

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

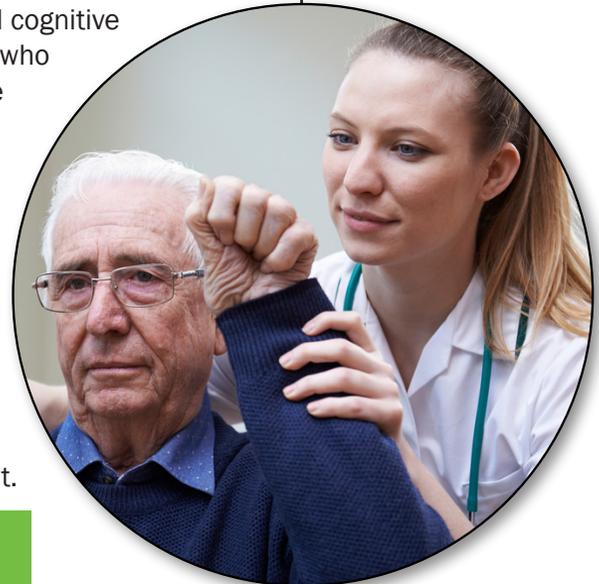
People are more likely to go to their GP about fatigue, psychological and cognitive impairment after a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) than similar people who have not had a TIA. Following a TIA people also go to their GP with these health problems sooner than those who haven't had a TIA.

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



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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.