

Late Diagnosis of Congenital Heart Disease - A Study Prior to Army Enlistment

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The exact incidence of congenital heart disease is unknown. The accepted incidence (6-8/1000 live birth) is based on studies of infants. A significant number of cases are diagnosed later because of lack of or missed early clinical signs. Bicuspid aortic valve and mitral valve prolapse are classic examples of these "late diagnoses".

Numerous other pathologies are also diagnosed later in life. Personal experience over many years with such cases led to a study of 52,000 young adults before admission to the army. The details of these cases were obtained from their files. Many of the positive cases were personally examined.

Cardiac abnormalities were found in 295 cases. Of these- 227 were known cases, diagnosed prior to army enlistment. Sixty eight cases were newly diagnosed. These included: Bicuspid aortic valve (13), aortic stenosis (4), aortic insufficiency (mild-7), aortic insufficiency (severe- 1), mitral valve prolapse (26), patent ductus arteriosus (2), pulmonic stenosis (10), Ebstein's anomaly (1), atrial septal defect (1), partial anomalous pulmonary venous return (1), coarctation of aorta (1) and Marfan syndrome with aortic dilatation (1). Six of these cases were sent directly to surgery and the remainder referred for follow up.

Pertinent features of these cases will be discussed.