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MEDIA STATEMENT

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STUDY SUGGESTS REVIEW OF STROKE, HEART ATTACK RISKS

A new diagnostic tool may help better predict the risk of stroke and heart attack in men over 70 years of age.

A decade-long research study at the Western Australia Centre for Health and Ageing (WACHA) has developed a prototype tool to aid medical professionals better predict the risk of older men having a stroke or a heart attack.

UWA's senior lecturer in geriatric medicine and [WACHA](#) chief investigator, Associate Professor Christopher Beer, said although there had been major inroads into preventing heart attack and stroke in recent years it was important to further understand the risk factors that affected people aged over 70.

"Our study has shown that this prototype provides a more accurate estimate of an individual's risk of having a stroke or heart attack," Professor Beer said.

"This research is a sign of the times and the need to focus on ways to accommodate our ageing population. We envisage that this prototype will eventually enhance a medical professional's clinical judgement and improve their ability to educate and motivate patients to reduce their risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

"Clinicians currently use the Framingham Risk Equation. This was based on a study that looked at Americans aged 30 to 74. With today's ageing population of people living well into their 80s and 90s, the tool may not be as appropriate for this age group".

The research suggests it may be time to review risk classifications for stroke and heart attack for older people, but more research is needed before making recommendations to change the current system, Professor Beer said.

Professor Beer and his team from WACHA assessed 4,382 men from metropolitan Perth aged 65 to 83, who had no history of stroke or heart attacks and lived independently. They were surveyed and given medical and physical examinations in 1996, 2004 and 2009.

Professor Beer said more work was required to test if the risk predictors applied equally well in older women.



The study was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Bupa Health Foundation and was published in influential peer-reviewed journal *Stroke*.

Dr Christine Bennett, Chair of the Bupa Health Foundation Steering Committee, said: “With the number of Australians older than 65 years set to double over the next 40 years, this important research will help us understand how we can better predict risk and help people in their later years to take action to live longer, healthier lives.”

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