

String of PEARLS

Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations

Stroke

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners—developed by Prof. Brian McAvoy for the Cochrane Primary Care Field (www.cochraneprimarycare.org), New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland (www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa), funded by the Ministry of Health (www.health.govt.nz), and published in NZ Doctor (www.nzdoctor.co.nz).

MRI may be more sensitive than CT imaging for early detection of stroke

Percutaneous vascular interventions may be beneficial in stroke

Insufficient evidence for benefits of very early mobilisation after stroke

Electromechanical-assisted training improves walking after stroke

Mirror therapy improves motor function after stroke

Repetitive task training can improve functional ability after stroke

Insufficient evidence for interventions for post-stroke fatigue

DISCLAIMER: PEARLS are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity, nor are they a clinical guideline.



Thyroid hormone replacement does not improve subclinical hypothyroidism

Megan Arroll PhD, FHEA, CPsychol, CSci, AFBPsS; Visiting Research Fellow, Chronic Illness Research Team, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane, London, E15 4LZ, United Kingdom; Email: m.a.arroll@sa.uel.ac.uk

THE PROBLEM: The presentation of subclinical hypothyroidism (or mild thyroid failure) is often vague, with the non-specific symptoms of actual hypothyroidism, such as dry skin, cold skin or feeling colder, constipation and cognitive disturbance (e.g. slower thinking and poor memory). This is a common complaint, affecting 3% of men and 8% of women, with prevalence rising sharply in older age.¹ As the symptoms of subclinical hypothyroidism are non-specific, diagnosis is made if a patient's serum thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) level is above the upper limit of normal despite normal levels of serum free thyroxine.² There is debate over whether this condition should be treated, as the impact of subclinical hypothyroidism on patients' health remains unclear.

CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE: Levothyroxine replacement therapy does not improve symptoms or quality of life when compared to placebo in patients with subclinical hypothyroidism. However, there is some evidence that thyroid hormone replacement may improve some parameters of lipid profiles and left ventricular function.

Thyroid hormone replacement for subclinical hypothyroidism

	Success	Evidence	Harms
Symptom score change	Non-significant difference between intervention and placebo	Cochrane review ³	Insufficient data to determine harms
Improvement in total cholesterol level	Non-significant difference between intervention and placebo		
Improvement in quality of life	Non-significant difference between intervention and placebo		

References

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- Villar H, Saconato H, Valente O, Atallah A. Thyroid hormone replacement for subclinical hypothyroidism. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2007;3:CD003419.

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