Risk of death from ischemic stroke appears to have decreased in US black children

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The excess risk of death from ischemic (due to reduced blood flow), but not hemorrhagic (due to bleeding), stroke in US black children has decreased over the past decade, according to a study by Laura L. Lehman, M.D., of Boston Children's Hospital, and colleagues.

The study analyzed death certificate data from the National Center for Health Statistics for all children who died from 1988 through 2007 in the United States. Among 1.6 billion person-years of US children (1988-2007), there were 4,425 deaths attributed to stroke, yielding an average of 221 deaths per year; 20 percent were ischemic; 67 percent, hemorrhagic; and 12 percent were unspecified. The relative risk of ischemic stroke mortality for black versus white children decreased from 1.74 from 1988 through 1997 to 1.27 from 1998 through 2007. The ethnic disparity in hemorrhagic stroke mortality, however, remained relatively stable between these 2 periods: black versus white relative risk, 1.90 (1988-1997) and 1.97 (1998-2007), according to the study results.

"The excess risk of death from ischemic, but not hemorrhagic, stroke in US black children has decreased over the past decade. The only major change in childhood stroke care during this period was the initiation of long-term blood transfusion therapy for primary stroke prevention in sickle cell disease," the study concludes.

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