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HEART FAILURE HITS ASIANS MUCH EARLIER - STUDY

A large-scale, international study has found that heart failure affects Asian patients at least 10 years earlier, compared to Western populations.

The multinational study looks at 8,000 heart failure patients in 11 Asian regions (China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand), and is the first of its kind in the region. Preliminary results from the first 2,094 patients enrolled in the first year of study have revealed that the average age of Asian patients with heart failure is 60 years - much younger compared to patients from other studies in the United States (72 years), and in Europe (70 years). The results also revealed a very high rate of diabetes and hypertension amongst these heart failure patients in Singapore and Malaysia. The rates are also higher than those in the other Asian countries studied.

According to the principal investigator of the study, Associate Professor Carolyn Lam of the National University Heart Centre, Singapore, "The frightening finding is that heart failure affects Asian patients at a much younger age than in Western countries, and within Asia itself there is tremendous diversity in disease characteristics. For example, the average ages of patients from China, India and Malaysia are even younger than 60 years, and the rates of diabetes are strikingly high among patients from Singapore and Malaysia – affecting almost 60% of patients in Singapore and almost 50% of those from Malaysia, compared to only 33% of patients in Europe. These findings have important implications for risk factor control, and treatment for the prevention of heart failure."

These preliminary results, presented by A/Prof Lam at the European Society of Cardiology Heart Failure Congress in Athens on 20 May 2014, have garnered significant interest.

Heart failure is a major public health problem worldwide. As the final common pathway of a myriad of heart diseases, the heart failure burden increases with the increasing prevalence of cardiovascular disease in a community, as patients survive their acute cardiac conditions (such as heart attacks) and progress to chronic heart failure.

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Furthermore, heart failure is a debilitating and deadly condition with high re-hospitalization rates and dismal survival rates comparable to most cancers. In Singapore, there were about 6,000 hospitalization episodes for heart failure in the resident population in 2011. “The 5-year survival rate in patients with heart failure is only about 32% but advances in treatment have been shown to improve survival,” added A/Prof Lam.

Commenting on the findings, the Director of the National University Heart Centre, Singapore, Associate Professor Tan Huay Cheem said, “The observation of heart failure occurring at a younger age among Asian patients drives the need for more intensive prevention and intervention effort in this part of the world. As the economic cost of heart failure disease on any health care system is significant, it is hope that the heart failure registry study will be able to shed light on the possible cause.”

Added Professor Mark Richards, Director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at the NUHCS, “The careful nature of the recordings taken on patients within ASIAN HF will soon be strengthened by gene and biomarker studies that will hopefully highlight reasons for the increasing problem of heart failure within Singapore and greater Asia and point the way to new management strategies and novel treatments best suited to Asian patients.”

The statistics from the study reflect the global shift in the cardiovascular disease burden to developing countries in Asia. In fact, the World Health Organization has projected that the largest increases in cardiovascular disease worldwide are occurring in Asia, due to rapidly increasing rates of smoking, obesity, dyslipidemia and diabetes among Asians. Thus the burden of heart failure is expected to reach epidemic proportions in Asia.

As knowledge gaps exists regarding disease burden, treatment patterns and barriers to therapy as well as outcomes in Asian patients with heart failure, the findings from the multinational study will help doctors to understand what Asian patients with heart failure are dying from and whether some of these deaths may be prevented. The long term goal is to improve the survival of Asian patients with heart failure.

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About the National University Health System (NUHS)

The National University Health System (NUHS) groups the National University Hospital (NUH), the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, the NUS Faculty of Dentistry and the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health under a common governance structure to create synergies to advance health by integrating clinical care, research and education.

The enhanced capabilities and capacity will enable the NUHS to deliver better patient care, train future generations of doctors more effectively and bring innovative treatments to patients through groundbreaking research.

For more information about the NUHS: www.nuhs.edu.sg

About the National University Heart Centre, Singapore

The National University Heart Centre, Singapore (NUHCS) brings together the resources, expertise and capabilities in the areas of Cardiology, Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery to better meet the needs of the growing number of patients with heart disease. A key centre for the treatment and management of complex cardiovascular diseases, its core clinical programmes include heart failure, structural heart disease, acute coronary syndrome, vascular medicine and therapy, women's heart health and heart rhythm.

Comprising a team of cardiovascular specialists and experts from a multitude of medical and surgical disciplines, the NUHCS provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to the treatment of patients with heart problems. This approach is backed by cutting edge knowledge and information gathered by the Cardiovascular Research Institute (CVRI).

The CVRI focuses on developing niche research work in creating new knowledge in support of NUHCS' core clinical programmes by working in close collaboration with both local and international renowned research institutes such as the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and New Zealand's Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Partnerships are formed with various medical institutes as the NUHCS is a selected training centre for international physicians. Education and training ensures that our medical

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professionals are kept abreast of the latest findings, with our specialists also actively involved in conducting workshops and teaching programmes for medical undergraduates.

For more information about the NUHCS: www.nuhcs.com.sg