

Bloomberg.com [BloombergAnywhere](#) | [SoftwareSupport](#) | [LiveSupport](#) | [Feedback](#) [LOG IN/REGISTER](#)
 Updated: New York, Jun 25 15:59
 London, Jun 25 20:59

Tokyo, Jun 26 04:59

Search News

Enter Symbol [FINANCIAL NEWS](#)

MORNING CALL
 with Carol Massar
 The news you need to start the business day with confidence.
 Weekdays from 6-8 AM ET on Bloomberg Television

[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [MARKET DATA](#) [INVESTMENT TOOLS](#) [TV and RADIO](#) [ABOUT BLOOMBERG](#) [CAREERS](#) [CONTACT US](#)

news

Heart Failure Patients Don't Need to Control Abnormal Rhythms

By Michelle Fay Cortez

- [Exclusive](#)
- [Worldwide](#)
- [Regions](#)
- [Markets](#)
- [Industries](#)
- [Consumer](#)
- [Energy](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Health Care](#)
- [Insurance](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Economy](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Invest](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Spend](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Muse Arts](#)
- [Audio/Video Reports](#)
- [Bloomberg Markets Magazine](#)
- [Special Report](#)

June 18 (Bloomberg) -- Heart failure patients don't need aggressive drug therapy to synchronize the beating of their hearts, a study in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) found.

An erratic heart rate known as [atrial fibrillation](#) signals a worse prognosis for patients with heart failure, which occurs when a weakened and enlarged heart fails to pump enough blood to fuel the body. Patients often get therapy with electric shocks to stop and restart the heart, along with a variety of medications to try to keep it in proper rhythm.

The study of 1,376 patients found trying to fix the problem with rhythm control failed to reduce the risk of death more than did drugs including beta blockers and digitalis, which are already given to most heart failure patients. Doctors should save the shocks, and the hospital stays and drugs that go with them, for patients with severe symptoms, the researchers said.

"A simpler approach to treating atrial fibrillation in heart failure patients eliminates the need for repeated cardioversion and reduces hospitalization rates," said lead researcher [Denis Roy](#), a cardiologist at the Montreal Heart Institute. Standard treatment, known to control the heart rate rather than the rhythm, "should be the initial approach and in many cases it will be the only approach required," he said.

Patients should be closely monitored to ensure the drugs are given in the proper doses to control the heart rate, even during exercise or other exertion, Roy, the University of Montreal's chairman of medicine, said today in a telephone interview. Carefully crafting the dose of the standard drugs is known as rate control, he said. The medications used for rhythm control included [amiodarone](#), sotalol and dofetilide.

RESOURCES

- [Bloomberg TV](#)
- [Bloomberg Radio](#)
- [Bloomberg Podcasts](#)
- [Bloomberg Press](#)

Previous Studies

Previous studies found the rhythm control method failed to benefit a general group of patients with atrial fibrillation. The researchers speculated the results may be different in those who also have heart failure. As many as half of heart failure patients have atrial fibrillation, when the heart's two upper chambers contract rapidly and irregularly and fail to get blood to the lower pumping chambers.

Nearly 6.9 million [people](#) in the U.S. and Europe have atrial fibrillation. Patients with heart failure who also have the erratic heart rhythm have twice the risk of death as those with a normal heartbeat, the researchers said.

The study, conducted at 123 medical centers worldwide, found 27 percent of those getting rhythm control and 25 percent of those getting standard drugs to control the heart rate died within an average of about three years. There were

Market Pulse
 on Bloomberg
 Hosted By **Monica Bertran**
 As the trading day progresses, find out what's moving the markets
 Weekdays from 10-11 AM ET only on Bloomberg Television

More News

- [Biovail's Disputed Election Heads for Court July 8, Founder Melnyk Says](#)

few differences between the groups in any measure, including death for any reason, worsening heart failure and stroke.

Frustration

Doctors are "frustrated by the conundrum that atrial fibrillation is associated with increased morbidity and mortality, yet attempts to prove that a strategy to maintain nature's rhythm has a favorable effect on patients have been met with one setback after another," wrote Michael E. Cain and [Anne B. Curtis](#), from the University at Buffalo in New York State and the University of South Florida in Tampa, in an editorial.

Studies are needed to see if other techniques, including newer medications and ablation to halt the erratic electrical impulses around the heart, are more effective, they said.

"Ample data show that rate control is an acceptable strategy and one that is almost certainly more cost effective than any other approach," they said. "It is difficult to support a primary approach of rhythm control that relies on anti-arrhythmic drugs in any patient with atrial fibrillation, including those with heart failure."

A second study found [Sanofi-Aventis SA's](#) Multaq increased the risk of death in patients with severe heart failure and dysfunction in their left ventricle, the heart's main pumping chamber. The study, slated to include 1,000 patients, was halted early for safety reasons in 2003 after it became clear that the drug led to a worsening of heart failure.

Multaq, also known as dronedarone, is an experimental drug that is supposed to work like amiodarone without the side effects of the generic drug. It has been delayed since the study was halted as U.S. regulators asked for more information. Paris-based Sanofi announced last month that another study showed the drug can reduce hospitalizations and heart-related deaths.

To contact the reporter on this story: [Michelle Fay Cortez](#) in Minneapolis at mcortez@bloomberg.net

Last Updated: June 18, 2008 17:03 EDT

[News tools](#) [Email this article](#) [Printer friendly format](#)
[Advertisement: Top hedge fund managers reveal how they profit in good times and bad.](#)

Sponsored links

Atrial Fibrillation
 Ablation procedure. Learn more. Hear patient & doctor interviews.
www.mystrongheart.com

Artrial Fibrillation
 Learn about the symptoms of and treatments for artrial fibrillation
RevolutionHealth.com

New AF Treatment Option
 Minimally invasive procedure for permanent and persistent AF
www.Ex-Maze.com



Bloomberg.com [NEWS](#) | [MARKET DATA](#) | [INVESTMENT TOOLS](#) | [TV AND RADIO](#) | [ABOUT BLOOMBERG](#) | [CAREERS](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [LOG IN/REGISTER](#)

©2008 BLOOMBERG L.P. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Trademarks](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Help](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Advertising](#) | [日本語サイト](#)