
1 in 4 Develop Heart Failure Following First Heart Attack



Heart attacks are quite common. The complication rates after heart attacks have been well studied in the short term. However, long-term data on risk factors for heart failure after a first MI are not well known.

Now a study from Utrecht Medical Center in the Netherlands reveals that nearly 25% of patients who suffer a first heart attack go on to develop heart failure within 4 years. This is an alarming high rate. These findings were just reported at the Heart Failure 2016 and third World Congress on Acute Heart Failure. These researchers followed nearly 25,000 patients for an average of 4 years.

Heart failure is not a trivial disorder and in most cases, the patient requires admission and readjustment of medications and the risk of death is extremely high if it is undertreated.

Dr Johannes Gho who was part of the study stated, "Research studying incidence of heart failure following myocardial infarction is limited and mainly stems from the thrombolytic era, when drugs were used to dissolve blood clots. Today the preferred treatment for acute myocardial infarction is percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) where a stent is used to open the blocked artery."

This was a prospective study that collected electronic records to assess the incidence and investigated the risk factors for heart failure in patients who suffered their first heart attacks. Dr Gho went on to add, "Finding which heart attack patients are most likely to get heart failure would help us target preventive therapies."

The researchers identified 24 745 patients aged 18 years or older who experienced a first myocardial infarction between January 1998 and 25 March 2010 and had no prior history of heart failure. Patients were followed up for a median of 3.7 years for the first recorded heart failure diagnosis in any of the CALIBER sources.

During follow-up, 24.3% (6005) patients developed heart failure. It is important to note that the introduction of PCI several decades ago has improved treatment for myocardial infarction so the risk of heart failure would be expected to decrease. However, it appears that there are now more patients alive after a heart attack who are susceptible to heart failure.

A number of factors were associated with an increased risk of developing heart failure after a first myocardial infarction. Risk factors for heart failure included advanced age, comorbidities like diabetes and poverty. Other risk factors included peripheral vascular disease, atrial fibrillation, COPD, hypertension and hypotension.

Source: JAMA

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Published on : Tue, 24 May 2016