

Pulmonary embolism may be cause of syncope in some elderly

October 20 2016



(HealthDay)—About one of every six patients hospitalized for a first

episode of syncope has a pulmonary embolism, according to a study published in the Oct. 20 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Researchers at 11 hospitals in Italy performed a systematic work-up for [pulmonary embolism](#) in 560 patients admitted for a first-time syncope episode. The patients were 76 years old, on average, and had been admitted from the [emergency department](#) for various reasons: The cause of syncope was not apparent; there was reason to suspect a cardiovascular-related cause; they had other serious [medical conditions](#); or they'd been injured when they fainted.

The team found that 17.3 percent—or roughly one in six—were diagnosed with pulmonary embolism. That included 13 percent of patients who'd had a potential alternative explanation for their syncope, such as a cardiovascular condition.

"In [elderly patients](#) presenting with syncope, the attending physician in medical wards should consider pulmonary embolism as a possible differential diagnosis—particularly when an alternative explanation is not found," study coauthor Sofia Barbar, M.D., a physician at the Civic Hospital of Camposampiero in Padua, Italy, told *HealthDay*.

More information: [Abstract](#)
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Citation: Pulmonary embolism may be cause of syncope in some elderly (2016, October 20) retrieved 8 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-pulmonary-embolism-syncope-elderly.html>

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