

New treatment guidelines for patients with abnormal heart rhythms

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University researchers have developed risk assessment tools for the treatment of atrial fibrillation, the most common cardiac rhythm disorder which can lead to stroke or heart failure if not treated properly. These assessment tools are now included in New European guidelines for treatment and could lead to significant improvements in stroke prevention for patients.

Atrial fibrillation affects around six million people across Europe and can result in stroke if anticoagulation (treatment with blood-thinning drugs) is not used when needed. These risk assessment tools allow clinicians to assess the risk of stroke and bleeding when anticoagulation drugs such as warfarin are prescribed.

The European Society of Cardiology clinical guidelines now include the CHA2DS2-VASc and HAS-BLED risk scores which were devised and validated by researchers at the University's [Centre for Cardiovascular Sciences \(http://www.clinexpmed.bham.ac.uk/research/cardio.shtml\)](http://www.clinexpmed.bham.ac.uk/research/cardio.shtml).

Professor Gregory Y H Lip, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at the University who led the development and validation of the two new risk scores, said:

'Doctors need simple risk assessment tools when evaluating a patient with atrial fibrillation. The CHA2DS2-VASc and HAS-BLED scores in the guidance reflect the emphasis on improving decision-making for stroke prevention in patients, given the benefits of oral anticoagulation therapy in this setting.

'The new guidelines will also mean that more patients will require anticoagulation. With the availability of new drugs that overcome the disadvantages of warfarin, more patients with atrial fibrillation will be able to reap the benefits of stroke prevention with oral anticoagulation therapy. The new risk scores will clearly help everyday management of such patients.'

[Atrial fibrillation press release \(/news/latest/2010/10/14Oct-Cardiology.aspx\)](#)