

Noninvasive Cardiovascular Risk Assessment of the Asymptomatic Diabetic Patient



The Imaging Council of the American College of Cardiology

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CME Objective for This Article: After reading this article the reader should be able to: 1) give an overview of the present state-of-the-art of imaging in the context of the person with type II diabetes; 2) increase knowledge in the appropriate use of these tests for clinical decision making in asymptomatic patients; 3) review the possible value of coronary calcium, nuclear imaging and echocardiography in this context; and 4) understand the relationship between different imaging modalities in persons with diabetes and their ability to predict future occurrence of cardiovascular events.

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ABSTRACT

Increased cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients with type 2 diabetes is well established; diabetes is associated with at least a 2-fold increased risk of coronary heart disease. Approximately two-thirds of deaths among persons with diabetes are related to cardiovascular disease. Previously, diabetes was regarded as a "coronary risk equivalent," implying a high 10-year cardiovascular risk for every diabetes patient. Following the original study by Haffner et al., multiple studies from different cohorts provided varying conclusions on the validity of the concept of coronary risk equivalency in patients with diabetes. New guidelines have started to acknowledge the heterogeneity in risk and include different treatment recommendations for diabetic patients without other risk factors who are considered to be at lower risk. Furthermore, guidelines have suggested that further risk stratification in patients with diabetes is warranted before universal treatment. The Imaging Council of the American College of Cardiology systematically reviewed all modalities commonly used for risk stratification in persons with diabetes mellitus and summarized the data and recommendations. This document reviews the evidence regarding the use of noninvasive testing to stratify asymptomatic patients with diabetes with regard to coronary heart disease risk and develops an algorithm for screening based on available data. (J Am Coll Cardiol Img 2016;9:176–92) © 2016 by the American College of Cardiology Foundation.

iabetes is increasing by epidemic proportions in the United States and throughout the world (1,2). Increased cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients with type 2 diabetes is well established; diabetes is associated with at least a 2-fold increased risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) and 2- to 4-fold increased risk of CHD and stroke mortality compared with patients without diabetes (3-5). Currently two-thirds of death among persons with diabetes is related to cardiovascular disease (CVD) (5). Furthermore, management strategies for diabetes have shifted from glucocentric to multifactorial, to identify and target patients' cardiovascular risk factors.

Formerly, diabetes was regarded as a "coronary risk equivalent," implying a 10-year cardiovascular risk of >20% for every diabetes patient (6). This was based on an observational Finnish study by Haffner et al. (6), which showed that people with diabetes without prior myocardial infarction (MI) had a similar risk of CHD to those with MI but without diabetes. Following the original study by Haffner et al. (6), multiple studies from different population cohorts provided varying conclusions on the validity of the concept of coronary risk equivalency in patients with diabetes. Although some large observational studies supported the concept of coronary risk equivalency (7-10), several others did not (11-14). In a systematic review and meta-analysis, Bulugahapitiya et al. (15)

included 13 studies involving 45,108 patients. The mean duration of follow-up was 13.4 years (range 5 to 25 years). Patients with diabetes without prior MI had a 43% lower risk of developing CHD compared with patients without diabetes with previous MI (summary odds ratio [OR]: 0.56; 95% confidence interval [CI]: 0.53 to 0.60). The results showed that patients with diabetes were at a lower risk of developing total CHD events compared with patients without diabetes with established CHD (15). New guidelines have started to acknowledge the heterogeneity in risk and include different treatment recommendations for diabetic patients without other risk factors who are considered to be at lower risk (16,17). Furthermore, guidelines have suggested that further risk stratification in patients with diabetes is warranted before universal treatment (18,19). An important clinical question remains: do patients with asymptomatic diabetes need routine screening for CHD, and if so, how? This document reviews the evidence regarding the use of noninvasive testing to stratify asymptomatic patients with diabetes with regard to CHD risk (Central Illustration).

1. ROLE OF EXERCISE STRESS TESTING

Exercise testing in patients with diabetes is attractive due to low cost, simplicity, and wide availability. Compared with nondiabetic patients, the goals of

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