

Does carotid stenosis cause cognitive decline- No

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Asymptomatic significant ($\geq 50\%$) carotid stenosis (ASCS) is frequently found in elderly, mainly in patients with several vascular risk factors. Its most feared complication is stroke. The same risk factors are associated with increased risk for cognitive decline (CD). Associated brain imaging pathology manifestations are "small vessel type" including leukoaraiosis, microbleeds, and lacunar infarctions (often silent). Overt strokes are also important contributors to CD. So, is there an association between ASCS and CD? Yes! The natural history of ASCS is, however, quite benign. Studies, done with "best medical treatment" (BMT, including statins), show an annual stroke risk of $< 1\%$. This is why carotid endarterectomy (CEA), done for stroke risk reduction in ASCS patients, is still under investigation. Studies done before current BMT was introduced show only modest benefit ($\sim 1\%$ annual risk reduction). Advocating surgery for such patients would mean screening for ASCS (and operating all appropriate candidates). The US task force, however, is advising against such screening. The association between ASCS and CD, its significance & possible treatment approaches is supposedly more complicated.