

Aboriginal Australians at greater risk of stroke

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A blood clot forming in the carotid artery. Credit: American Heart Association

Aboriginal Australians under 60 years of age who suffer from atrial fibrillation are three times more likely to experience a stroke than non-Aboriginal patients, according to a new study by The University of

Western Australia.

The researchers studied patients aged between 20 and 84 years who were hospitalized with atrial fibrillation in Western Australia between 2000 and 2012.

Dr. Lee Nedkoff, a Research Fellow from UWA's School of Population and Global Health said cardiovascular risk factors such as [high blood pressure](#) and smoking were higher among Aboriginal people when compared to other Australians.

"Our research discovered that the differences in [stroke risk](#) are even greater when examining fatal strokes, with the risk nearly six times higher among Aboriginal patients," Dr. Nedkoff said.

Atrial fibrillation is a common type of irregular heartbeat which is often undiagnosed and can put people at greater risk of having a stroke.

"Oral blood-thinning medications reduce the risk of stroke caused by blood clots and mortality despite the increased risk of major bleeding, but data on their use by Aboriginal Australians is limited," Dr. Nedkoff said.

"The more recent availability of new oral blood-thinning medications provides an opportunity for reducing the risk of stroke for Aboriginal people with atrial fibrillation.

"Increased screening for atrial fibrillation and [cardiovascular risk factors](#) in [primary care](#) and incorporating new models of ongoing care that recognize the importance of cultural factors could improve primary and secondary stroke prevention for Aboriginal people," Dr. Nedkoff said.

According to Dr. Nedkoff, there is currently a limited amount of data

available which quantifies the risk of stroke in Aboriginal patients with [atrial fibrillation](#).

"Our study provides insight into the level of risk in adults aged under 60 years, which hasn't been established before," Dr. Nedkoff said.

"A committed effort from governments, health service providers and communities have the potential to greatly reduce the stroke and cardiovascular risk of our Aboriginal population."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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