In Qatar, cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of mortality and morbidity.

Cardiovascular diseases can be prevented and controlled by modifying lifestyle risk behaviours such as physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and smoking. Obesity, as the result of physical inactivity and unhealthy diet, raises the risk of heart diseases. Studies show that 62.6% of Qatari women were overweight and the prevalence of overweight is high among adult females with 80% of women 30 years and over. Qatar World Health Survey in 2006 shows that only 40% of Qatari women participated regularly in sports or other physical activities. Furthermore, waterpipe smoking is increasing across the Eastern Mediterranean.

Funded by the Qatar National Research Fund, the ultimate goal of this study was to find ways to effectively promote cardiovascular/coronary artery disease prevention and management activities among Qatari women (citizen and resident Arabic women) by exploring factors affecting the ways in which Qatari women participate in physical activities, healthy diet and smoking.

An exploratory qualitative research approach was used in this study, with a semi-structured questionnaire using open ended questions to gather data. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with 50 Arabic women who are 30 years and over, have confirmed diagnosis of CVD/coronary artery diseases to investigate factors influencing lifestyle risk behaviours associated with cardiovascular diseases amongst Qatari women (citizen and resident Arabic women).

The study’s results show that social support networks, cultural beliefs, values, practices, and religion; rapid economic growth; changing environmental and social conditions; influence women’s participation in physical activities, dietary practices and smoking. Conclusion: Prevention of cardiovascular diseases and promotion of healthy lifestyle should consider women’s specific health condition and socio-economic status; empower women to take charge of their health; facilitate women’s informal and formal social support networks; provide culturally appropriate public education; create healthy environment with more recreational facilities for women and children.