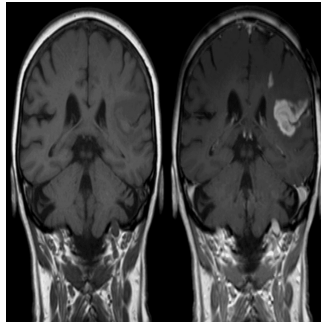

Stroke Patients Have High Long-Term Risk



According to recent data presented at the Canadian Stroke Congress, people who have already had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) are at a high risk for a second similar event or other serious medical complications for the next five years. They need continuous follow-up and monitoring in order to manage this risk.

The research was conducted at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES). Data were collected from the Ontario Stroke Registry and involved 34,000 patients who had been discharged from the hospital following a stroke or TIA.

The study showed that such patients have a 10 percent risk of suffering from a repeat stroke, heart attack, admission to long-term care or even death in the first year. In addition, these patients remain at risk over the long term. According to the study, after five years, the risk of these events occurring was twice that of individuals of the same age and sex who had not had a previous stroke or TIA.

"This high long-term risk was surprising and shows that we need to develop better strategies and interventions for these patients to prevent as many of these serious problems as we can," says Dr. Richard Swartz, director of the University of Toronto stroke program, a stroke neurologist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and leader of the study.

The study reveals that death was the most common of the events and occurred in 5.1 percent of patients in the first year. In patients who survived, the event rate was around five percent for each of the following four years.

The findings of the study suggest that patients who have had a stroke or TIA should be closely monitored for longer periods since the elevated risk continues after 90 days and can continue for years. It is also important to educate patients, their families and their family physicians and nurses to be vigilant and alert to the risks and to closely monitor these patients.

Dr. Swartz and his team have started new studies to investigate the impact of risk factors such as depression, obstructive sleep apnoea and cognitive impairment. They have developed a test that could help physicians evaluate cognitive decline in stroke or TIA patients.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation has also developed best practices for the transition of care for stroke patients and has developed a post-stroke checklist for doctors, clinical staff, patients and families.

Source: Science Daily

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