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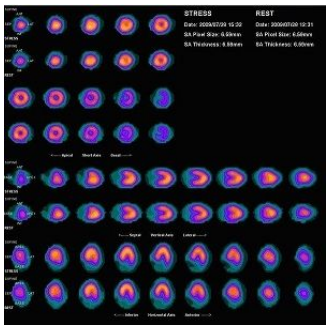
Nuclear Stress Test Identifies Heart Attack Risk in Diabetics



Nuclear stress tests reveal an increased risk of cardiac-related deaths in patients with diabetes, a new study in *Radiology: Cardiothoracic Imaging* confirms.

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Myocardial Perfusion Imaging (MPI) uses radioisotopes and a special camera to capture how efficiently blood is flowing through the heart under stress. This has typically been used to evaluate patients with coronary artery disease risks, however, not much research has been done in relation to risks associated with diabetic patients.

Diabetes is a known cause of coronary artery disease and heart attacks, and the use of PET MPI could improve cardiac risk stratification and prove as an efficient diagnostic and risk assessment tool. By using PET MPI to test for cardiac risks could highlight patients needing immediate treatment and sparing others from undergoing it unnecessarily.

The results from stress tests for 7061 participants – 1966 of these with diabetes – across 4 centres were studied. The study confirmed that abnormal PET MPI results in diabetic patients led to increased risk of cardiac death in clinical subgroups based on age, gender, obesity, or those with prior revascularization procedures like angioplasty. These results were then used to assess cardiac risk for a population of diabetic patients.

Lead study author Dr. Hicham Skali, M.D., M.Sc. of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, explained that patients with diabetes were at a higher risk of cardiac death than patients without. Dr. Skali also discussed how data from the stress test among diabetic patients were able to give better risk stratification in more than 39% of cases.

The results of the study also raised concerns about the risks to younger diabetic patients. It was found that even normal PET MPI results in diabetic patients had similar cardiac arrest rates to people 10-15 years older, without diabetes. It was suggested that tools should be available to younger diabetic patients to manage these risks.

Source: RSNA

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