



Clinical research

# Management and outcome of patients with established coronary artery disease: the Euro Heart Survey on coronary revascularization

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Received 6 December 2004; revised 10 February 2005; accepted 23 February 2005; online publish-ahead-of-print 31 March 2005

See page 1147 for the editorial comment on this article (doi:10.1093/eurheartj/ehi247)

## KEYWORDS

Coronary artery disease;  
Coronary angiography;  
CABG;  
PCI;  
Practice survey

**Aims** The purpose of the Euro Heart Survey Programme of the European Society of Cardiology is to evaluate to which extent clinical practice endorses existing guidelines as well as to identify differences in population profiles, patient management, and outcome across Europe. The current survey focuses on the invasive diagnosis and treatment of patients with established coronary artery disease (CAD).

**Methods and results** Between November 2001 and March 2002, 7769 consecutive patients undergoing invasive evaluation at 130 hospitals (31 countries) were screened for the presence of one or more coronary stenosis >50% in diameter. Patient demographics and comorbidity, clinical presentation, invasive parameters, treatment options, and procedural techniques were prospectively entered in an electronic database (550 variables + 29 per diseased coronary segment). Major adverse cardiac events (MACE) were evaluated at 30 days and 1 year. Out of 5619 patients with angiographically proven coronary stenosis (72% of screened population), 53% presented with stable angina while ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) was the indication for coronary angiography in 16% and non-ST segment elevation myocardial infarction or unstable angina in 30%. Only medical therapy was continued in 21%, whereas mechanical revascularization was performed in the remainder [percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) in 58% and coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) in 21%]. Patients referred for PCI were younger, were more active, had a lower risk profile, and had less comorbid conditions. CABG was performed mostly in patients with left main lesions (21%), two- (25%), or three-vessel disease (67%) with 4.1 diseased segments, on average. Single-vessel PCI was performed in 82% of patients with either

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single- (45%), two- (33%), or three-vessel disease (21%). Stents were used in 75% of attempted lesions, with a large variation between sites. Direct PCI for STEMI was performed in 410 cases, representing 7% of the entire workload in the participating catheterization laboratories. Time delay was within 90 min in 76% of direct PCI cases. In keeping with the recommendations of practice guidelines, the survey identified under-use of adjunctive medication (GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers, statins, and angiotensin-converting enzyme-inhibitors). Mortality rates at 30 days and 1 year were low in all subgroups. MACE primarily consisted of repeat PCI (12%).

**Conclusion** The current Euro Heart Survey on coronary revascularization was performed in the era of bare metal stenting and provides a global European picture of the invasive approach to patients with CAD. These data will serve as a benchmark for the future evaluation of the impact of drug-eluting stents on the practice of interventional cardiology and bypass surgery.

## Introduction

The management of patients with coronary artery disease (CAD) is complex. Better understanding of the pathophysiology of the disease and the introduction of novel diagnostic techniques in conjunction with novel or more powerful pharmacologic and revascularization therapies mandate continuous reassessment and evaluation of medical practice.<sup>1-6</sup>

Practice guidelines for diagnostic procedures and patient management are established to help cardiologists in every-day clinical decision making. The scientific foundation for these guidelines is provided by randomized clinical trials, although non-randomized trials, retrospective studies, or consensus opinion of experts are also used.<sup>7-9</sup>

The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) is dedicated to improve health by reducing the impact of cardiovascular disease by various means. The Euro Heart Survey programme is meant to evaluate to which extent clinical practice endorses existing guidelines as well as to identify differences in population profiles, patient management, and outcome across Europe.<sup>10</sup>

The current survey focuses on patients with at least one >50% diameter stenosis, visualized during coronary angiography, who are potential candidates for coronary revascularization.

## Methods

The Euro Heart Survey on coronary revascularization was conducted in 130 voluntary participating hospitals from 31 ESC member countries, with the objective to evaluate clinical practice, adherence to guidelines, differences in the management, and outcome of patients and to assess to what extent the patients of daily practice are represented in randomized clinical trials. Participating hospitals represent both academic (40%) and non-academic (60%) institutions with (83%) and without (17%) cardiac surgery and/or interventional cardiology facilities. These centres were asked to enrol blocks of 40 consecutive patients. The present survey was designed to screen all consecutive patients undergoing invasive diagnostic or therapeutic catheterization, of which all patients with >50% diameter stenoses in at least one major epicardial vessel were asked to

participate. In each hospital, data (550 patient variables and 29 variables per treated coronary segment) were collected by data collecting officers on computers, using the Macro™ software (InferMed, UK) and sent through the internet to a central database located at the European Heart House. The software used implemented internal edit checks for missing or contradictory entries or for values out of the normal range. The data management staff of the European Heart House performed additional edit checks. Canadian Class Society (CCS) functional class and risk stratification were evaluated prospectively in patients with stable angina.<sup>11,12</sup> The EuroSCORE and TIMI risk score were calculated from the available variables.<sup>13,14</sup>

The survey on coronary revascularization was conducted between November 2001 and March 2002. One year follow-up was made by personal or telephone contact and available in 4770 patients (83%). Fourteen hospitals (11%) were not able to provide follow-up information. Median (quartiles) follow-up period was 12 months (11-13 months). Statistical analyses were carried out with SPSS statistical software (version 12.0 for Windows), using mostly descriptive statistics between subsets of patients defined by treatment preference. Results are presented as mean and median with corresponding values (SD and inter-quartile ranges, respectively) and as per cent. Given the large sample size, *P*-value of  $\leq 0.001$  was considered statistically significant.

## Results

A total of 7769 patients undergoing coronary angiography were screened, of whom 5767 fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Patients with either insufficient or invalid data ( $n = 148$ ) were excluded from further analysis. Therefore, the total population of the present report amounts to 5619. The baseline characteristics are summarized in *Table 1*. Stable angina was the most frequent indication to perform angiography (53%), followed by non-ST segment elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI) or unstable angina (UA) (30%) and ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) (16%). In 2002 of the screened patients (24%), no CAD or stenosis <50% was found. Absence of significant CAD differed between patients with acute coronary syndrome (ACS) (16%) and stable ischaemic heart disease (35%) but was most prevalent when CAD was not the primary reason for performing angiography (48%).

**Table 1** Clinical characteristics of total cohort and patients in different treatment groups

	Total (n = 5619)	PCI (n = 3254)	CABG (n = 1188)	Medical (n = 1177)	P-value
Age (mean ± SD)	63.2 ± 10.8	62.4 ± 11.2	64.5 ± 10.0	64.3 ± 10.6	*
Male gender, n (%)	4268 (76)	2448 (75)	933 (79)	887 (75)	
Smoking, n (%)					
Current	1411 (25)	912 (28)	262 (22)	237 (20)	}
Past	1924 (34)	1045 (32)	434 (37)	445 (38)	
Never	2084 (37)	1170 (36)	452 (38)	462 (39)	
Diabetes mellitus, n (%)					
Type 1	208 (4)	121 (4)	38 (3)	49 (4)	
Type 2	1130 (20)	603 (19)	261 (22)	266 (23)	
Hypercholesterolaemia, n (%)	3591 (65)	2130 (67)	737 (64)	724 (64)	
Hypertension, n (%)	3315 (60)	1851 (57)	714 (61)	750 (64)	*
Sedentary lifestyle, n (%)	1601(40)	869 (37)	357 (43)	375 (45)	*
Congestive heart failure, n (%)	1026 (18)	457 (14)	279 (24)	290 (25)	*
Chronic lung disease, n (%)	492 (9)	273 (8)	106 (9)	113 (10)	
Chronic renal failure, n (%)	226 (4)	137 (4)	33 (3)	56 (5)	
Peripheral vascular disease, n (%)	657 (12)	330 (10)	169 (14)	158 (14)	*
Cerebrovascular disease, n (%)	427 (8)	205 (6)	116 (10)	106 (9)	*
Comorbidity per patient <sup>a</sup> (mean ± SD)	0.5 ± 0.8	0.4 ± 0.7	0.6 ± 0.8	0.6 ± 0.8	*
Risk factors per patient <sup>b</sup> (mean ± SD)	2.1 ± 1.0	2.1 ± 0.9	2.1 ± 1.0	2.1 ± 1.0	
Prior CABG, n (%)	601 (11)	307 (10)	41 (4)	253 (22)	*
Prior PCI, n (%)	1140 (20)	738 (23)	130 (11)	272 (23)	*
Prior MI, n (%)	2258 (39)	1168 (36)	448 (38)	542 (47)	*
Diagnosis at admission, n (%)					
Stable angina	2936 (53)	1503 (47)	743 (64)	690 (61)	}
Non-ST elevation ACS/UA	1672 (30)	1014 (31)	331 (28)	327 (29)	
ST elevation MI	906 (16)	710 (22)	88 (8)	108 (10)	
Duration of hospitalization in days (median-IQR) <sup>c</sup>	5 (3–11)	4 (3–8)	12 (7–22)	4 (2–10)	*

Proportions are given per column. Asterisks denote  $P \leq 0.001$ ; MI, myocardial infarction.

<sup>a</sup>Comorbidity included congestive heart failure, chronic lung disease, renal failure, peripheral vascular disease, and cerebrovascular disease.

<sup>b</sup>Risk factors included, smoking (ever), diabetes, hypercholesterolaemia, and hypertension.

<sup>c</sup>Data known in 5291 cases (3142 PCI, 1102 CABG, 1047 Medical).

Mechanical revascularization [percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI): 58%, CABG: 21%] was often performed or planned, whereas a substantial number of patients were continued on medical treatment (21%). PCI was predominantly performed in patients admitted with ACS with or without ST-segment elevation or UA (53%), whereas CABG and medical treatment were applied mostly in patients with stable angina (64 and 61%, respectively). Patients who underwent PCI were, in general, younger, more active, and with fewer comorbid conditions. Patients who received medical therapy had a higher prevalence of previous bypass surgery and myocardial infarction (Table 1).

Of all diseased segments at coronary angiography (15 856), 51% was considered suitable for PCI and 69% for CABG, whereas 24% of the lesions (1597 patients) were judged as only suitable for CABG, not for PCI. Most of the lesions unsuitable for PCI were totally occluded (70%) or located in the left main (20%). PCI was predominantly performed in patients with single-vessel disease and preserved ventricular function (Table 2). Nonetheless, two- and three-vessel disease was present in 33 and 21%, respectively, suggesting incomplete revascularization by anatomy. Single-PCI was performed in 82% of all cases and the attempted

lesions were of type A in 15%, B in 50%, and C in 12%. Bypass surgery was mainly performed in patients with three-vessel disease (67%), left main stem stenosis, (21%) or extensive disease as reflected by the mean number of diseased segments (4.1). The left anterior descending coronary artery (LAD) was diseased in 90% of all patients undergoing CABG and extracorporeal circulation was used in 81% of all operations.

Patients who received only medical therapy had a higher prevalence of advanced disease when compared with PCI patients (61 vs. 54% multi-vessel disease, 2.9 vs. 2.3 diseased segments). Angiographic profile was worst in those who underwent CABG (92% multi-vessel disease, 4.1 diseased segments). It is worth noting that patients treated medically had the highest prevalence of poor ventricular function. Although the reason for choosing medical treatment was largely related to the clinical presentation and the severity and extent of CAD, we also observed large differences in treatment options between participating hospitals (Figure 1). Apart from contraindications for mechanical revascularization (i.e. vessels not suitable: 34%; high-risk procedure: 17%), 13% of the medically treated patients had refused mechanical revascularization.

**Table 2** Angiographic results based on chosen treatment option

	Total (n = 5619)	PCI (n = 3254)	CABG (n = 1188)	Medical (n = 1177)	P-value
Severity of CAD, n (%) <sup>a</sup>					
Single-vessel disease	2010 (36)	1469 (45)	87 (7)	454 (39)	}
Two-vessel disease	1701 (30)	1086 (33)	298 (25)	317 (27)	
Three-vessel disease	1882 (34)	687 (21)	797 (67)	398 (34)	
Left main lesions	476 (9)	126 (4)	251 (21)	99 (8)	*
Diseased segments					
Mean number of diseased segments, SD	2.8 ± 1.9	2.3 ± 1.7	4.1 ± 1.9	2.9 ± 2.1	*
% valued as suitable for PCI	51	69	37	32	*
% valued as suitable for CABG	69	63	91	52	*
Left ventricular function known, n (%)					
Ejection fraction >50%	4854 (86)	2732 (84)	1096 (92)	1026 (87)	}
Ejection fraction 40–50%	2904 (60)	1726 (63)	633 (58)	545 (53)	
Ejection fraction <40%	1281 (26)	710 (26)	295 (27)	276 (27)	
Ejection fraction <40%	669 (14)	296 (11)	168 (15)	205 (20)	*
Intervention performed within 30 days after angiography, n (%)					
Total number of attempted segments/diseased segments <sup>b</sup>	5426	3564/6477 (55)	1862/2483 (75)	–/3404 (0)	
Attempted segments per patient, mean <sup>b</sup>	–	1.30	3.13	–	
Successfully dilated/bypassed segments (%) <sup>b</sup>	–	95	96	–	
Procedural techniques					
Stenting (%) <sup>b</sup>	–	2050 (75)	–	–	
One or more arterial graft (%) <sup>b</sup>	–	–	531 (89)	–	

Proportions are given per column. Asterisks denote  $P \leq 0.001$ .

<sup>a</sup>Due to missing data (>1%) not counting up to total number of patients.

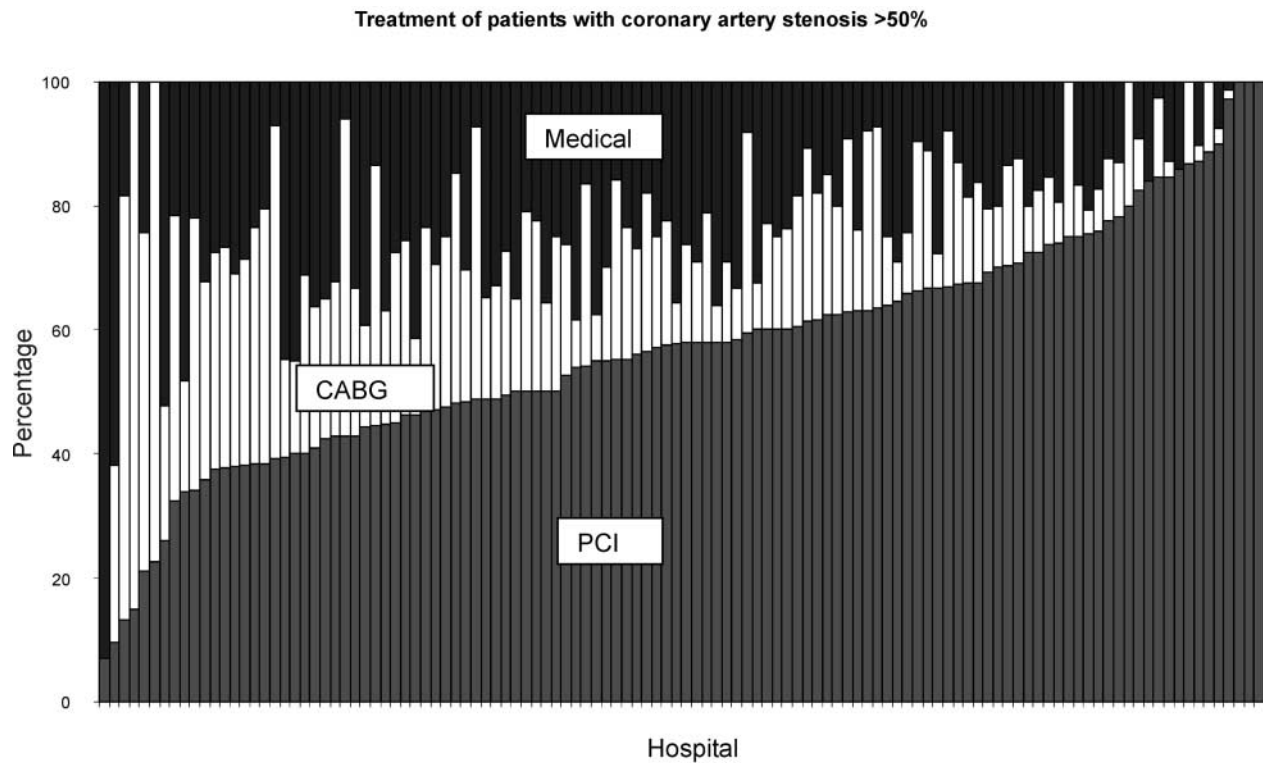
<sup>b</sup>On the basis of number (%) of patients who underwent the intervention within 30 days after angiography.

In conjunction with the differences in baseline characteristics, the total and average number of attempted segments differed between PCI- and CABG-treated patients (Table 2). The large majority of patients undergoing PCI (84%) was treated within 30 days, whereas only 50% of CABG patients were treated within this period. The majority of patients undergoing PCI (59%) underwent the procedure within 24 h after diagnostic angiography. There was a strikingly high use of stents (applied in 72% of all attempted segments and 75% of PCI patients) while at least one arterial graft was implanted in 89% of the surgical procedures. The variation in the use of stents in participating hospitals was huge as illustrated in Figure 2. The assessment of procedure-related myocardial injury from serial sampling of necrosis markers was only performed in 61% of PCI and 31% of CABG cases. In accordance with guidelines, consensus statements and data from clinical trials, PCI patients at increased risk (diabetes, ACS) should receive periprocedural GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers. GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers were used only in 27% of all PCI procedures. Almost half (46%) of all STEMI patients undergoing primary PCI ( $n = 393$ ) were treated with GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers. In NSTEMI/UA patients undergoing PCI within 30 days after angiography, 32% received GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers, mostly because of high-risk features (60%). Among PCI patients with stable angina, 14% received GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers and 23% were on thienopyridine treatment prior to the intervention. No difference in GP IIb/IIIa receptor blocker use was observed between patients with or without diabetes

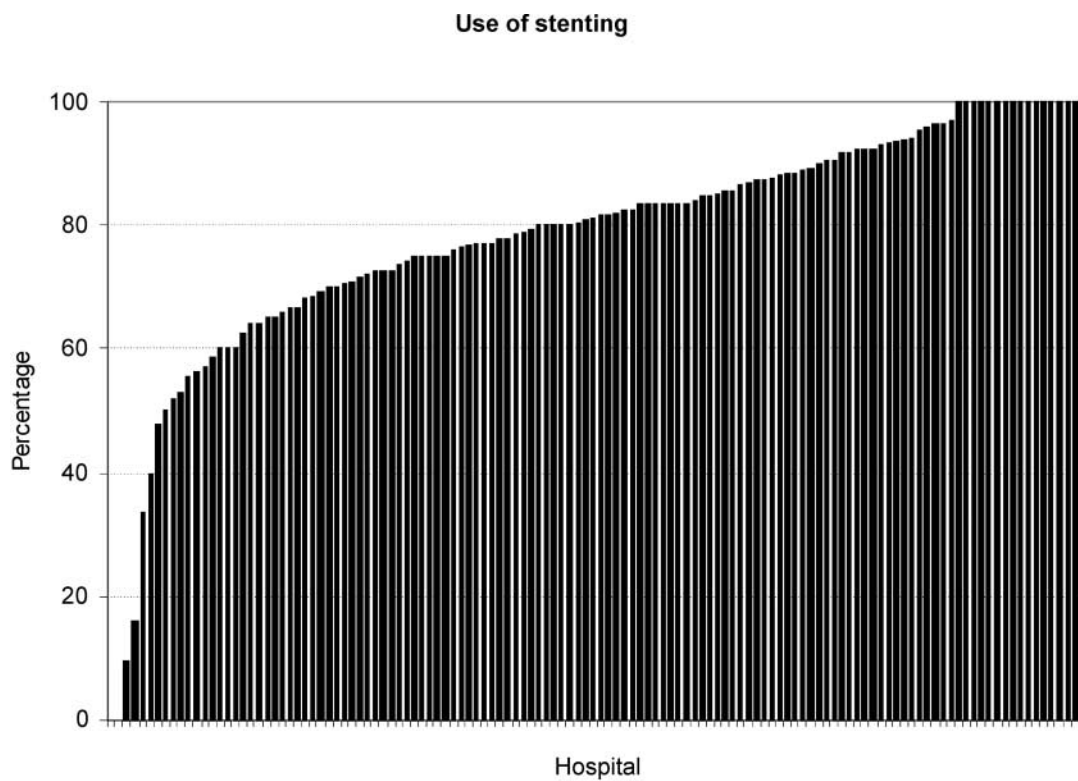
mellitus. Furthermore, we observed large differences in the use of GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers between the participating hospitals (Figure 3).

In most patients with stable angina, CCS was known (96%). Almost two-thirds of these patients were in CCS class 1 or 2 (Table 3). Patients in CCS 3 or 4 were more likely to be classified as high-risk patients when compared with patients in CCS 1 or 2 (23 vs. 13%). Comparison of this risk stratification with the EuroSCORE revealed a mean score of 3.3 in low-risk patients, 3.7 in intermediate-risk patients, and 4.4 in high-risk patients. When calculating the EuroSCORE per treatment-group in patients with stable angina and NSTEMI/UA, we observed a lower risk in PCI patients when compared with CABG and medically treated patients (Table 4). In NSTEMI/UA patients, the TIMI score was similar among the three treatment options (mean score  $3.1 \pm 1.1$ ). Despite the proven CAD, a normal ECG was present in 23% of all NSTEMI/UA cases.

High-risk features or recurrent/persistent angina in NSTEMI/UA patients and recurrent ischaemia or complications in STEMI patients were the most frequent indications for angiography (62 and 42%, respectively). Cardiogenic shock was registered in 8% of STEMI patients. The rate of reperfusion therapy including fibrinolytic treatment and primary PCI in this selected group of STEMI patients who reached the catheterization laboratory was 64%, of which 68% underwent primary PCI. The median time from admission to the intervention was 45 min (inter-quartile range: 15–90 min) and the procedure started within 90 min after admission in 76%,

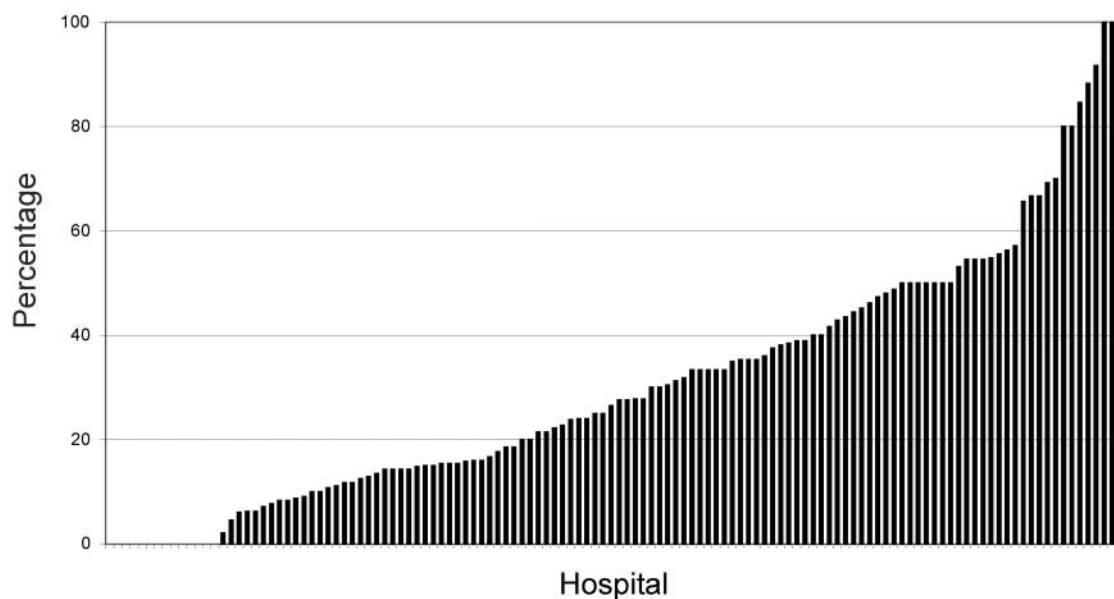


**Figure 1** Visualizes the per cent of invasive (PCI and CABG) and medically treated patients in hospitals participating in the Euro Heart Survey on coronary revascularization. Hospitals are ordered on the basis of patients referred for PCI. It should be noted that the ordering of hospital differs between the three figures.



**Figure 2** The variation in use of stents per hospital in patients who underwent PCI within 30 days after diagnostic angiography. It should be noted that the ordering of hospital differs between the three figures.

### GP IIb/IIIa inhibitors in PCI patients



**Figure 3** The variation in the use of GP IIa/IIIb receptor blockers stents per hospital in patients who underwent PCI within 30 days after diagnostic angiography. It should be noted that the ordering of hospital differs between the three figures.

**Table 3** Risk assessment and outcome in patients with stable angina

Estimated risk of Canadian class	Total 2936 (53)	1 year mortality	1 year mortality/ non-fatal MI	1 year mortality/non-fatal MI/ rehospitalization for cardiac reason
CCS 1 or 2, <i>n</i> (%)	1795 (63)			
Unknown	203 (11)	5 (3)	9 (4)	51 (25)
Low (<1% annual mortality)	536 (30)	14 (3)	22 (4)	108 (20)
Intermediate (1–3% annual mortality)	818 (46)	16 (2)	27 (3)	156 (19)
High (>3% annual mortality)	238 (13)	10 (4)	13 (6)	59 (25)
CCS 3 or 4, <i>n</i> (%)	1037 (37)			
Unknown	144 (14)	7 (5)	10 (7)	35 (24)
Low (<1% annual mortality)	158 (15)	8 (5)	10 (6)	42 (27)
Intermediate (1–3% annual mortality)	496 (48)	18 (4)	26 (5)	120 (24)
High (>3% annual mortality)	239 (23)	18 (8)	20 (8)	69 (29)

Proportions are given per row.  
Values in parentheses are percentages.

indicating that the majority of patients was treated within the advocated timeframe of 90 min. It should be noted, however, that no information on in-hospital time delay was available in 28% of patients. Delayed angiography was performed on a systematic basis in 44% of the 513 STEMI patients who did not undergo primary PCI.

Of the 5619 participating patients, 1.9% (104 patients) died within 30 days. The overall 1 year mortality was 4.7% (263 patients). The mortality differed between diagnosis and treatment groups (Table 4). One-year mortality was lowest in patients with stable angina who underwent PCI (1.9%) and highest in STEMI patients not undergoing mechanical revascularization (8.4%). However, a significantly reduced 1 year mortality between the three treatment groups was observed only in patients with stable

angina, reflecting the large proportion of low-risk patients undergoing PCI.

After 1 year, 13% of the PCI patients required repeat revascularization (10% at least one repeat PCI, 3% were operated), whereas only 1% of patients initially treated with CABG needed repeat revascularization. A small proportion of patients who were initially treated medically underwent mechanical revascularization eventually (4%). Rehospitalization for cardiac reasons was more frequent in PCI and medical patients (28 and 25%, respectively), when compared with those undergoing CABG (15%).

At discharge, most patients (>90%) were prescribed at least one anti-thrombotic drug (either aspirin, thienopyridine, or anticoagulants), irrespective of treatment



**Table 4** Risk assessment and outcome in three different diagnosis groups, based on treatment option

	Total	PCI	CABG	Medical	P-value
Stable angina, <i>n</i>	2936	1503	743	690	
Duration of hospitalization in days (median-IQR)	3 (2-9)	3 (2-5)	10 (5-18)	3 (2-6)	*
EuroSCORE (mean ± SD)	3.8 ± 2.7	3.3 ± 2.4	4.4 ± 3.0	4.2 ± 2.6	*
30 day mortality, <i>n</i> (%)	25 (1)	5 (0)	17 (2)	3 (0)	*
Total mortality at 1 year, <i>n</i> (%)	101 (3)	28 (2)	41 (6)	32 (5)	*
Non-fatal MI <sup>a</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	41 (2)	24 (2)	8 (1)	9 (2)	
Rehospitalization for cardiac reason <sup>a</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	559 (24)	354 (29)	80 (14)	125 (23)	*
(Repeat) Revascularization <sup>a</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	183 (7)	150 (12)	6 (1)	27 (5)	*
NSTEMI/UA, <i>n</i>	1672	1014	331	327	
Duration of hospitalization in days (median, IQR)	7 (3-12)	5 (3-10)	16 (9-25)	7 (3-12)	*
EuroSCORE (mean ± SD)	5.8 ± 2.8	5.4 ± 2.6	6.1 ± 3.2	6.5 ± 2.8	*
30 day mortality, <i>n</i> (%)	35 (2)	19 (2)	8 (2)	8 (2)	
Total mortality at 1 year, <i>n</i> (%)	82 (5)	41 (4)	17 (5)	24 (7)	
Non-fatal MI <sup>b</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	43 (3)	30 (4)	11 (4)	2 (1)	
Rehospitalization for cardiac reason <sup>b</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	376 (29)	249 (31)	48 (19)	78 (31)	*
(Repeat) Revascularization <sup>b</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	133 (10)	119 (14)	5 (2)	9 (3)	*
STEMI, <i>n</i>	906	710	88	108	
Duration of hospitalization in days (median-IQR)	7 (4-12)	7 (4-11)	13 (9-27)	9 (4-18)	*
30 day mortality, <i>n</i> (%)	42 (5)	30 (4)	7 (8)	5 (5)	
Total mortality at 1 year, <i>n</i> (%)	67 (7)	51 (7)	7 (8)	9 (8)	
Non-fatal MI <sup>c</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	18 (3)	13 (3)	2 (3)	3 (4)	
Rehospitalization for cardiac reason <sup>c</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	148 (23)	122 (24)	7 (11)	19 (24)	
(Repeat) Revascularization <sup>c</sup> , <i>n</i> (%)	63 (9)	58 (11)	0	5 (6)	

Asterisks denote  $P \leq 0.001$ .

<sup>a</sup>Data known in 2472 patients, 84% of patients with stable angina (1279 PCI, 608 CABG, 585 Medical).

<sup>b</sup>Data known in 1403 patients, 84% of patients with NSTEMI/UA (862 PCI, 267 CABG, 274 Medical).

<sup>c</sup>Data known in 704 patients, 78% of patients with STEMI (550 PCI, 66 CABG, 88 Medical).

allocation (Table 5). When coronary stenting was performed, 94% were discharged on clopidogrel or ticlopidine. Other prophylactic drug classes such as beta-blockers, angiotensin-converting enzyme-inhibitors (ACE-inhibitors), and statins were used less frequently. Except for beta-blockers, comparison between the three treatment groups revealed significant differences in prescription profile. At 1 year follow-up, pharmacological treatment remained unchanged and below the target. Only the use of statins increased from discharge (54%) to 1 year in patients undergoing CABG (69%), but remained below the target.

## Discussion

Acute presentations of CAD represented the primary indication for diagnostic angiography in 46% of all cases, whereas in patients with stable angina, the selection of patients to undergo diagnostic angiography was based on symptomatic status and/or risk evaluation. In line with previous reports, we observed a global normalcy rate of 24%.<sup>10,15</sup> This proportion was higher when the primary diagnosis leading to the angiography was stable angina rather than acute CAD. An indication for mechanical revascularization followed the diagnostic angiogram in 57% of all cases screened and in 79% of those with at least one significant stenosis, indicating appropriate use of this invasive and expensive diagnostic procedure. This survey of current practice in Europe shows a clear

preference for PCI over CABG (ratio 3:1), possibly suggesting under-use of the more invasive bypass operation.<sup>16</sup>

In accordance with the guidelines, patients selected for CABG were sicker and had more extensive CAD; however, a sizable proportion of patients with multi-vessel or left main disease, impaired left ventricular function or diabetes did not undergo bypass surgery.

Patient and/or physician preference as well as the shorter time delay between angiography and PCI (compared with time delay between angiography and CABG) may have contributed to this choice. In patients with multi-vessel disease, recent meta-analyses show no difference in the rate of major irreversible adverse events between PCI and CABG.<sup>17,18</sup> However, after 1 year follow-up, repeat PCI was performed in 10 and 3% eventually required CABG, indicative of the lower durability of the result after PCI. Coronary stenting using bare metal devices was applied in 72% of all segments and PCI was limited to a single-vessel in 82% of cases. Use of stents varied widely from 0% in two hospitals to 100% in 17 hospitals, a wide range that probably relates to differences in local reimbursement policies. It should be remembered that all data from the current survey have been acquired prior to the clinical availability of drug-eluting stents. Increased availability of these more durable devices will likely increase the confidence of interventional cardiologists in treating more complex patient and/or lesion subsets by means of PCI.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 5** Pharmacological treatment at discharge

	Total (n = 5619)	PCI (n = 3254)	CABG (n = 1188)	Medical (n = 1177)	P-value
Aspirin, n (%)	4857 (86)	2972 (91)	922 (78)	963 (82)	*
Any anti-thrombotic drug, n (%) <sup>a</sup>	5356 (95)	3179 (98)	1087 (92)	1090 (93)	*
Beta-blocker, n (%)	4133 (74)	2442 (75)	833 (70)	858 (73)	*
ACE-inhibitor, n (%)	3190 (57)	1845 (57)	590 (50)	755 (64)	*
Statin, n (%)	3740 (67)	2301 (71)	643 (54)	796 (68)	*

Asterisks denote  $P \leq 0.001$ .

<sup>a</sup>Any anti-thrombotic drug includes anti-platelet drugs and coumadin.

Another proportion of patients who were at high risk did not undergo revascularization. This probably results from the limitations of currently available mechanical revascularization procedures in treating diffuse disease or from the poor general condition of some patients unable to undergo an invasive treatment or from the estimated unacceptably high procedural risks.

Despite their proven beneficial effects in high-risk patients (e.g. diabetes) and/or procedures,<sup>20,21</sup> overall a sizable proportion of patients fulfilling these criteria did not receive GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers. In addition, major variations across European hospitals in the use of GP IIb/IIIa receptor blockers were observed. Most surprising was the low use of these drugs in diabetic patients undergoing PCI for stable angina (15%). Also of concern was the failure to measure post-procedural necrosis markers in 39% of all PCI procedures. Increased levels of cardiac enzymes are indeed an independent predictor of cardiac mortality and subsequent myocardial infarction.<sup>22,23</sup> Similarly, in patients undergoing CABG, necrosis markers were measured in only one-third, most likely reflecting the disputable value of these markers following surgery.<sup>24</sup>

As to the treatment of STEMI, this survey concurs with previous studies in showing that reperfusion treatment remains underused,<sup>25</sup> even in this selected subgroup of patients referred for angiography. By design, we cannot analyse the factors that contribute to this sobering observation. In accordance with the guidelines, primary PCI is the preferred treatment for STEMI, provided this procedure can be performed by an experienced team within 90 min after first medical contact.<sup>9</sup> It was encouraging to observe that the majority of patients undergoing primary PCI was treated within the advocated timeframe of 90 min. However, due to missing admission or procedure times, the in-hospital delay was unknown in a sizeable proportion of patients. The current prospective survey clearly shows that in clinical practice, reporting of all relevant time intervals was not optimal. This failure stresses the importance of a thorough registration as well as the need for implementing in each institution appropriate procedures and pathways that will permit to select the optimal treatment for an individual patient.<sup>26,27</sup>

The overall mortality figures were low (1.9% at 30 days and 4.7% at 1 year) in all patient groups and treatment modalities, even after risk-adjustment using for instance the EuroSCORE. As expected, 1 year mortality rate was

larger in STEMI (7%) and in NSTEMI/UA (5%) compared with stable angina patients (3%).

Patients with established CAD enrolled in this survey should benefit from secondary prevention measures.<sup>28</sup> Changing the patient risk behaviour (unhealthy diet, smoking, and sedentary lifestyle) and prescribing drugs with proven prophylactic effects are essential aspects of current treatment, even after mechanical revascularization.<sup>29-33</sup> Furthermore, effective secondary prevention in clinical practice, using evidence-based treatment, has been proven effective in reducing the composite of death, myocardial infarction, and stroke.<sup>34,35</sup> Although the majority of patients used anti-thrombotics and beta-blockers, as recommended, ACE-inhibitors were underused in all subgroups and statins were particularly underused after CABG. Overall, prescription of these prophylactic drugs was increased when compared with EuroAspire II,<sup>36</sup> indicating that time is required before guidelines are progressively endorsed. In any case, the moment that patients are admitted in the hospital to undergo an invasive procedure should be taken as an opportunity to further optimize their pharmacological treatment.

The limitations of this study are those inherent to observational surveys involving voluntarily participating hospitals. Although we have attempted to include a wide spectrum of hospitals in different countries, almost certainly the results are biased towards better than average practices. The sample size only represents a small fraction of all patients admitted in catheterization laboratories throughout Europe during the study period. Nevertheless, because patient inclusion was consecutive at the participating sites, we trust that the survey depicts the ongoing clinical practice. Data on the 1 year follow-up were not obtainable in 14 hospitals (from 10 countries) because of management problems unrelated to individual patient characteristics. Presumably, this did not introduce significant selection bias. Data quality was checked through queries for missing or contradictory entries. However, no site visits or source data verification was performed. However, since many participating sites are part of other Euro Heart Surveys, their performance is regularly evaluated.

To summarize, the current Euro Heart Survey on coronary revascularization provides a global European picture of the invasive approach to patients with CAD, as they present with either stable angina, STEMI or NSTEMI/UA. Although the recommendations of guidelines are mostly



endorsed, the main area for improvement pertains to the underuse of adjunctive pharmacology (GP IIb/IIIa inhibitors, statins, and ACE-inhibitors). These data on the indications for revascularization, the choice between PCI or CABG and their outcome in the era of bare metal stenting will serve as a benchmark for the future evaluation of the impact of drug-eluting stents on the practice of coronary revascularization.

## Appendix: Organization of the survey

**Coronary Revascularization Expert Committee:** W. Wijns (Survey Chairman), Belgium; N. Mercado (Research Fellow), The Netherlands; M. Bertrand, France; W. Maier, Switzerland; B. Meier, Switzerland; C. Moris, Spain; F. Piscione, Italy; U. Sechtem, Germany; P. Sergeant, Belgium; E. Stahle, Sweden; J. Vos, The Netherlands; P. Widimsky, Czech Republic; F. Unger, Austria.

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**Industry Sponsor:** Eucomed.

**List of Sponsoring Institutions:** French Federation of Cardiology, Hellenic Cardiological Society, Netherland Heart Foundation, Swedish Heart and Lung Foundation, and individual hospitals.

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