

Brain-Heart Clinical Practice Guideline

Integrated Care for Heart, Brain and Mental Health

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WHY IS THE GUIDELINE IMPORTANT?



Heart, brain and mental health disorders have overlapping risk factors.



Patients with cardiovascular disease often have stroke, cognitive decline, or depression.



Current guidelines consider evidence for these conditions separately. Recommendations for integrated care may improve patient outcomes.

HOW WAS THIS GUIDELINE DEVELOPED?



Canada's first brain-heart clinical practice guideline

was developed through C-CHANGE (Canadian Cardiovascular Harmonized National Guideline Endeavour), a nationally endorsed guideline process that targets primary healthcare practitioners.

C-CHANGE combines 11 different Canadian heart-related guidelines into one, simplified resource designed for primary care. It's built to help clinicians manage complex patients—especially those with multiple conditions like both brain and heart disease.

Features of the brain-heart clinical practice guideline

- + First integrated brain-heart-mental health guideline
- + Focus on coexisting conditions
- + Patient-informed
- + Promotes shared decision-making
- + Sex and gender included
- + Women's health gaps highlighted

Levels of Impact



Primary care

Early risk assessment for brain + heart health



Specialists

Expands perspective for cardiologists and neurologists



Patients/public

Raises awareness for those living with these conditions

WHAT DOES THE GUIDELINE RECOMMEND?



SCREENING



TREATMENT



SHARED DECISION-MAKING



1

Screen patients with atrial fibrillation for risk of cognitive impairment



2

Screen patients with coronary artery disease for depression



3

Treat depression in coronary artery disease with evidence-based therapy



4

Intensively lower systolic blood pressure in high-risk patients to reduce cognitive impairment



5

Intensify LDL-cholesterol treatment in coronary artery disease above guideline threshold



6

Intensify LDL-cholesterol treatment after stroke above guideline threshold



7

Offer influenza vaccination to reduce risk of stroke and cardiovascular death



8

Offer pneumococcal vaccination to reduce risk of myocardial infarction and stroke



9

Offer herpes zoster (shingles) vaccination to reduce risk of stroke, myocardial infarction, and dementia



10

Use evidence-based decision aids to support shared decision-making in brain-heart care

Integrated management of heart, brain and mental health diseases provides better whole-person care