

Newly recognized feature of athlete's heart found to be more prevalent in black male athletes

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Left-ventricular hyper-trabeculation (LVHT) – a feature of certain cardiomyopathies (chronic disease of the heart muscle) – has been found to be more common in black, male athletes according to a new study presented today at the World Congress of Cardiology.

A study of 692 athletes carried out in the UK, found that LVHT was more prevalent in athletes compared with non-athletes (6.8 per cent compared with 0.4 per cent). None of the individuals with LVHT, however, fulfilled the diagnostic criteria for any form of cardiomyopathy. Moreover, LVHT was found to be significantly more common in afro-Caribbean (black) athletes than in other athletes (13.2 per cent versus 4 per cent).

Regular athletic training results in physiological adaptation of a person's [heart](#) structure and function. And while many functional changes have been identified, LVHT has not previously been recognized as a feature of "athlete's heart". Rather LVHT is a known feature of cardiomyopathy, which remains the commonest cause of exercise-related sudden cardiac death in athletes.

"The high prevalence of LVHT among athletes suggests that this may represent part of the spectrum of cardiac adaptations that are known to make up "athletes heart'," said Dr. Navin Chandra, St Georges University of London. "Given that LVHT is a feature of sudden cardiac

death, its prevalence among athletes creates greater challenges for doctors trying to differentiate between athlete's heart and a serious medical condition, particularly in black male athletes where the prevalence is much higher."

The study was carried out from 2006-2011, during which time 692 athletes and 455 sedentary participants underwent cardiac evaluation that included ECG and echocardiography. Results were analyzed according to the European Society of Cardiology sports cardiology consensus.

Provided by World Heart Federation

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