

UNDERWRITING

UNDERWRITER: DEFINED AS SOMEONE SITTING IN AN IVORY TOWER 900 MILES FROM HERE, TRAINED TO SAY, "NO."

YOUR JOB: TO CONVINCEN THAT UNDERWRITER, WITH TRUTHFUL INFORMATION, PRESENTED IN AS FAVORABLE A LIGHT AS POSSIBLE THAT IT IS DESIRABLE, EVEN POSSIBLE TO SAY "YES."

HEART ATTACK

Few Life Underwriters intentionally solicit bad risks. Nevertheless, we all run into our share of "people with problems." If you can assist them to obtain the life insurance that they would like to purchase, you stand to do a lot of good for a lot of people, including yourself.

One of the most common impairments that you are likely to run into is the client who has had a heart attack.

In order to evaluate the prospect's insurability you need to ask many of the following important questions:

Does the client currently smoke?

Clients who have had heart attacks and still continue to smoke may be extremely undesirable risks. Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease and one that can have a dramatic impact on life expectancy. The good news is that smokers who quit following a heart attack have better survival rates and are more likely to be looked upon favorably by the underwriter. The bad news is that those that do not quit smoking are likely to be heavily rated if not declined, if only for reasons of insanity.

When did the client have the heart attack?

Clients with uncomplicated heart attacks (also called myocardial infarction), may be insurable as soon as 3 to 6 months following the actual heart attack.

How was the heart attack treated?

There are essentially three treatment options for clients who have experienced heart attacks.

1. Clot dissolving medication to interrupt the actual heart attack.
2. Angioplasty (balloon expansion of a blocked coronary artery).

3. Coronary bypass surgery.

It is important to know exactly what treatment option the client had in order to accurately evaluate the risk.

Frequently more than one option has been tried in the treatment of the heart attack. Clot dissolving medication could be used initially to abort the heart attack. The blocked artery may then have been opened using balloon angioplasty. While balloon angioplasty is much less invasive and is therefore preferable to bypass surgery, approximately 30% of the balloon angioplasty procedures fail within six months, requiring either a second procedure or follow-up bypass surgery.

Has the client had any chest pain or other heart symptoms since the heart attack?

Chest pain or other cardiac related symptoms such as irregular heart rhythm, shortness of breath, circulatory discomfort, weakness, etc. following a heart attack carries with it a significant increase in mortality. Clients who experience chest pain or other cardiac related symptoms in the post-heart attack period are probably uninsurable.

What medications is the client currently taking?

Uncomplicated heart attacks are usually managed with minimal medications such as aspirin. Complicated heart attacks are managed with stronger medications such as LANOXIN, IMDUR, ISORDIL, or NITROGLYCERIN. Knowledge of the client's current medications is essential for an accurate risk appraisal.

Is the client participating in any form of cardiac rehabilitation?

Lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, exercise, diet and stress are all extremely important to a successful recovery from a heart attack. They are



by Donald Victorson, CLU

also extremely important to the final risk evaluation. The more documentation you can provide regarding improvements in health habits, the more likely that you will obtain a favorable offer for your client.

Lifestyle changes can have an enormous impact on mortality, and thus upon underwriting outcome in cardiac cases. There are numerous medical studies that verify that mortality outcome is greatly improved with positive lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking or beginning an exercise program. It is important that you document all lifestyle changes that would indicate a decrease in cardiac risk factors.

When it develops that your client has a history of heart attack, please don't become discouraged, become interested.

Someone with a cardiac history needs insurance badly. Usually they are motivated to buy it, and if you will only take the time to ask the right questions, usually we can help you obtain it for them at a price that they are only too willing to pay.

You may have to do a little extra digging, but you will be amply rewarded for your efforts. If you will only take the trouble to help these "people with problems" obtain the insurance that they need, you will also discover that they are wonderful centers of influence.