



Press Releases

Alzheimer's Society comment on new research into heart rhythm disorder as a risk factor for dementia

Published: Friday 15th May 2009

Researchers at the Intermountain Medical Center have conducted research into the link between atrial fibrillation, a fairly common heart rhythm disorder, and dementia.

The study of more than 37,000 (presented today, Friday 15 May) shows that patients with atrial fibrillation were 44% more likely to develop dementia than patients without the disorder.

The large-scale retrospective study is the first to make clear that irregular heart rhythms increase the risk for both vascular and Alzheimer's type dementia. The risk was most increased for people under 70 with irregular heart rhythms.

'Dementia is not a natural part of ageing and there are over 100 different forms, of which Alzheimer's disease is the most common.

We have known for some time that irregular heart rhythms increase the risk of stroke. What this large-scale study clearly shows us for the first time is that irregular heart rhythms can increase the risk of both vascular and Alzheimer's type dementia.

Knowing what puts people at risk of the two most common forms of dementia could help us identify these individuals and investigate whether it is possible to develop targeted interventions that may reduce the risk. Research into dementia is desperately underfunded; but with the right investment it can be defeated.'

Dr Susanne Sorensen
Head of Research
Alzheimer's Society

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Full reference

Bunch TJ, Weiss JP, Crandall, BG et al. Atrial Fibrillation is Independently Associated with Senile, Vascular, and Alzheimer's Dementia. Presented at the annual scientific sessions of the Heart Rhythm Society, Boston, 15 May 2009.

Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society is the leading care and research charity for people with all forms dementia and their carers. It provides information and education, support for carers, and quality day and home care. It funds medical and scientific research and campaigns for improved health and social services and greater public understanding of dementia. The Alzheimer's Society provides a national help line on 0845 3000 336 and website alzheimers.org.uk. Please include this information in any publication that uses these comments.

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