

Heart disease patients less likely to die of cancer if they are fit

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Heart disease patients are less likely to die of cancer if they are fit, suggests an observational study in more than 12 000 patients presented today at EuroEcho-Imaging 2017.

"There is evidence that [higher levels](#) of [physical activity](#) are associated with lower risk of several cancers," said lead author Dr Jesus Peteiro, a cardiologist at University Hospital A Coruna, A Coruna, Spain. "However, this association comes mainly from observational studies in which people self report their physical activity."

This study examined the association between physical fitness assessed by [exercise echocardiography](#) and death due to cancer. The study included 12,615 patients with known or suspected [coronary artery disease](#) referred for exercise echocardiography. Patients were 62 years old on average and 63% were men.

Exercise echocardiography was performed using a treadmill. For each patient the achieved metabolic equivalents (METs), which is a measure of oxygen consumption by the heart, was calculated.

Good functional [capacity](#) was defined as ten METs or more, based on previous studies that reported overall mortality of less than 1% per year in patients achieving ten METs during exercise echocardiography. Ten METs is equivalent to walking 12 minutes at maximal capacity on a treadmill (by a standard Bruce protocol). Patients were divided into two groups according to whether they had good functional capacity (ten METs or more) or not (less than ten METs).

Patients were followed up for death due to cancer. The association between functional capacity and death due to cancer was calculated after adjusting for clinical characteristics and resting echocardiography.

During an average follow-up of 4.7 years, 669

patients died of cancer. The researchers found that a worse functional capacity was significantly linked to a higher risk of cancer-related death. Cancer-related death was half in patients with good functional capacity (0.8%) compared to those without good functional capacity (1.5%; p

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