

Edinburgh University Research finds new diagnosis for heart attacks

New research part-funded by the British Heart Foundation has discovered that using a more sensitive test to measure a protein that leaks out of damaged heart cells into the blood stream could help in the diagnosis of heart attacks.

The test could also help identify heart attack patients who are at a high risk of dying from a second attack, conclude researchers in Scotland.

Scientists used a new test to detect very low levels of the protein troponin which is released into the blood when heart muscle cells are damaged. Doctors measure it to find out if a patient with chest pains has suffered a heart attack.

Professor Peter Weissberg, Medical Director at the British Heart Foundation, said:

“This promising study shows us that by using a more sensitive test for heart muscle damage than is currently being used, more patients who come to hospital with chest pain are identified as having suffered a small heart attack.

“Over recent years it has become clear that people who suffer heart pain but only a small amount of heart damage are at a very high risk of going on to have a larger, potentially fatal heart attack if left untreated. This test will help doctors identify this vulnerable group of patients.

“If further studies corroborate these findings there will be considerable pressure on the NHS to adopt the new test as the standard for patients with chest pain.”

✘ The university is one of four BHF Centres of Research Excellence. The research was led by the BHF's Chair of Cardiology Professor David Newby at the University of Edinburgh.

Professor Newby graduated from the University of Southampton with a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Medicine degree in 1991. He has worked in Edinburgh for nearly 15 years and obtained Doctorate of Medicine and Doctorate of Philosophy degrees. Professor Newby is currently British Heart Foundation Professor of Cardiology at the University of Edinburgh, Translational Professor for the Translational Medicine Research Collaboration, Director of the Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Facility, Director of the Clinical Research Imaging Centre, Director of Research and Development for NHS Lothian and a Consultant Interventional Cardiologist at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.