

Health Bulletin



Important News for People with Heart Failure

(NAPSA)—If you are among the five million Americans living with heart failure—a condition where the heart is too weak to pump blood properly through the body—you may be able to reduce your risk for sudden cardiac arrest (SCA)—one of the nation's leading killers.

- **FACT:** SCA is responsible for 60 percent of deaths among Americans with moderate heart failure.

- **FACT:** SCA is responsible for approximately 1,000 deaths every day, or between 340,000 and 450,000 every year.

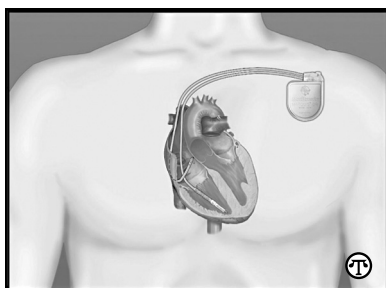
- **FACT:** SCA is usually caused by a disturbance in the heart's electrical system that makes the heart beat dangerously fast and then stop.

Study Results

Now, results from a government sponsored clinical trial may offer hope for people with heart failure. The Sudden Cardiac Death in Heart Failure Trial (SCD-HeFT), published in the January 20, 2005 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, found that people with heart failure and poor heart pumping function live longer when they receive an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD)—a device that uses electrical impulses to stop fatal heart rhythms.

The study showed that ICDs reduced death by 23 percent in this group compared to those who did not receive defibrillators. It also proved the benefit of receiving ICD therapy before experiencing an episode of SCA, which is important because 95 percent of people who experience SCA don't survive. Economic data also indicate that ICDs are considered a cost-effective therapy.

"This is great news for heart failure patients at high-risk for sudden cardiac arrest," said Dr. Bruce Wilkoff, director of cardiac pacing at the Cleveland Clinic Heart Center. "With the help of an ICD we now have the potential to save thousands of lives each year."



Studies suggest implantable defibrillators can save lives.

This trial is the latest in a series of major medical studies demonstrating the life-saving benefits of ICDs.

Stopping SCA

Business owner Elizabeth Johnson has suffered from heart failure for eight years. When doctors first diagnosed this condition, they didn't know how long she would live. She grew increasingly depressed and gained almost 100 pounds.

This all changed when Johnson enrolled in a clinical trial and received an implantable defibrillator that shocked her heart out of a lethal rhythm.

"If I didn't have an ICD, I wouldn't be alive today," said Johnson. "I would have been dead almost two years ago. So life right now is a gift to me."

Despite the life-saving benefits of ICDs, many remain unaware that SCA deaths are preventable.

"It is critical that people with heart failure talk with their doctors about their risk for SCA and whether ICD therapy is right for them," said Dr. Wilkoff.

Visit www.heartfailuresca.com for more information about the SCD-HeFT trial, SCA or available therapies.

Not all patients experience the same results from ICD therapy. The use of ICD therapy should always be determined by a knowledgeable physician in consultation with patients under their care who have an identified indication for ICD therapy.