

Multiple risk factors cancel impact of atrial fibrillation on ischemic stroke risk

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The impact of atrial fibrillation on ischaemic stroke risk in elderly patients is eliminated with multiple risk factors, according to an 11 year study in more than 425 000 patients presented at ESC Congress today. The findings suggest that stroke prevention in the elderly may need to focus on the concomitant effects of multiple risk factors rather than on a specific risk factor such as atrial fibrillation (AF).

"The incidence of ischaemic stroke increases with greater numbers of [cardiovascular risk factors](#)," said principal investigator Dr Yutao Guo, cardiologist at the PLA General Hospital in Beijing, China. "However until now, how [atrial fibrillation](#) contributed to the risk of ischaemic stroke with increasing [age](#) and multiple [cardiovascular risk factors](#), was unclear."

The researchers investigated incident ischaemic stroke rates in relation to age and increasing cardiovascular risk factors (vascular disease, hypertension, diabetes or heart failure), and the incremental impact of AF on these stroke rates. The study population was a 5% random sample of patients without prior ischaemic stroke from a Chinese medical insurance dataset of more than 10 million patients during 2001 to 2012. The rate of ischaemic stroke was calculated in patients with and without AF in relation to age groups (75 years old) and increasing risk factors using the CHA2DS2-VASc score.

The study included 425 600 patients who were followed up for 1 864 232 patient-years. Patients were 63.8% male, mean age was 60 years, 880 had AF and 424 720 did not have AF. There were 13 242 (3.1%) ischaemic strokes after 64 834 person-years follow-up. Overall, ischaemic stroke incidence (per 100 person-years) was 0.35 (95% confidence interval [CI] = 0.34-0.35) in the non-AF population and 1.11 (95%CI = 0.84-1.45) in patients with AF (p

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