Postop AF Risk Lower in African Americans

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DENVER — Several recent studies have shown that the prevalence of atrial fibrillation in the general population is considerably lower in African Americans than in whites. New evidence indicates this is also the case in the setting of post–coronary artery bypass graft.

"It's counter-intuitive because of the fact that African Americans have a lot more of the risk factors that lead to atrial fibrillation, like high blood pressure, heart failure, and diabetes. There's something fundamentally different that alters the risk for atrial fibrillation in African Americans," Dr. Marc K. Lahiri observed at the meeting.

He presented a retrospective study involving 270 African Americans and 731 whites with no prior atrial fibrillation (AF) who underwent CABG at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. Postoperative AF occurred in 29% of the white patients compared with 19% of African Americans.

In a multivariate analysis adjusted for age, gender, heart failure, hypertension, and diabetes, black race remained a highly significant independent predictor of reduced risk of postop AF, with a 47% lower risk than in whites, said Dr. Lahiri, senior staff physician at Henry Ford.

"Since it appears that Caucasians are at an increased risk of developing postoperative atrial fibrillation, clinicians may want to use this information in deciding when to take measures to prevent its occurrence, such as using antiarrhythmic medications at the time of surgery," added Dr. Lahiri, who reported no conflicts of interest. ■