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Snoring

THE possibility that snoring during sleep is a risk factor or marker for heart attacks and strokes has provoked much interest in recent years. Cross-sectional studies have indicated an association between habitual snoring and such risk, but the extent of confounding by well-established cardiovascular risk factors, such as smoking, remains uncertain. Moreover, cross-sectional studies cannot provide evidence of causal relationships.

This paper from Copenhagen, Denmark, is based on the follow up of a cohort of 804 men and women aged 70 years who, in 1984, provided questionnaire information about lifestyle and about snoring habits; they also had a brief medical examination. In 1990, information about hospital admissions and death certificate diagnoses of coronary heart disease and stroke was obtained from the Danish national health service register.

Snoring was reported by nearly a third of women and nearly half of men. During the six-year follow-up period, no association was found between snoring and coronary heart disease, stroke risk, or all causes mortality — reassuring news for snorers.

However, the validity of self-reported information about snoring is uncertain: surprisingly perhaps, there is some evidence that those who do not snore are more likely to report that they do than vice versa. The findings in this study are at variance with those from some others, but epidemiologists elsewhere will envy the access that their Danish colleagues have to a national database which records all contacts with hospital services.

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Source: Jennum P, Schultz-Larsen K, Davidsen M, Christensen NJ, *et al.* Snoring and risk of stroke and ischaemic heart disease in a 70 year old population. A 6 year follow-up study. *Int J Epidemiol* 1994; **23**: 1159-1163.

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