C5arotid endarterectomy (CEA) has been shown effective as preventive treatment for symptomatic and asymptomatic disease.1–3 Carotid artery stenting (CAS) was introduced in 1994 and provides another option for treatment. Results of randomized trials comparing CAS with CEA for symptomatic participants have varied.4–6 The Carotid Revascularization Endarterectomy Versus Stenting Trial (CREST) compared CAS with CEA in both symptomatic and asymptomatic patients.7

Methods
CREST is a randomized trial with blinded end point adjudication.9 The protocol was approved by all appropriate Institutional Review Boards, and written informed consent was provided by all participants. Enrollment was carried out at 117 CREST centers, and participants could not be randomized until operators had been selected at each site through a validated selection process (CEA)9 or a training and credentialing program (CAS).10

To be eligible, symptomatic patients had to have had a transient ischemic attack, amaurosis fugax, or minor nondisabling stroke in the distribution of the study artery within 180 days of randomization and had to have carotid artery stenosis ≥50% by angiography, ≥70% by ultrasound, or ≥70% by CT angiography or MR angiography if ultrasound was 50% to 69%. Asymptomatic patients had to have carotid artery stenosis of ≥60% by angiography, ≥70% by ultrasound, or ≥80% by CT angiography or MR angiography if ultrasound was 50% to 69%. Patients were not eligible if they had a previous disabling stroke or had chronic atrial fibrillation. Complete eligibility criteria have been reported.8

CAS was performed with the use of the RX Acculink stent; the RX Accunet embolic protection device was required except when not technically feasible. The RX AccuLink embolic protection device was required except when not technically feasible. For both CAS and CEA, antiplatelet therapy was required before and after the procedure.

The National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale, modified Rankin Scale, Transient Ischemic Attack Stroke Questionnaire, cardiac enzymes, electrocardiogram, and carotid ultrasound were performed at baseline. Cardiac enzymes were obtained 6 to 8 hours postprocedure; repeat neurological evaluation, National
new ST segment depression or elevation >1 mm in ≥2 contiguous leads (as determined by the centralized core laboratory).13

Analysis was intention to treat. Proportional hazards analysis adjusting for age, sex, and symptomatic status was used to test for treatment differences.

Secondary aims were analyzed by including interaction terms in the proportional hazards models.

**Results**

For a total of 2502 participants (Table 1), there was no significant difference in the primary end point between CAS and CEA (7.2% versus 6.8%; hazard ratio, 1.11; 95% CI, 0.81 to 1.51; Table 2). During the periprocedural period, the incidence of the primary end point was similar for CAS and CEA, but there were differences in the end point components (stroke 4.1% versus 2.3%; P = 0.012; MI 1.1% versus 2.3%; P = 0.032; and death 0.7% versus 0.3%, P = 0.18). Thereafter, ipsilateral stroke was infrequent for both CAS and CEA (2.0% versus 2.4%, P = 0.85). Neither symptomatic status nor sex showed an effect on treatment difference per preplanned effect modification analyses. Patient age did interact with treatment efficacy (P = 0.02). Outcomes were slightly better after CAS for patients aged <70 years and better after CEA for patients aged >70 years.

During the periprocedural period, the occurrence of the primary end point components (stroke, MI, or death) for CAS and CEA was not different for symptomatic (6.7% versus 5.4%; hazard ratio, 1.26; 95% CI, 0.81 to 1.96) or asymptomatic subjects (3.5% versus 3.6%; hazard ratio, 1.02; 95% CI, 0.55 to 1.86). The risk of stroke and death was significantly higher for CAS in symptomatic patients (6.0% versus 3.2%; hazard ratio, 1.89; 95% CI, 1.11 to 3.21), but not for asymptomatic patients (2.5% versus 1.4%; hazard ratio, 1.88; 95% CI, 0.79 to 4.42); however, a smaller total number of events occurred in the asymptomatic strata, resulting in lower statistical power to detect treatment differences. Cranial nerve palsies were less frequent for CAS (0.3% versus 4.7%; hazard ratio, 0.07; 95% CI, 0.02 to 0.18). At 1 year, periprocedural major and minor stroke had an effect on the physical component

### Table 1. Selected Characteristics of the Study Cohort by Treatment Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>CAS (N=1262)</th>
<th>CEA (N=1240)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age, years</strong>*</td>
<td>68.9±9.0</td>
<td>69.2±8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male sex, % of patients</strong></td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asymptomatic arteries, % of patients</strong></td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk factors, % of patients</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>86.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslipidemia†</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current smoker</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent stenosis at randomization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe (≥70%)</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>85.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median time from randomization to treatment (no. of days)</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Means±SD. P = 0.05 for the difference in the baseline rate of dyslipidemia between the 2 groups.

### Table 2. Composite Primary End Point and Components of the Primary End Point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Year Study Period (Including Periprocedural Period)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of Patients (%±SE)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS (N=1262)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major ipsilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor ipsilateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary end point (any periprocedural stroke, myocardial infarction, or death or post procedural ipsilateral stroke)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*pFor patients who received the assigned procedure within 30 days after randomization, the periprocedural period was defined as the 30-day period after the procedure. For patients who did not receive the assigned procedure within 30 days after randomization, the periprocedural period was defined as the 36-day period after randomization.

†P values were calculated based on significance of the hazard ratios."
summary scale of the Medical Outcomes Study 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36), whereas periprocedural MI did not. Minor stroke had a significant effect on the mental component scale at 1 year.7

Discussion
CAS and CEA had similar net outcomes for symptomatic and asymptomatic men and women. However, there was a lower incidence of MI immediately after CAS and a lower incidence of stroke immediately after CEA.14,15 Exploratory analyses among 1-year survivors with regard to quality of life suggested a sustained effect for stroke but not for MI. In addition, older patients had better outcomes after CEA and younger patients had slightly better outcomes after CAS.16 Consequently, the preferences of the patient and his or her age may be important considerations in choice of treatment for carotid stenosis. The relationship between advancing age and increasing adverse events after CAS has been observed previously,10,5,17 and the effect of advancing age on treatment differences, CAS versus CEA, has been observed in the Stent-Protected Angioplasty versus Carotid Endarterectomy (SPACE) trial.
The periprocedural safety outcomes for CAS and CEA are the best reported to date for patients with pre- and postprocedural medical, neurological, electrocardiogram, and enzyme evaluations. These excellent CREST outcomes may reflect a validated and effective surgeon credentialing process, the rigorous training and credentialing of interventionists, and the increasing assimilation of endovascular expertise.10 Improved and more widely used medical therapies may also account for the better outcomes observed after CEA in CREST compared with outcomes in previous randomized clinical trials of CEA.9,18–21

Inference from the CREST results should be done in the context of several notable limitations. Changes occurred during the course of the study in preprocedural medical management, CAS and CEA procedural techniques and technology, and in postprocedural medical management. Only 1 stent system was used among several available. The definitions of stroke and MI and methods to detect them are the best reported to date for patients with pre- and postprocedural medical, neurological, electrocardiogram, and enzyme evaluations. These excellent CREST outcomes may reflect a validated and effective surgeon credentialing process, the rigorous training and credentialing of interventionists, and the increasing assimilation of endovascular expertise.10 Improved and more widely used medical therapies may also account for the better outcomes observed after CEA in CREST compared with outcomes in previous randomized clinical trials of CEA.9,18–21

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Summary
CAS, when done by experienced and skilled interventionists, has patient outcomes similar to those of CEA done by experienced and skilled surgeons. During the perioperative period, more strokes occur after CAS and more MIs occur after CEA. Younger patients have slightly better outcomes with CAS and older patients have better outcomes with CEA. For the future, both CEA and CAS appear to be useful tools for preventing stroke.

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Disclosures
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References


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for the CREST Investigators

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