

Transient ischaemic attacks may have greater long-term impact than previously thought

School for  
Primary Care  
Research

## STUDY SUMMARY

**NHS**

National Institute for  
Health Research

People are more likely to go to their GP about fatigue, psychological and cognitive impairment after a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) than similar people who have not had a TIA. Following a TIA people also go to their GP with these health problems sooner than those who haven't had a TIA.

A TIA, sometimes called a “warning stroke”, is caused by a blockage in the blood vessels leading to the brain. The symptoms are similar to a stroke but last less than 24 hours unlike a stroke which, by definition, is longer lasting. This study used a large database of anonymised GP records to compare fatigue, psychological and cognitive impairment amongst similar people who either had or hadn't experienced a TIA.

The findings suggest that professionals involved in TIA management and follow-up should be aware of potential long-term health consequences of TIA in order to offer appropriate support and treatment.

### Publication:

Ongoing impairments following transient ischaemic attack: retrospective cohort study. G. Turner, M. Calvert, M. Feltham, R. Ryan, T. Marshall. European Journal of Neurology, 2016. doi: [10.1111/ene.13088](https://doi.org/10.1111/ene.13088)



## Ongoing impairments following transient ischaemic attack: retrospective cohort study



### **Issue:**

In the UK, 46,000 people have a first TIA each year. One in 12 people who have a TIA go on to have a stroke within a week. This high risk of a full stroke means that there is a focus on rapid diagnosis and early treatments to prevent it. Strokes can have a significant long-term impact on people's health and independence. However, a recent systematic review highlighted that the long-term impact of TIA is less well-known. The review suggested that there was a high rate of fatigue, psychological and cognitive impairment following a TIA. However, it was unclear whether this was higher than in the general population.

### **What we did:**

This study compared rates of fatigue, psychological and cognitive impairment amongst people in the UK who had experienced a TIA to similar people who had not had a TIA. Psychological impairment included symptoms or a diagnosis of depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. Cognitive impairment included memory loss, difficulty with attention, spatial awareness and perception, but not dementia.

### **What we found:**

The findings of this study suggest that all health professionals supporting people following a TIA should be aware of fatigue and cognitive impairment as potential long-term consequences and ask patients specifically about them in order to provide appropriate treatment and support.