

Diabetic women face higher risk of stroke

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Credit: Rachel Huxley

(Medical Xpress)—A review of more than 60 studies has shown that women with diabetes have a 27 per cent higher risk of stroke than men with diabetes.

Professor Rachel Huxley, from The University of Queensland, collaborated with researchers from leading public health units at the University of Cambridge (UK) and The George Institute for Global Health.

The UQ School of Population Health researcher said the study was the first to reveal that the risk of diabetes-related stroke significantly differs in women and men.

"Research has previously shown that diabetes confers a greater risk of having a heart attack in women than men, and now we have shown that this gender difference also extends to stroke," Professor Huxley said.

"Data was pooled from three-quarters of a million people, including more than 12,000 individuals who had suffered strokes, both fatal and non-fatal.

"Our analysis of the data showed, in comparison to men with diabetes, women with the condition had a 27 per cent higher relative risk of stroke even after taking into account other risk factors such as age and blood pressure."

Diabetes is a [global health](#) concern, currently affecting an estimated 347 million people worldwide.

It is predicted to increase by more than fifty per cent over the next decade due to the prevalence of overweight, obese and physically inactive people.

"With diabetes on the rise, there is an urgent need to establish why the condition poses a greater cardiovascular health threat for women than men," she said.

"We don't yet understand why diabetes is more hazardous for women in determining their cardiovascular risk compared with men, but existing studies suggest that it may be linked to obesity.

"Men tend to become diabetic at lower levels of [body mass index](#) compared with women.

"Consequently, by the time women develop diabetes and begin receiving intervention from a GP, their levels of other [cardiovascular risk factors](#) - including BMI - are higher than in men with diabetes who may have been picked up – and treated- at an earlier stage of the condition."

"It may be this chronic exposure to high levels of [cardiovascular risk](#) factors in the lead up to developing diabetes that may be responsible for the greater risk of stroke that we see in [women](#) with [diabetes](#) than in similarly affected [men](#)."

More information: "Diabetes as a risk factor for stroke in women compared with men: a systematic review and meta-analysis of 64 cohorts, including 775 385 individuals and 12 539 strokes." Sanne A E Peters PhD, Prof Rachel R Huxley DPhil, Prof Mark Woodward PhD. *The Lancet* - 7 March 2014 [DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)60040-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)60040-4)

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