Many stroke patients suffer from spasticity of the arm that cause pain and impaired sensorimotor function. But there are ways of identifying such patients ahead of time so that they can obtain the earliest possible treatment. Researchers at Sahlgrenska Academy have completed a study of stroke patients in the Gothenburg area.

Spasticity and related complications are relatively common after stroke, leading to poorer joint range of motion, greater pain and less sensitivity in the arm one year later.

A study at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, has found that the Fugl-Meyer assessment scale, a sensorimotor test performed during the first month after stroke, predicts with a fairly high degree of accuracy the patients who will develop spasticity within one year.

Arve Opheim, a researcher at Sahlgrenska Academy, says, "Our findings suggest that systematic examinations of sensorimotor function can identify patients at risk of developing spasticity so that they can obtain early treatment. Opportunities for minimizing pain, impaired function and other repercussions of spasticity will inevitably follow."

The article Early Prediction of Long-term Upper Limb Spasticity after Stroke: Part of the SALGOT Study was published in Neurology on August 14.

A few facts about spasticity

Spasticity refers to a motor disorder caused by damage to the central nervous system. The spasms, which may arise following a stroke, have the potential to occasion pain as well. Anywhere from 40% to 50% of stroke patients develop upper limb spasticity.