



For the attention of Accredited Medical Writers Only

New research links Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) to cardiovascular disease

- This retrospective study adds to existing research showing that RLS is a serious condition with increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Brussels (Belgium), 15th April 2011, 0700 CET – Results from a two-year retrospective cohort study presented at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), Hawaii, U.S., showed that patients were significantly more likely to develop cardiovascular (CV) conditions, including hypertension, cardiac dysrhythmias and chronic ischemic heart diseases after an initial diagnosis of RLS, as compared to controls without RLS.

“These findings suggest a significant association between a diagnosis of RLS and subsequent records of major cardiovascular conditions, and build on previous evidence suggesting that RLS may be a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. The findings confirm the need for early diagnosis of RLS so that patients can be monitored for subsequent development of serious cardiovascular events,” commented study author, Dr. Florent Richy, Head of Global Epidemiology, UCB and Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Liege, Belgium.

The two year retrospective cohort study matched the U.S. medical records of 3,485 RLS patients to those of 3,485 healthy controls. Mean age was 55 years and female/male ratio was 2.34. The study investigated the risk of major CV risk events among patients diagnosed with RLS. The most frequent CV diagnoses observed were hypertension (48%), cardiac dysrhythmias (9.3%), chronic ischemic heart diseases (8.5%), occlusion and stenosis of cerebral arteries (2.81%), cardiomegaly (2.50%), and hypertensive heart disease (2.43%).



During this two-year observation period, RLS patients had a 12% greater risk of developing any CV event compared to healthy controls ($p < 0.01$). The relative risk (95% CI) for CV events by category were, in decreasing order: other forms (non-ischemic) of cardiovascular diseases, 1.33 (1.20; 1.47); cerebrovascular diseases, 1.31 (1.12; 1.53); disease of the pulmonary circulation, 1.28 (0.86; 1.92); ischemic heart diseases, 1.20 (1.06- 1.35); diseases of the arteries, 1.19 (1.01; 1.43); and hypertension, 0.99 (0.84; 1.03).

About the study

This two-year matched retrospective cohort study was performed on a dataset from a U.S. claims database (PharMetrics®)* containing longitudinal records on demographics, diagnoses, procedures, providers, prescriptions and claims. RLS patients were matched by age, gender and co-morbidities (including hypertension) to healthy controls. CV diagnoses were recorded for a two-year observation period.

**A licensed data extract from PharMetrics®, a division of IMS Health*

Notes to Editors

About Restless Legs Syndrome

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a neurological disorder characterized by unpleasant sensations in the legs and an uncontrollable urge to move when at rest in order to relieve these feelings. It affects between 3 and 10% of the population to some extent. Most people with RLS have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep. Left untreated the condition causes exhaustion and daytime fatigue. Many people with RLS report that their job, personal relations and activities of daily living are strongly affected as a result of their exhaustion. They are often unable to concentrate, have impaired memory, or fail to accomplish daily tasks. More than 80% of people with RLS also experience a more common condition known as periodic limb movement disorder (PLMD).

For further information

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Forward looking statement

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