CHICAGO – Competitive male triathletes face a higher risk of a potentially harmful heart condition called myocardial fibrosis, according to research being presented next week at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA). The increased risk, which was not evident in female triathletes, was directly associated with the athletes’ amount of exercise.

Myocardial fibrosis is scarring of the heart. It usually affects the pumping chambers, also known as the ventricles. The condition might progress to heart failure. While regular exercise has beneficial effects on the cardiovascular system, previous studies have shown the presence of myocardial fibrosis in elite athletes.

“The clinical relevance of these scars is currently unclear,” said study lead author Jitka Starekova, M.D., fellow in the Department for Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology and Nuclear Medicine at University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf in Hamburg,

At A Glance

- Male triathletes who log too much distance may be at risk for myocardial fibrosis of the left ventricle.
- Myocardial fibrosis, or scarring of the heart, might lead to heart failure.
- Evidence of myocardial fibrosis was seen in 18 percent of male triathletes studied, but none of the female triathletes.
Male Triathletes May Be Putting Their Heart Health at Risk

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RSNA is an association of over 54,000 radiologists, radiation oncologists, medical physicists and related scientists, promoting excellence in patient care and health care delivery through education, research and technologic innovation. The Society is based in Oak Brook, Ill. (RSNA.org)

Editor’s note: The data in these releases may differ from those in the published abstract and those actually presented at the meeting, as researchers continue to update their data right up until the meeting. To ensure you are using the most up-to-date information, please call the RSNA Newsroom at 1-312-791-6610.

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