



A viable alternative to open-heart surgery

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TAVR offers lower risks of disabling strokes and death

- The operation is a daring one: to replace a failing heart valve, cardiologists insert a mechanical replacement through a patient's groin and thread it all the way to the heart, manoeuvring it into the site of the old valve.
- The procedure, called Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR), has been reserved mostly for patients so old and sick they might not survive open-heart surgery.
- Now, two large clinical trials show that TAVR is just as useful in younger and healthier patients.
- It might even be better, offering lower risks of disabling strokes and death, compared to open-heart surgery.
- Cardiologists say it will likely change the standard of care for most patients with failing aortic valves.
- With TAVR, the only incision is a small hole in the groin where the catheter is inserted.
- Most patients are sedated, but awake through the procedure, and recovery takes just days, not months, as is often the case following the usual surgery.
- The Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve the procedure for lower-risk patients.

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