

The LIFE initiative – a national screening campaign to evaluate the risk factors for stroke in Switzerland

Objective. To evaluate the cardiovascular risk factors in Switzerland during the “LIFE initiative: active against stroke” 2004 campaign.

Methods. 4996 individuals had their cardiovascular risk checked during a national awareness and screening campaign. The assessment included systolic and diastolic blood pressure, levels of total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, triglycerides and glucose and age, gender, weight, medical family history, physical activity, stress, elevated alcohol consumption, smoking and diabetes were also recorded.

Results. Men were more frequently overweight (51.1% of men had a BMI ≥ 25 kg/m² vs. 40.1% of women), were more likely smokers (15.6% of men vs. 11.9% of women), had a higher prevalence of increased alcohol consumption (9.2% of men vs. 2.6% of women) and were more often physically inactive (19.4% of men vs. 17.2% of women). Additionally, their blood pressure was significantly higher than in women (137 mm Hg systolic/86 mm Hg diastolic vs. 133/84 in women).

Discussion: The positive trends seen in this population are counterbalanced by the high prevalence of avoidable risk factors such as hypertension and elevated body mass index.

Conclusions. Men demonstrated greater cardiovascular risk than women. The risk situation could be significantly improved with lifestyle changes and drug intervention especially for hypertension.