

Heart failure patients may be at higher risk for cancer: study

November 7 2012, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter

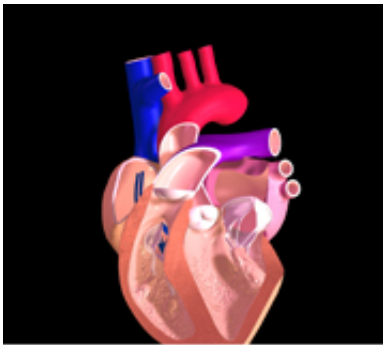


Image courtesy of Blausen Medical

But whether heart failure is the cause isn't clear, expert says.

(HealthDay)—People suffering from heart failure may have a nearly 60 percent higher risk of developing cancer, a preliminary study suggests.

Moreover, cancer appeared to increase the risk of death in [heart failure patients](#) by 46 percent, according to lead [researcher](#) Dr. Tal Hasin, with the cardiology department at the [Mayo Clinic](#) in Rochester, Minn.

Heart failure occurs when the heart can't pump enough blood to keep the body supplied with oxygen and [nutrients](#).

Since [patients with heart failure](#) are at greater risk of dying anyway, the question was whether developing cancer made death even more likely,

Hasin said. "Not surprisingly, the answer was 'yes' again, if you have heart failure and also develop cancer, your risk of dying is increased," he said.

In patients with heart failure, death often occurs from other causes, such as cancer, Hasin said, and this is just beginning to be appreciated by the [medical community](#).

"More emphasis should be put on cancer surveillance and prevention in this population," he said.

The results of the study were due to be presented Wednesday at the American Heart Association annual meeting, in Los Angeles.

For the study, Hasin's team collected data on 961 people recently diagnosed with heart failure, comparing them to similar people without the condition.

At the time of diagnosis, heart failure patients had similar rates of cancer to those without heart failure.

During over six years of follow-up, however, the risk for cancer among heart failure patients was significantly higher than among those without heart failure, the researchers found.

[Cancer rates](#) in heart failure patients were similar for men and women, but people under 75 were more likely to develop cancer.

One expert says that heart failure patients may be at risk for cancer because their bodies are already compromised—making another disease more probable—or the finding could be just an association rather than a direct cause-and-effect relationship.

"Certain risk factors for heart failure including older age, diabetes, obesity and smoking are also well-established risk factors for cancer," said Dr. Gregg Fonarow, a spokesman for the [American Heart Association](#) and a professor of cardiology at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, also in Los Angeles.

This new analysis of heart failure patients from a single community suggests that patients with heart failure may be at increased risk for developing cancer independent of these established risk factors, he said.

"[Heart failure](#) activates a variety of pro-inflammatory pathways which may in turn increase cancer risk. However, these findings may instead reflect confounding rather than a true causal relationship," Fonarow said. "Further studies are needed to corroborate these findings."

Because this study was presented at a medical meeting, the data and conclusions should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: To learn more about heart failure, visit the [American Heart Association](#).

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