

Octogenarians can be good candidates for heart surgery

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Patients 80 years and older who are in overall good health are perfectly able to withstand open-heart surgery, according to the latest study of Dr. Kevin Lachapelle of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC). His findings were presented this morning in Toronto during the 2008 Canadian Cardiovascular Congress.

"Age should not be a reason for doctors to rule out the possibility of heart surgery for their octogenarian patients," explained Dr. Lachapelle. "If patients with heart problems are otherwise in good health, this surgery can significantly improve their quality of life."

This study conclusion is based on the follow-up of 185 patients who underwent open-heart surgery at the MUHC for a cardiac valve replacement. Five years after the operation, 60% of these patients were still alive and 90% of the survivors were leading active and independent lives. "This outcome is extremely positive," said Dr. Lachapelle. "It proves that age alone should not be a factor in ruling out this type of surgery: feasibility must be assessed by a surgeon based on the patient's overall state of health."

Quality of life is a major concern for octogenarians, a growing segment of the Quebec population. It is therefore important to evaluate all possible treatments according to each patient's specific needs and limitations in order to provide everyone with the best possible care. "Pediatricians account for children's specific needs, as they differ from those of adults. The elderly also have specific issues that must be objectively assessed and not considered based on pre-conceived notions," explained Dr. Lachapelle.

Source: McGill University

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