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3-17-2021

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### Recommended Citation

Blakeman, John R.; Woith, Wendy M.; Astroth, Kim S.; Jenkins, Sheryl H.; and Stapleton, Stephen J., "Women's Prodromal Myocardial Infarction Symptom Perception, Attribution, and Care Seeking" (2021). *Faculty Publications - Mennonite College of Nursing*. 20. <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/fpnrs/20>

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# Women's Prodromal Myocardial Infarction Symptom Perception, Attribution, and Care Seeking

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## Introduction

Most women experience several prodromal symptoms prior to myocardial infarction (MI). While investigators have focused on *acute* MI symptom perception, attribution, and care seeking, few have studied how women experience and process *prodromal* MI symptoms and ultimately decide to seek care.

## Research Question

How do women who experience type 1 myocardial infarction perceive, attribute, and respond to the prodromal symptoms that they experience?

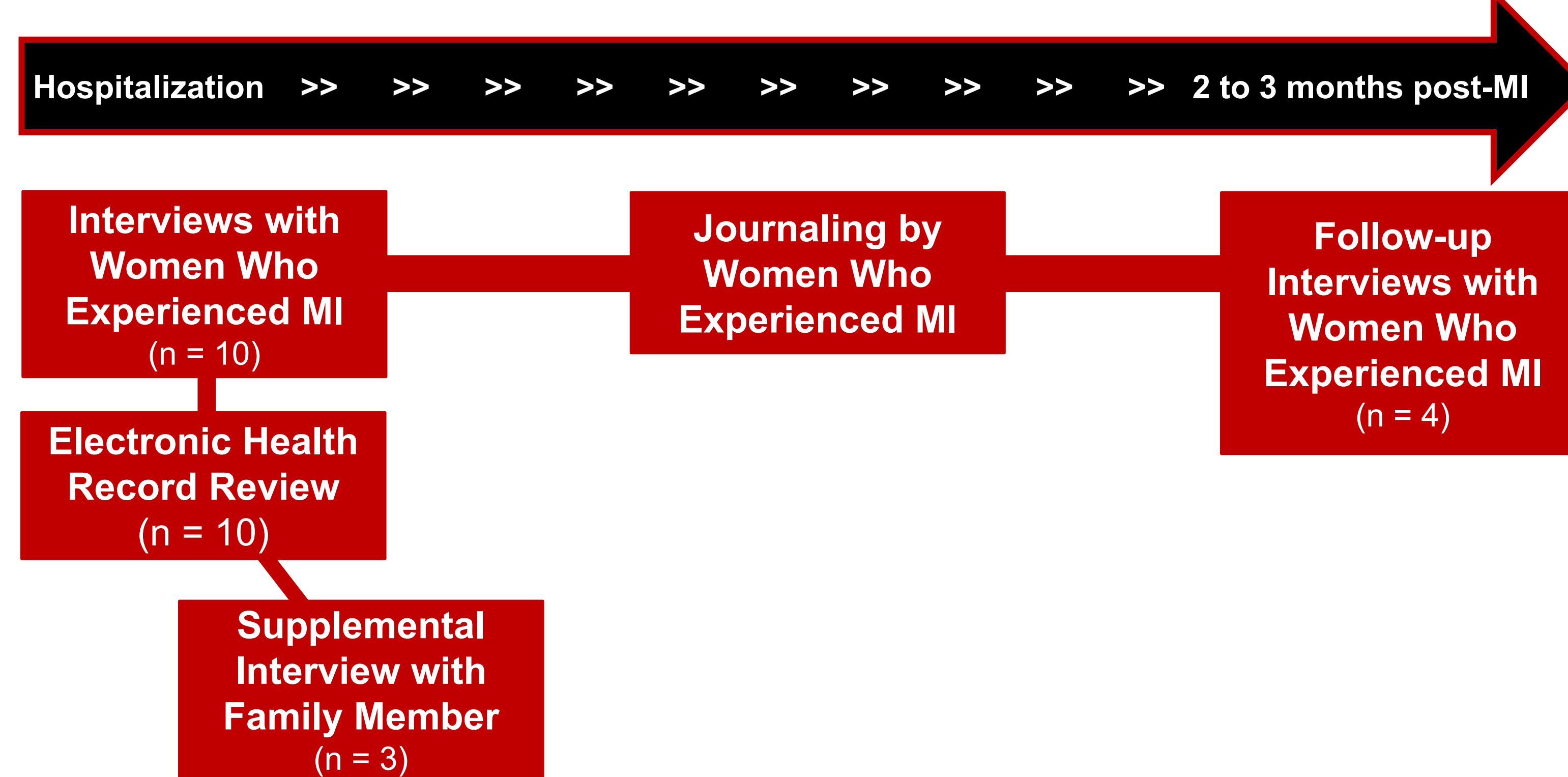
## Methods

- Theory of Unpleasant Symptoms (Lenz et al., 1997) served as theoretical framework
- Purposive enrollment of women with type 1 MI from large, Magnet®-designated teaching hospital in Midwest, USA
- Also enrolled supplementary sample of family members of women with MI
- Qualitative, multiple case study design (Merriam 1998; 2009)
- Inductive, comparative analysis; within- and across-case content analysis with focus on data triangulation

## References

- Lenz, E. R., Pugh, L. C., Milligan, R. A., Gift, A., & Suppe, F. (1997). The middle-range theory of unpleasant symptoms: An update. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 19(3), 14-27. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00012272-199703000-00003>
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- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mishel, M. H. (1990). Reconceptualization of the uncertainty in illness theory. *Image: Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 22(4), 256-262. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.1990.tb00225.x>

## Data Collection Process

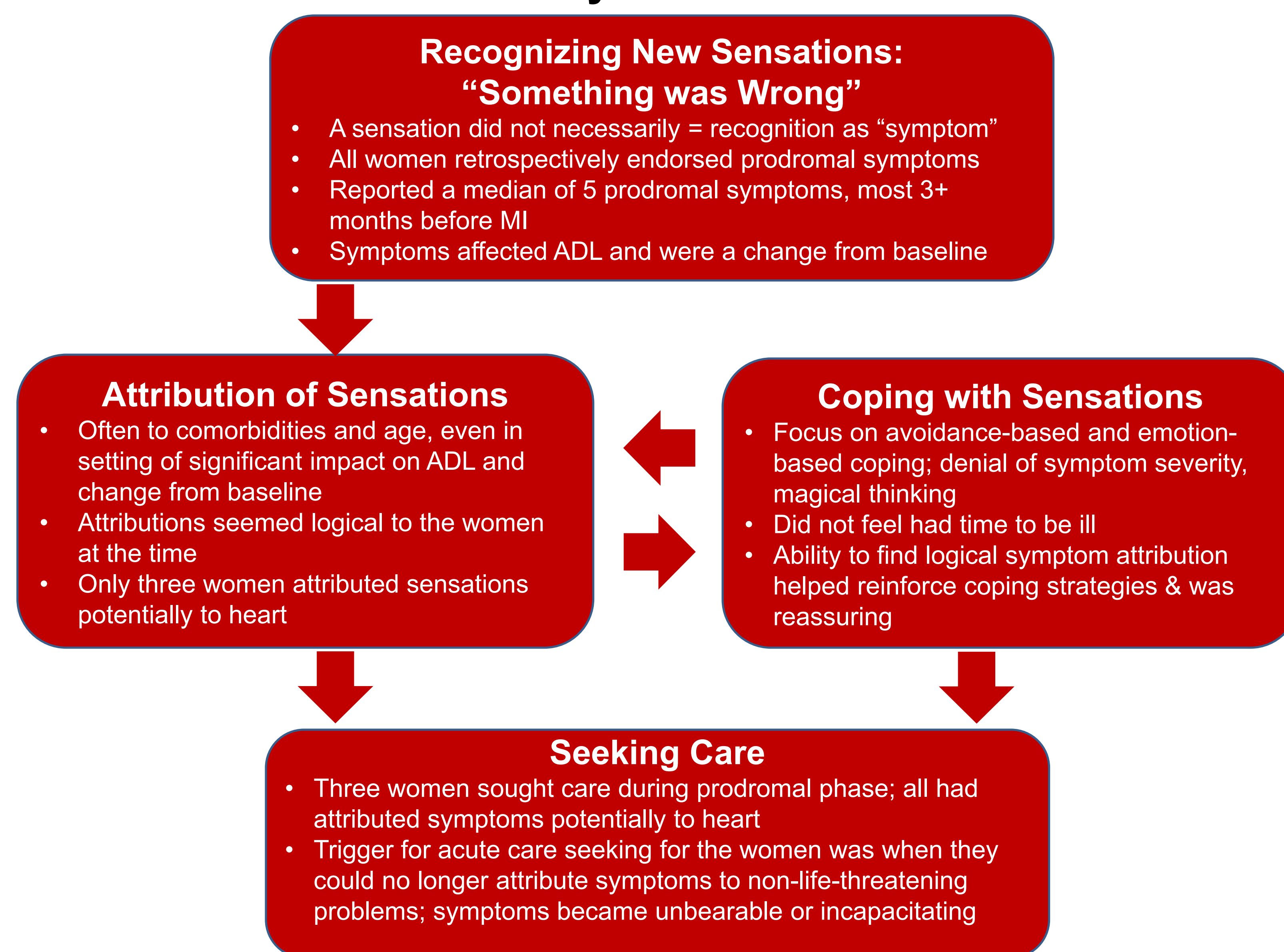


## Results

### Participant Description (names changed to protect anonymity)

Pseudonym	Age	Race & Ethnicity	Relationship Status	Work Status	Education	Menopause	History of CAD	MI Type
Anne	42	White, N-H	Married	None	High school	Pre	Yes	NSTEMI
Sheila	46	White, N-H	Married	Full-time	High school	Pre	Yes	STEMI
Jill	53	White, N-H	Widowed	Full-time	Some college	Post	No	NSTEMI
Kathy	59	White, N-H	Widowed	Part-time	High school	Post	No	STEMI
Mary	60	White, N-H	Divorced	None	Associate's	Post	No	NSTEMI
Janet	60	White, N-H	Divorced	Full-time	High school	Post	No	STEMI
Sandra	63	White, N-H	Divorced	None	High school	Post	No	STEMI
Sheryl	71	White, N-H	Single	Part-time	Bachelor's	Post	Yes	NSTEMI
Faye	81	White, N-H	Married	None	Some college	Post	Yes	NSTEMI
Marge	84	White, N-H	Widowed	None	High school	Post	No	NSTEMI

### Key Themes



## Results

### Common Prodromal Symptoms Reported

Prodromal Symptom	Number of Women
Overwhelming fatigue	9
Dyspnea	6
Indigestion/heart burn	6
Arm discomfort	4
Chest discomfort	4

## Discussion

- Opportunities exist for early recognition and action related to prodromal MI symptoms
- Lack of recognition of personal vulnerability towards heart disease limited symptom attribution to heart
- Lack of awareness that non-chest symptoms can be indicative of heart disease
- Assessment of symptoms requires careful use of terminology (e.g. "chest pain" may be limiting term)
- Similarities exist between acute and prodromal MI symptom attribution/perception/care-seeking literature
- Mishel's (1990) Uncertainty in Illness Theory and Leventhal's Common Sense Model (Leventhal et al., 2016) may serve to help explain aspects of these findings

## Future Research

- Additional qualitative and quantitative research with diverse samples; enhanced focus on attribution and coping processes
- Exploration of health care professionals' knowledge and assessment practices related to prodromal MI symptoms
- Development of targeted educational and clinical interventions for patients and health professionals related to prodromal MI symptoms

