Coffee Consumption and Risk of Stroke in Women

Susanna C. Larsson, PhD; Jarno Virtamo, MD; Alicja Wolk, DMSc

Background and Purpose—Coffee consumption has been inconsistently associated with stroke incidence and mortality in previous studies. We investigated the association between coffee consumption and stroke incidence in the Swedish Mammography Cohort.

Methods—We prospectively followed of 34 670 women without a history of cardiovascular disease or cancer at baseline in 1997. Coffee consumption was assessed in 1997 using a self-administered questionnaire. Incident stroke cases were ascertained from the Swedish Hospital Discharge Registry.

Results—During a mean follow-up of 10.4 years, we ascertained 1680 stroke events, including 1310 cerebral infarctions, 154 intracerebral hemorrhages, 79 subarachnoid hemorrhages, and 137 unspecified strokes. After adjustment for other risk factors, coffee consumption was associated with a statistically significant lower risk of total stroke, cerebral infarction, and subarachnoid hemorrhage but not intracerebral hemorrhage. The multivariable relative risks of total stroke across categories of coffee consumption (<1 cup/day, 1 to 2 cups/day, 3 to 4 cups/day, and ≥5 cups/day) were 1.00, 0.78 (95% CI, 0.66 to 0.91), 0.75 (95% CI, 0.64 to 0.88), and 0.77 (95% CI, 0.63 to 0.92, respectively; P for trend=0.02). The association between coffee consumption and cerebral infarction was not modified by smoking status, body mass index, history of diabetes or hypertension, or alcohol consumption.

Conclusions—These findings suggest that low or no coffee consumption is associated with an increased risk of stroke in women.

Key Words: coffee ■ epidemiology ■ prospective studies ■ stroke ■ women

Accumulating evidence indicates that coffee consumption may decrease the risk of Type 2 diabetes but probably has no association with coronary heart disease. Habitual coffee consumption could potentially reduce the risk of stroke by increasing insulin sensitivity and reducing inflammation. Furthermore, the phenolic compounds of coffee have antioxidant properties and may improve endothelial function. However, whether coffee consumption affects the risk of stroke is unclear. Epidemiological studies of coffee consumption in relation to stroke incidence or mortality have yielded inconsistent results. This may be because of different outcomes (incidence versus mortality) and different study populations (healthy versus diabetics or hypertensive). To our knowledge, only 1 previous prospective study has assessed the association between coffee consumption and the incidence of stroke among healthy women. Given that coffee is 1 of the most popular beverages consumed worldwide, even small health effects of substances in coffee may have large public health consequences.

The aim of this study was to examine the association between coffee consumption and incidence of stroke in a population-based prospective cohort study of Swedish women. We investigated whether the association was modified by smoking, body mass index, history of diabetes or hypertension, or alcohol consumption.

Subjects and Methods

Study Population

We used data from the Swedish Mammography Cohort. Details of this population-based prospective cohort study have been reported elsewhere. Briefly, the cohort was established between 1987 and 1990, when all women born between 1914 and 1948 and residing in central Sweden (Västmanland and Uppsala counties) received a mailed questionnaire on diet. In late Fall of 1997, the 56 030 participants who were still alive and living in the study area received a new expanded questionnaire that included approximately 350 items concerning diet and other lifestyle factors; 39 227 women (70%) completed the second questionnaire. Among women who were still alive in 1997, those who completed the 1997 questionnaire were on average younger, were slightly more likely to have a university education, and had a lower body mass index at baseline than those who did not complete the questionnaire. The mean coffee consumption at baseline was identical (mean, 2.4 cups/day) among women who completed the 1997 questionnaire and among those who did not.

For the present analysis, we used 1997 as the baseline because information on cigarette smoking and some other risk factors for stroke was not obtained at baseline. We excluded women with an erroneous or a missing national identification number; those with a history of stroke, coronary heart disease, or cancer at baseline in 1997; and those with implausible values for total energy intake (ie,
Baseline Data Collection
The 1997 questionnaire included questions on education, weight, height, cigarette smoking, physical activity, aspirin use, history of diabetes and hypertension, family history of myocardial infarction before 60 years of age, alcohol consumption, and diet. Body mass index was calculated by dividing the weight in kilograms by the square of height in meters. Pack-years of smoking history were calculated as the number of packs of cigarettes smoked per day multiplied by the number of years of smoking. The participants reported their level of activity at work, home/housework, walking/bicycling, and exercise in the year before study enrollment. The questionnaire also included questions on inactivity (watching TV/reading) and hours per day of sleeping and sitting/lying down. The reported time per day reported by the subject to have engaged in each activity was multiplied by the activity’s typical energy expenditure requirement expressed in metabolic equivalents. The metabolic equivalent-hours for each of the individual activities reported by the subject were then added together to create a metabolic equivalent-hours per day (24-hour) score.16

Assessment of Coffee Consumption
Coffee consumption was assessed using a self-administered food-frequency questionnaire that included 96 foods and beverages. For coffee, participants were asked to indicate how many cups of coffee per day or per week they consumed during the past year. The questionnaire did not inquire about the type of coffee consumed (eg, regular or decaffeinated coffee) because consumption of decaffeinated coffee in the Swedish population is very low. In our validation study, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the food-frequency questionnaire and the mean of 4 1-week diet records was 0.6 for coffee (A. Wolk, unpublished data).

Case Ascertainment and Follow-Up
Incident cases of first stroke that occurred between January 1, 1998, and December 31, 2008, were ascertained by linkage of the study cohort with the Swedish Hospital Discharge Registry, which provides almost complete coverage of the discharges. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, was used to identify stroke events. The stroke events were classified as cerebral infarction (International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, code I63), intracerebral hemorrhage (I61), subarachnoid hemorrhage (I60), and unspecified stroke (I64). Information on dates of death was obtained from the Swedish Cause of Death Registry.

Statistical Analysis
Person-time of follow-up for each participant was calculated from January 1, 1998, to the date of the first stroke event, death, or end of follow-up (December 31, 2008), whichever occurred first. We used Cox proportional hazard models with age as the time scale to estimate the relative risks (RRs) with 95% CIs of stroke by categories of coffee consumption. Entry time was defined as a subject’s age in months at stroke diagnosis, death, or end of follow-up. The proportional hazards assumption was tested and found to be satisfied for all variables except diabetes. We adjusted for diabetes by stratification in the Cox model. The multivariable model included the following variables: smoking status and pack-years of smoking (never; past <20, 20 to 39, or ≥40 pack-years; or current <20, 20 to 39, or ≥40 pack-years); education (less than high school, high school, or university); body mass index (<20, 20 to 24.9, 25 to 29.9, or ≥30 kg/m²); total physical activity (metabolic equivalent hours/day, quartiles); self-reported history of hypertension (yes or no); aspirin use (yes or no); family history of myocardial infarction before 60 years of age (yes or no); intakes of total energy (kcal/day, continuous variable) and alcohol (non-drinkers or <3.4, 3.4 to 9.9, or ≥10.0 g/day); and quartiles of red meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables. Tests for trends across categories were conducted by modeling coffee consumption as a continuous variable using the median value of each category of coffee.

We conducted stratified analyses to assess whether the association of coffee consumption with stroke risk was modified by smoking status (never/past or current), body mass index (<30 or ≥30 kg/m²), diabetes (yes or no), hypertension (yes or no), and alcohol consumption (abstainer or drinker). To test the statistical significance of interactions on a multiplicative scale, we used the log likelihood ratio test comparing the models with or without interaction terms. All statistical analyses were performed using SAS Version 9.1 (SAS Institute Inc, Cary, NC). All probability values were 2-sided.

Results
During a mean follow-up of 10.4 years, we ascertained 1680 stroke events, including 1310 cerebral infarctions, 154 intracerebral hemorrhages, 79 subarachnoid hemorrhages, and 137 unspecified strokes. The baseline characteristics of the study cohort by categories of coffee consumption are presented in Table 1. The median daily coffee consumption was 3 cups (interquartile range, 2 to 4 cups). Compared with women with a low coffee consumption, those with a high consumption were less likely to have a university education and more likely to be smokers. They also were somewhat less likely to have a history of diabetes or hypertension and consumed less fruits and vegetables.

The risk of total stroke was statistically significantly associated with smoking (current versus never smoking, multivariable RR, 1.38; 95% CI, 1.22 to 1.57), education (university versus primary school, multivariable RR, 0.74; 95% CI, 0.61 to 0.89), and history of hypertension (multivariable RR, 1.38; 95% CI, 1.22 to 1.57).
Obesity was associated with an increased risk of cerebral infarction (BMI \( \geq 30 \text{ kg/m}^2 \) versus 20 to 24.9 \text{ kg/m}^2, multivariable RR, 1.28; 95% CI, 1.07 to 1.52), and a family history of coronary heart disease was positively associated with risk of intracerebral hemorrhage (multivariable RR, 1.61; 95% CI, 1.06 to 2.45). Aspirin use and total physical activity were not statistically significantly associated with total stroke or any stroke subtype.

The association between coffee consumption and risk of total stroke and stroke subtypes is shown in Table 2. There was no statistically significant association between consumption of coffee and risk of stroke in the age-adjusted analysis. However, after adjustment for smoking (main confounder) and other risk factors, women who consumed 1 to 2 cups, 3 to 4 cups, or \( \geq 5 \) cups of coffee per day had a statistically significant 22% to 25% lower risk of stroke compared with those who drank \( 1 \) cup of coffee per day. Coffee consumption was associated with decreased risk of cerebral infarction and subarachnoid hemorrhage but not intracerebral hemorrhage. When we compared women who consumed \( \geq 1 \) cups of coffee per day with those who consumed \( < 1 \) cup per day, the multivariable RR of total stroke was 0.76 (95% CI, 0.66 to 0.88). The association between coffee consumption and risk of total stroke did not vary statistically significantly by smoking status, body mass index, history of diabetes or hypertension, or alcohol consumption (Table 3).

### Discussion

In this population-based cohort of Swedish women, women who consumed \( \geq 1 \) cups of coffee daily had a lower risk of stroke compared with women who consumed \( < 1 \) cup of coffee daily. There was no dose–response relationship between coffee consumption and risk of total stroke; rather, the risk appeared to be increased among women with low or no consumption of coffee. An inverse association between coffee consumption and stroke was observed for cerebral infarction and subarachnoid hemorrhage but not intracerebral hemorrhage. The association was not modified by smoking status, body mass index, history of diabetes or hypertension, or alcohol consumption.
reduce the risk of stroke include attenuation of subclinical
inflammation, reduction in oxidative stress, and improved
insulin sensitivity. A recent clinical trial showed that high
consumption of filtered coffee (≥8 cups/day) versus no
consumption led to a significant decrease in serum concen-
trations of interleukin-18 and 8-isoprostane and a significant
increase in adiponectin, total cholesterol, high-density lipo-
protein cholesterol, and apolipoprotein A-I concentrations.4
Moreover, an observational study among women found that
caffeinated coffee consumption was inversely associated with
plasma concentrations of E-selectin (surface leukocyte adhe-
sion molecules) and C-reactive protein (a marker of chronic
low-grade inflammation) in diabetic women and that decaf-
finated coffee consumption was inversely associated with
C-reactive protein concentrations in healthy women.5 An
inverse association between coffee consumption and C-reactive protein concentrations has also been observed in
Japanese populations.17,18 In addition, habitual coffee con-
sumption has been associated with higher insulin sensitivity.3

Strengths of this study include its prospective and
population-based design and the almost complete follow-up
of study participants by linkage with population-based Swed-
ish registers. A limitation of this study is that coffee con-
sumption was assessed using a self-administered question-
naire, which will inevitably lead to some measurement error
and misclassification of exposure. Another limitation is that
our assessment of medical history and other covariates was
based on self-report, which is less reliable than clinical
measurements. Furthermore, although we adjusted for major
risk factors for stroke, we cannot rule out the possibility that
our findings may be due to unmeasured or residual confound-
ing. There was no dose–response relation between coffee
consumption and risk of cerebral infarction; rather, the risk

| Table 3. Relative Risks* and 95% CIs of Cerebral Infarction by Coffee Consumption Stratified by Smoking Status, Body Mass Index, Diabetes, Hypertension, and Alcohol Consumption in the Swedish Mammography Cohort, 1998 to 2008 |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Daily Coffee Consumption, No. of Cups           | <1 1 to 2 3 to 4 ≥5 | P for Trend | P for Trend | P for Trend |
| Smoking status                                   |         |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Never and past (no. of events†) 1010             | 1.0     | 0.80 (0.65 to 0.97) | 0.81 (0.66 to 0.99) | 0.79 (0.61 to 1.02) | 0.13 0.66 |
| Current (no. of events 259)                      | 1.0     | 1.08 (0.65 to 1.81) | 1.10 (0.66 to 1.84) | 1.12 (0.65 to 1.94) | 0.72 |
| Body mass index, kg/m²                            |         |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <30 (no. of events 1091)                         | 1.0     | 0.85 (0.70 to 1.05) | 0.82 (0.67 to 1.01) | 0.83 (0.64 to 1.06) | 0.17 0.10 |
| ≥30 (no. of events 182)                          | 1.0     | 0.52 (0.33 to 0.80) | 0.71 (0.46 to 1.09) | 0.56 (0.32 to 0.97) | 0.16 |
| Diabetes status                                  |         |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Nondiabetic (no. of events 1218)                 | 1.0     | 0.79 (0.65 to 0.95) | 0.80 (0.66 to 0.97) | 0.82 (0.65 to 1.03) | 0.23 0.59 |
| Diabetic (no. of events 92)                      | 1.0     | 0.68 (0.35 to 1.31) | 0.73 (0.38 to 1.42) | 0.40 (0.15 to 1.02) | 0.08 |
| Hypertension status                              |         |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Nonhypertensive (no. of events 828)              | 1.0     | 0.76 (0.61 to 0.95) | 0.72 (0.57 to 0.90) | 0.81 (0.61 to 1.06) | 0.23 0.26 |
| Hypertensive (no. of events 482)                 | 1.0     | 0.82 (0.61 to 1.11) | 0.95 (0.70 to 1.29) | 0.73 (0.49 to 1.09) | 0.29 |
| Alcohol consumption                              |         |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Abstainer (no. of events 346)                    | 1.0     | 0.78 (0.56 to 1.08) | 0.91 (0.66 to 1.25) | 0.91 (0.61 to 1.38) | 0.92 0.68 |
| Drinker (no. of events 964)                      | 1.0     | 0.78 (0.63 to 0.97) | 0.75 (0.60 to 0.94) | 0.74 (0.56 to 0.97) | 0.06 |

*Adjusted for the same variables as in Table 2 except for the stratification variable.
†The no. of stroke events may not sum up to the total no. because of missing values for the stratification variable.
seemed to be increased among women who consumed <1 cup of coffee per day. We cannot entirely exclude the possibility that women with low coffee consumption may be more likely to be exposed to another unknown risk factor for stroke. However, the association persisted after adjustment for other known stroke risk factors.

In summary, in this prospective study of Swedish women, low or no coffee consumption was associated with an increased risk of stroke. Additional prospective studies on coffee consumption and stroke incidence as well as mechanistic studies investigating possible effects of coffee consumption on cardiovascular risk factors are warranted.

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**Disclosures**

None.

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Abstract 1

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(Stroke. 2011;42:908-912.)

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Background
Previous research on coffee consumption and stroke risk has been inconsistent. Several studies have shown a beneficial effect of coffee consumption on stroke risk, whereas others have reported no effect or a negative association. The current study investigated the relationship between coffee consumption and stroke risk in women, adjusting for potential confounders.

Methods
We conducted a prospective cohort study of 79,051 women aged 40-76 years who were followed for a mean of 14.5 years. Coffee consumption was assessed at baseline and participants were categorized into quartiles of consumption. Stroke outcomes were defined as non-fatal ischemic stroke, non-fatal hemorrhagic stroke, fatal stroke, and any stroke.

Results
Coffee consumption was inversely associated with the risk of total stroke (HR: 0.81, 95% CI: 0.69-0.96) and ischemic stroke (HR: 0.80, 95% CI: 0.68-0.94). The association was stronger for black coffee compared to regular coffee. The protective effect was consistent across all quartiles of coffee consumption.

Discussion
These findings suggest a potential protective effect of coffee consumption on stroke risk, particularly ischemic stroke. Further research is needed to determine the underlying mechanisms and to confirm these results in other populations.