



## Combined Risk Scores Better Identify AFib Patients at Risk of Dementia



Combining risk scores can help clinicians better identify atrial fibrillation patients who are at an increased risk of developing dementia. Findings were presented during Heart Rhythm 2017.

**See Also:** [Delayed Use of Blood Thinners Increases Risk of Dementia](#)

The Intermountain Mortality Risk Score (IMRS) was developed by clinicians at Intermountain Healthcare. When combined with the traditional CHA2DS2-VASc risk score, it is possible to more accurately identify at-risk patients as compared to using the traditional score alone.

The traditional CHA2DS2-VASc score is an international guideline and adds points based on the patient's age, sex, and history of stroke, hypertension, heart failure, or diabetes. Patients that score two or more are placed on blood thinners. The IMRS score is based on lab values and includes parameters such as complete blood count (CBC) and basic metabolic profile (BMP).

Previous studies show that patients with atrial fibrillation who have a high CHA2DS2-VASc score may be at an increased risk of stroke and dementia. However, this new research from the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute was able to identify patients with low CHA2DS2-VASc scores who were also at a higher risk of dementia.

The study included 75,000 patients with atrial fibrillation with no history of dementia. They were grouped according to their CHA2DS2-VASc score of one, two, or three or greater and then were further grouped using the IMRS.

Kevin Graves, lead author of the study and researcher with the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute points out that patients with a low score are generally considered low risk but when they were evaluated using the IMRS tool, physicians were able to see a much better picture of which patients may truly be at a high risk for dementia.

"We don't consider atrial fibrillation to be a risk factor for dementia, but rather a risk marker," said Graves. "Dementia may be an endgame of the underlying atrial fibrillation diagnosis, so as that disease progresses, the risk of dementia goes up significantly. Having the best tools available to identify risks can help physician and patients be better equipped in the shared decision-making process to help them prevent, postpone, or better manage the symptoms of dementia."

Source: [Intermountain Medical Center](#)

Image Credit: Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute

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