prevalences of MetS in men and women were 30.9% and 24.8%, respectively. Marital status was significantly related to the prevalence of MetS in men, but not in women. Economy and education status was related to the prevalence of MetS in women, but not men. These findings suggest that gender-specific public health interventions that consider socioeconomic status are needed for targeting MetS prevention and treatment.