

Overview of congestive heart failure

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Heart failure (HF) is a major and growing health problem world wide, including Taiwan. HF is primarily a condition of the elderly and it has been estimated that the incidence of HF approaches 10 per 1000 population after age 65. The prognosis of HF is uniformly poor with half of patients carrying a diagnosis of HF will die within 4 years and in patients with severe HF, >50% will die within one year. By definition, HF is a complex clinical syndrome that can result from any structural or functional cardiac disorder that impairs the ability of the ventricle to fill with or eject blood. Approaches to HF patients including quantify the degree of functional limitation and understanding that HF is generally a progressive process, which may be caused by neurohormonal mechanisms or LV remodeling. Diagnosis of HF included clinical symptoms and signs and various laboratory methods, including echocardiography, invasive investigation and recently, natriuretic peptides. Identification of the underlying etiology will allow the detection of coexistent conditions that may contribute to or exacerbate the severity of symptoms. Precise diagnosis and evaluation of HF will help in further management of the patients.