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New Blood Test Predicts Stroke Risk

Test Measures Enzyme Linked to Increased Risk of Ischemic Stroke

Editors Note: Many people who have cancer also have cardio-vascular disease (CVD). According to a new study people with cancer have an increased risk of an astounding 4800% in the 60 day window surrounding the diagnosis of cancer and an increased lifetime risk of CVD of 760%. This new blood test is a welcome addition to the High Sensitivity C-Reactive Protein (hs-CRP) and Homocysteine, and Fibrinogen tests to detect heart disease – not only in people who have cancer – but in the general population. – Frank D Wiewel, Founder, People Against Cancer.

WebMD - June 20, 2005 -- A newly approved blood test may help spot people at increased risk for stroke who lack traditional risk factors, such as high blood pressure or diabetes.

The test, called PLAC, is the first blood test approved by the FDA to predict a person's risk of ischemic stroke.

Ischemic stroke is the most common type of stroke and is caused by a blockage in a blood vessel supplying blood to the brain. It affects about 700,000 people per year in the U.S.

"This test provides a new tool to help us identify at-risk patients earlier, so we can start therapies in time to prevent a stroke altogether," says researcher Christie Ballantyne, MD, director of the Center for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention at the Methodist DeBakey Heart Center in Houston, in a news release.

Test May Reveal Stroke Risks

The PLAC test measures an enzyme known as Lp-PLA2 in the blood. It was originally approved by the FDA in 2003 to help predict people's risk of heart disease.

The FDA approved the test for predicting stroke risk after a large study showed that people with higher than normal levels of this enzyme are twice as likely to suffer an ischemic stroke associated with hardening of the arteries.

Hardening of the arteries or atherosclerosis leads to blockages in the blood vessels and leads to heart disease and stroke.

Researchers found the elevated risk associated with Lp-PLA2 was independent of traditional stroke risk factors, such as blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, obesity, and C-reactive protein (CRP, an inflammation maker).

"The PLAC test will help physicians more accurately predict who is at risk for stroke so that the individual can take proactive and preventative measures, such as lifestyle modification or therapeutic intervention, including statins and daily aspirin," says Ballantyne.

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