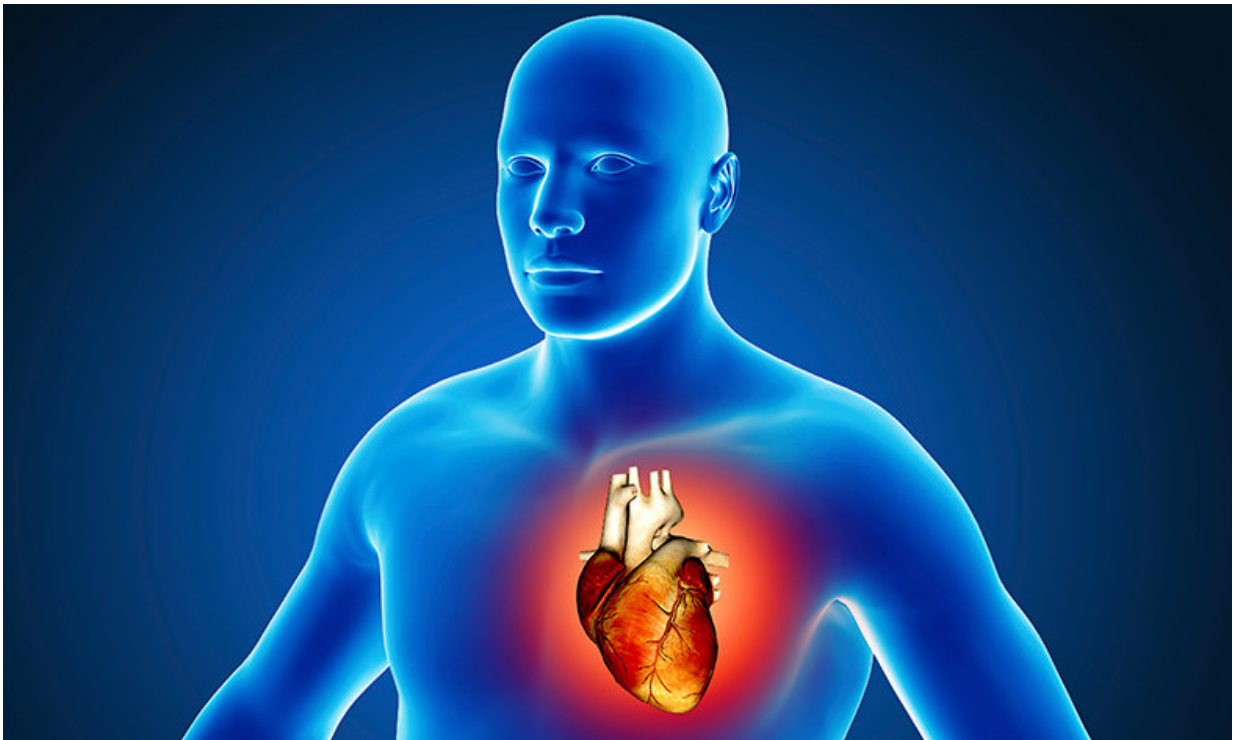


New study identifies those most at risk of developing a life-threatening heart infection

December 20 2017, by Amy Huxtable



Credit: University of Sheffield

A team of international researchers, led by the University of Sheffield, have measured the risk of developing or dying from the life-threatening heart condition infective endocarditis (IE), for people with predisposed heart conditions.

The new study, led by Professor Martin Thornhill from the University of Sheffield's School of Clinical Dentistry, shows that men were more than twice as likely to develop IE as women and that the risk peaked in young children and the elderly.

"Those with artificial or repaired [heart valves](#) and certain congenital [heart conditions](#) were at much higher risk of developing or dying from IE than the general population," said Professor Thornhill.

"And the risk of developing IE again was even higher in those who previously had IE.

"Surprisingly, the risk of IE was substantially reduced in those with repaired [congenital heart defects](#) although those in whom the repair involved shunts or conduits had a much higher and progressively worsening risk of developing or dying from IE."

In recent years there has been an increasing number of people in whom implantable pacemakers and defibrillators have been inserted to treat heart problems and the study showed for the first time that these individuals also have an increased risk of IE.

IE is a serious heart infection that kills around a third of those who develop it within the first year and causes long-term and serious disability in those who survive.

The findings, published in the *European Heart Journal*, are particularly important because they allow prevention measures to be targeted at those individuals most at risk of developing IE and they allow clinicians and patients to better evaluate the risk of this complication before procedures such as artificial heart valves, implanted pacemakers are performed.

These findings may also help international guideline committees to improve their guidance on the prevention of IE and the risks associated with different cardiac procedures.

Provided by University of Sheffield

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