

Britain may restrict heart pump use

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British researchers are urging the restricted use of an implantable pump designed to help heart failure patients while they wait for a transplant.

"Although we believe that the devices have been developed sufficiently to prolong life for some very sick patients who have rapidly deteriorating heart failure, we don't feel they've been developed quite enough yet for widespread use among the whole heart failure population," said lead researcher Linda Sharples of Britain's National Health Service.

Sharples studied health outcomes and the cost effectiveness of the ventricular assist devices for 70 British patients who received the implant between April 2002 and December 2004.

"We compared the VAD group with the very sickest of the transplant candidates and found the healthcare for those individuals was less costly. Those non-VAD patients also had greater survival," Sharples said.

"We recommend that the United Kingdom continue to monitor the development of the new devices," said Sharples. "I think we are all quite hopeful that they will progress and we will have more cost-effective and effective devices in the future."

The review appears in the latest issue of Health Technology Assessment.

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