

Long Distant Air Flights Increases Risk of Deep Venous Thrombosis 4X

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The European Society of Cardiology, (ESC) the preeminent authority on cardiovascular health re-affirms its warning to passengers on long-haul plane trips of the risk of deep venous thrombosis or VTE. The warning from ESC comes on the heels of a recent review by *The Lancet* which suggests that the risk of VTE increases when flight duration exceeds four hours.

According to ESC , The Lancet review by D. Silvermann and M. Gendreau published in 2009 points out the elevated risk is related to immobility, dehydration, reduced oxygen in the plane cabin and individual risk factors such as obesity, recent surgery and predispositions to thrombosis. ESC spokesman, Professor Kurt Huber addresses the risk component for those prone to thrombosis to include not just identified VTE patients, but includes patients with atherothrombotic diseases like

myocardial infarctions and stroke. Professor Huber also includes healthy people as a risk concern. In particular pregnant women, women taking oral contraceptives (more so if they smoke cigarettes), and the elderly.

According to Steen Kristensen, Vice President of ESC, long distant flying does increase the risk for deep venous thrombosis for a variety of people. He suggests, "to minimize the risk it is important to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids, and to walk (exercise) before and during the flight. The use of compression stockings is for some travelers an important way of preventing deep venous thrombosis."

In response to concerns to more serious cardiovascular complications in long-haul air flights, Professor Panos E. Vardas of the European Heart Rhythm Association says the reason for loss of consciousness or fainting during flights may happen for benign or malignant reasons. Specifically, Professor Vardas cites the use of certain medications taken by the elderly which results in low blood pressure as a significant cause of loss of consciousness.

ESC recommends the best course of action if a passenger loses consciousness is to keep the patient in a lying down position with the legs elevated. At the same time, the defibrillator (carried by most European airlines) should be readied and if the unconsciousness lasts for most than 30 to 40 seconds and if the automatic device advises defibrillation, the defibrillator should be activated.

ESC is in the process of preparing a final policy paper on the safety of air travel for cardiac patients and advocates improved airline personnel training, air to ground medical support and expansion of the practice of carrying a defibrillator to all commercial flights.

More information:

ESC Bulletin: ESC Reaffirms Advice on Cardiovascular Risks

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