"For African American women, our study found that positive, rewarding social roles, such as being a parent, are good for your heart."

Dr. Susan Everson-Rose

Background:
Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women in the U.S., accounting for 1/3 of deaths for women. Rates of heart disease are higher in black women than white women, but reasons for this are not well understood. Researchers at the University of Minnesota are working to understand how factors like social support and emotions may relate to heart disease in both African American and white women.

Research Findings:
In a study of 336 healthy, middle-aged women, Dr. Susan Everson-Rose and colleagues found that feeling rewarded by social roles, such as being a parent, was healthy for the heart, especially among black women.

- Black women who rated higher rewards from their roles were 50% less likely to show CAC progression over two years.

Roles:
Mother, spouse or being in a relationship, caregiver, and employed for pay were the 4 social roles that women rated how stressful or how rewarding they perceived each role to be.

In both groups, motherhood ranked #1 as the most rewarding social role.