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Are prosthetic heart valve fibrin strands negligible? The associations and significance.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Filamentous fibrin strands (FSs) attached to valve prostheses have been well described in patients undergoing transesophageal echocardiography, but the frequency and clinical significance of these strands remain poorly defined. The aims of this study were to determine the frequency of prosthetic valve strands and to assess their significance in relation to clinical cerebral ischemic events (CIEs) and anticoagulant status.

METHODS: Three hundred consecutive patients with 421 prosthetic heart valves were evaluated for the presence of FSs (highly mobile, filamentous masses <1 mm thick).

RESULTS: FSs were found in 139 patients (49%) and 147 prostheses (38%) in patients with left-sided prostheses, with a significant association between FSs, CIEs, and anticoagulant status ($P < .001$). A lower international normalized ratio (< 2.5) had a positive association with the occurrence of CIEs.

CONCLUSIONS: There is a significant association between FSs, CIEs, and patient's anticoagulant status; therefore, aggressive anticoagulation and close follow-up are recommended for these patients.

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