

Muscular heart failure patients may have a better chance at survival: study

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University of Alberta research has discovered heart failure patients with more muscle have the potential to increase their length of life.

Antigone Oreopoulos, a researcher from the U of A's School of Public Health, studied 140 patients with heart failure. Study participants underwent a special scan to measure their muscle mass and body fat.

Oreopoulos' research found that having more muscle was associated with better nutritional status and lower severity of heart failure, while higher body fat was associated with increased [inflammation](#) and reduced [exercise capacity](#). This suggests that in patients with heart failure having more [muscle mass](#) and lower fat may be beneficial.

Oreopoulos' research was published this month in the journal *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

The study also discovered that testing just the [body mass index](#) (BMI) of heart failure patients doesn't accurately measure their body fat status. Oreopoulos found 41 per cent of the participants were inaccurately classified by BMI. Many who had a high body weight but not high body fat were mislabelled as obese and others who did not weigh a lot but had a high amount of body fat were mislabelled as normal by BMI. Oreopoulos says this research has direct implications for weight management guidelines and adds that to date there is a shortage of evidence to guide a clinician's decision about when to recommend weight loss to a patient with heart failure.

While this study provides potential explanations of how muscle and fat could possibly play a role in the survival of [heart failure](#) patients, Oreopoulos says there isn't enough evidence to make specific recommendations. Her team plans to conduct treatment studies that examine the effects of intentional [weight gain](#) and loss on the survival and quality of life in these patients.

Provided by University of Alberta

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