Machine Learning-Derived Echocardiographic Phenotypes Predict Heart Failure Incidence in Asymptomatic Individuals
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To cite this version:

HAL Id: hal-03357064
https://hal.univ-lorraine.fr/hal-03357064
Submitted on 28 Sep 2021

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES This study sought to identify homogenous echocardiographic phenotypes in community-based cohorts and assess their association with outcomes.

BACKGROUND Asymptomatic cardiac dysfunction leads to a high risk of long-term cardiovascular morbidity and mortality; however, better echocardiographic classification of asymptomatic individuals remains a challenge.

METHODS Echocardiographic phenotypes were identified using K-means clustering in the first generation of the STANISLAS (Yearly non-invasive follow-up of Health status of Lorraine insured inhabitants) cohort (N = 827; mean age: 60 ± 5 years; men: 48%), and their associations with vascular function and circulating biomarkers were also assessed. These phenotypes were externally validated in the Malmö Preventive Project cohort (N = 1,394; mean age: 67 ± 6 years; men: 70%), and their associations with the composite of cardiovascular mortality (CVM) or heart failure hospitalization (HFH) were assessed as well.

RESULTS Three echocardiographic phenotypes were identified as “mostly normal (MN)” (n = 334), “diastolic changes (D)” (n = 323), and “diastolic changes with structural remodeling (D/S)” (n = 170). The D and D/S phenotypes had similar ages, body mass indices, cardiovascular risk factors, vascular impairments, and diastolic function changes. The D phenotype consisted mainly of women and featured increased levels of inflammatory biomarkers, whereas the D/S phenotype, consisted predominantly of men, displayed the highest values of left ventricular mass, volume, and remodeling biomarkers. The phenotypes were predicted based on a simple algorithm including e₀, left ventricular mass and volume (e₀VM algorithm). In the Malmö cohort, subgroups derived from e₀VM algorithm were significantly associated with a higher risk of CVM and HFH (adjusted HR in the D phenotype = 1.87; 95% CI: 1.04 to 3.37; adjusted HR in the D/S phenotype = 3.02; 95% CI: 1.71 to 5.34).

CONCLUSIONS Among asymptomatic, middle-aged individuals, echocardiographic data-driven classification based on the simple e₀VM algorithm identified profiles with different long-term HF risk. (4th Visit at 17 Years of Cohort STANISLAS-Stanislas Ancillary Study ESCIF [STANISLASV4]; NCT01391442) (J Am Coll Cardiol Img 2021; - - - - ) © 2021 The Authors. Published by Elsevier on behalf of the American College of Cardiology Foundation. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).
Sympathetic left ventricular (LV) systolic dysfunction and ventricular enlargement or hypertrophy are classified under Stage B heart failure (HF), which is characterized by a high risk of developing HF or cardiovascular outcomes (1). Accumulating data have further broadened this category by incorporating LV diastolic dysfunction (DD) (2,3). These structural and functional cardiac alterations may vary with age and comorbidity burden such as hypertension and diabetes mellitus (4–8). Therefore, the inter-relationships of echocardiographic parameters can potentially complicate echocardiogram-based evaluations for identifying high-risk individuals in a populational setting. Indeed, the definition of DD has been a moving target, and several classifications have been proposed over the last 20 years (9–12), leading to large differences in DD prevalence in population-based cohorts (13). Hence, a better use of echocardiographic phenotypes may help identify high-risk individuals and consequently prevent the progression from asymptomatic cardiac abnormalities to overt HF.

Machine learning (ML) clustering provides the potential value of identifying homogeneous groups among populations with heterogeneous underlying features. It has been efficiently used in various cardiovascular settings with noteworthy heterogeneity, e.g., early cardiac structure alterations in diabetic patients (14) and patients with HF and preserved ejection fraction (HFP EF) (15). Given that ML clustering can identify groups of individuals with specific characteristics and risk, the relevance of those groups should consequently be apparent by their association with “hard” outcomes including HF onset and death, vascular profiles (associated with adverse cardiac structural and functional remodeling [16,17]) and circulating biomarkers associated with cardiovascular pathophysiology.

The authors hypothesized that echocardiographic phenotypes can be identified using ML-derived decision algorithms in asymptomatic populations and that those phenotypes are associated with different levels of vascular impairments, circulating biomarkers, and a long-term risk for HF. In keeping with the last improvement, the population-based STANISLAS (Yearly non-invasive follow-up of Health status of Lorraine insured inhabitants) cohort provided an opportunity to identify asymptomatic echocardiographic phenotypes and their associations with vascular parameters and proteomic profiles (18).

Furthermore, the Malmö Preventive Project cohort provided the additional opportunity of verifying the external validity of this echocardiographic phenotyping by quantifying the association of these echocardiographic phenotypes with a long-term risk of incident HF and cardiovascular death (19).

## METHODS

### STANISLAS COHORT.

The STANISLAS cohort was a single-center familial longitudinal population-based cohort from the Nancy region in France, the features of which have been previously described (18). The cohort, established in 1993 to 1995, enrolled families consisting of 2 parents and at least 2 biological children which were deemed healthy and initially free of declared illness, with the primary objective to investigate gene-gene and gene-environment interactions. Between 2011 and 2015, 1,705 participants underwent the 4th cohort visit. The study was approved by the local ethics committee (Comité de Protection des Personnes Est III-Nancy-France, 11.02.03), and all study participants gave informed consent to participate (NCT01391442).

Collected variables included age, sex, height, weight, smoking status, disease history, medication use, and the following cardiovascular risk factors: hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and dyslipidemia. Hypertension was diagnosed by 3 consecutive office blood pressure measurements or by the use of anti hypertensive medication (20).

In the STANISLAS cohort, 701 participants who were initially children were relatively young at the 4th visit (mean age: 34 ± 5 years). As these participants are unlikely to have any echocardiographic abnormalities, only “parents” of the STANISLAS cohort were included in the present analysis. In
addition, participants with a history of HF or missing echocardiographic variables (used in the clustering procedure) were excluded (Supplemental Figure 1).

**CARDIAC FUNCTION ANALYSIS IN THE STANISLAS COHORT.** Echocardiographic examinations were performed at the Nancy University Hospital Clinical Investigation Center using standard, commercially available ultrasound equipment (Vivid 9, General Electric Medical Systems, Horten, Norway) with a 2.5-MHz phased-array transducer and reviewed on an Echopac workstation version 202 or 203 (GE Healthcare). The measurement of left atrial (LA) volume was obtained from the biplane method of disks (modified Simpson's rule) using apical 4- and 2-chamber views at end-systolic phase (without dedicated LA views maximizing LA size).

Diastolic function was assessed from the mitral inflow pattern by pulsed-wave Doppler. Mitral annular early diastolic velocity (e') was assessed at the septal and lateral sites of the mitral annulus using tissue Doppler imaging. The E/A ratio, e' mean, and E/e' mean ratio were calculated (10). LV systolic deformation was assessed from the 3 apical views with measurement of the global LV systolic strain (GLS %) corresponding to the maximum absolute value of strain derived from strain curves. DD was defined by the 2016 American Society of Echocardiography/European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging recommendations (DD class 2016 assessment with European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging and the 2016 American Society of Echocardiography/strain derived from strain curves. DD was définie by the 2016 American Society of Echocardiography/European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging recommendations (DD class 2016 assessment with European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging and the 2016 American Society of Echocardiography/strain derived from strain curves). The measurement of left atrial (LA) volume was obtained from the biplane method of disks (modified Simpson’s rule) using apical 4- and 2-chamber views at end-systolic phase (without dedicated LA views maximizing LA size).

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The authors’ center’s measurement reproducibility by experienced echocardiographers blinded to each other and to demographic parameters has been previously reported (23,24) and is shown in Supplemental Table 1. Overall, intra- and interobserver intraclass correlation coefficients of each echocardiographic parameter provided good reproducibility.}

**VASCULAR FUNCTION ANALYSIS IN THE STANISLAS COHORT.** Central and peripheral blood pressures (BP) and augmentation index were measured using the SphygmoCor cardiovascular management system (AtCor, Sydney, Australia) after arm calibration. Aortic stiffness was evaluated using carotid-to-femoral pulse wave velocity (PWV) assessed using a Complior (Alam Medical) device (25). Intima media thickness (IMT) was measured using a linear probe with an echo-tracking system (Wall Track System [WTS]/ART.LAB) at 1 cm-2 cm below the carotid bifurcation on the right common carotid artery (26).

**CIRCUITING BIOMARKERS EXPRESSING INFLAMMATION, EXTRACELLULAR MATRIX REMODELING, AND RENAL FUNCTION.** Inflammatory mediators associated with diastolic dysfunction in HFrEF were assessed (fatty acid-binding protein [FABP]-4 growth differentiation factor [GDF]-15, and galectin [Gal]-3).

**MALIGN PREVENTIVE PROJECT COHORT.** The Malmö Preventive Project cohort was a population-based longitudinal cohort of Malmö (Sweden) inhabitants (19). Of 1792 participants having undergone an echocardiogram from 2002 to 2006, those without a
Machine Learning Echocardiographic Phenotypes in Population-Based Cohorts

In order to choose between available clustering methods, the same echocardiographic parameters were used in a hierarchical clustering and latent class model (LCM) clustering. K-means clustering achieved a higher internal consistency than the hierarchical clustering after cluster bootstrap (>1,000) but provided consistent results with the LCM approach (Supplemental Table 3). Thus, the authors reported the results of the K-means clustering as the primary analysis.

Decision trees provided parsimonious and transparent rules that were particularly appropriate in producing a hierarchy of 2 or more predictive factors simultaneously. Each patient in the data set (or the cohort) was labeled with a corresponding cluster. Decision trees were subsequently constructed to predict the clusters by using the rpart R program (40). This program selected the best threshold of each echocardiographic parameter to maximize the discrimination of clusters and evaluated through a 10-fold cross-validation to ensure that the prediction error was correctly estimated.

The overall accuracy of these cluster predictions was, furthermore, explored using random forest classification using the random Forest R application (41). Parameters of the random forest were optimized by a grid search with the Caret R package (42) by varying the number of trees between 50 and 1000, and modifying the number of selected variables to construct each split from 2 to the total number of available variables. Retained parameters were 500 trees and 15 random selected variables and the final model accuracy was evaluated by a 10-fold cross validation.

Principal component analysis was used to visualize the relationship between echocardiographic parameters used in cluster analysis and individuals in each echocardiographic phenotype.

The source code of all analyses performed within this project including the random forest model is available in GitLab.

**Statistical Analysis.** Categorical variables are described as frequencies (percentages), whereas continuous variables are described as mean ± SD or median interquartile ranges (IQR: 25th, 75th percentiles) depending on variable distributions. Comparisons of participant characteristics across echocardiographic phenotypes were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA), Kruskal-Wallis, and chi-squared tests, as appropriate. Given the number of circulating biomarkers in the STANISLAS cohort, comparisons were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis tests followed by p values corrected for the multiplicity of tests, using the Benjamini Hochberg method.
In the Malmö cohort, primary outcome was a composite of initial hospitalization for HF or cardiovascular death. Secondary outcome was a composite of cardiovascular mortality and hospitalization (HF, arrhythmia, or coronary artery disease). Survival probabilities were estimated using the Kaplan-Meier method. Cox proportional-hazards models for echocardiographic phenotypes were used to obtain unadjusted and covariate adjusted HRs. The covariates used for adjustments were Model 1: Heart OMics in Aging HF risk score (without creatinine) plus cystatin-C and NT-proBNP (43); Model 2: adjusted for ARIC (Atherosclerosis Risk In Communities) HF risk score without NT-proBNP; and Model 3: ARIC HF risk score plus NT-proBNP (44). The increased C index and net reclassification improvement (NRI) were implemented to assess added prognostic values of echocardiographic phenotypes for the primary outcome on top of: 1) ARIC HF risk score plus NT-proBNP; 2) cardiac structure and function abnormalities (ie, LVH, LAVi >34 ml/m², septal e’<7 cm/s or lateral e’<10 cm/s, E/e’ mean >14); 3) DD class 2016 assessment with conventional echo variables; and 4) DD class 2016 assessment with additional echo biomarkers.

All statistical analyses were performed using R version 3.4.0 software (R Development Core Team. A language processing program for statistical computing and graphics; R Core Team. R: A language and environment for statistical computing and graphics, 2013). P value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Participants with missing values of at least 1 echocardiographic parameter used in cluster analysis were excluded (Supplemental Table 4). Those individuals

### Table 1: Clinical and Vascular Characteristics According to Echocardiographic Phenotypes in the STANISLAS Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global (N = 827)</th>
<th>MN Phenotype (n = 334)</th>
<th>D Phenotype (n = 322)</th>
<th>D/S Phenotype (n = 170)</th>
<th>P Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, yrs</td>
<td>60.0 ± 5.0</td>
<td>59.0 ± 4.0</td>
<td>61.0 ± 5.0</td>
<td>61.0 ± 5.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>399.0 (48.2)</td>
<td>143.0 (42.8)</td>
<td>128.0 (39.6)</td>
<td>128.0 (75.3)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body mass index, kg/m²</td>
<td>27.0 ± 4.0</td>
<td>25.0 ± 4.0</td>
<td>27.0 ± 4.0</td>
<td>28.0 ± 5.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical history</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>234.0 (28.3)</td>
<td>59.0 (17.7)</td>
<td>115.0 (35.6)</td>
<td>60.0 (35.3)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>44.0 (5.4)</td>
<td>13.0 (3.9)</td>
<td>20.0 (6.3)</td>
<td>11.0 (6.5)</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslipidemia</td>
<td>259.0 (31.3)</td>
<td>81.0 (24.3)</td>
<td>118.0 (36.5)</td>
<td>60.0 (35.3)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronary artery disease</td>
<td>20.0 (2.4)</td>
<td>7.0 (2.1)</td>
<td>6.0 (1.9)</td>
<td>7.0 (4.1)</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>101.0 (12.3)</td>
<td>42.0 (12.7)</td>
<td>45.0 (14.2)</td>
<td>14.0 (8.2)</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antihypertensive treatment</td>
<td>225.0 (27.5)</td>
<td>58.0 (17.5)</td>
<td>104.0 (32.6)</td>
<td>63.0 (37.7)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statin</td>
<td>156.0 (18.9)</td>
<td>40.0 (12.0)</td>
<td>76.0 (23.5)</td>
<td>40.0 (23.5)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC/AHA Heart Failure Stage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 0</td>
<td>398.0 (48.1)</td>
<td>216.0 (64.7)</td>
<td>151.0 (46.7)</td>
<td>31.0 (18.2)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage A</td>
<td>247.0 (29.5)</td>
<td>75.0 (22.5)</td>
<td>141.0 (43.7)</td>
<td>31.0 (18.2)</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage B</td>
<td>182.0 (22.0)</td>
<td>43.0 (12.9)</td>
<td>31.0 (9.6)</td>
<td>108.0 (63.5)</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HbA1c, %</td>
<td>5.8 ± 0.6</td>
<td>5.7 ± 0.5</td>
<td>5.8 ± 0.6</td>
<td>5.8 ± 0.6</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cholesterol, mg/dL</td>
<td>224.0 ± 38.0</td>
<td>225.0 ± 37.0</td>
<td>227.0 ± 39.0</td>
<td>218.0 ± 38.0</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eGFR, ml/min/1.73m²</td>
<td>142.0 ± 34.0</td>
<td>144.0 ± 33.0</td>
<td>143.0 ± 35.0</td>
<td>138.0 ± 34.0</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vascular parameters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart rate, beats/min</td>
<td>62.0 ± 8.0</td>
<td>61.0 ± 8.0</td>
<td>63.0 ± 9.0</td>
<td>60.0 ± 8.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral SP, mm Hg</td>
<td>124.0 ± 17.0</td>
<td>119.0 ± 15.0</td>
<td>126 ± 17</td>
<td>130 ± 18</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central SP, mm Hg</td>
<td>115.0 ± 17.0</td>
<td>110.0 ± 16.0</td>
<td>117.0 ± 17</td>
<td>119.0 ± 18</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral AI, %</td>
<td>85.0 ± 17.0</td>
<td>85.0 ± 17.0</td>
<td>86.0 ± 17.0</td>
<td>82.0 ± 14.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central AI, %</td>
<td>34.0 ± 12.0</td>
<td>34.0 ± 11.0</td>
<td>35.0 ± 12.0</td>
<td>34.0 ± 13.0</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMT, μm</td>
<td>691.0 (616.0-784.0)</td>
<td>673.0 (598.0-764.0)</td>
<td>689.0 (627.0-771.0)</td>
<td>738.0 (656.0-822.0)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWV, m/s</td>
<td>8.4 (7.5-9.4)</td>
<td>8.1 (7.3-9.0)</td>
<td>8.6 (7.7-9.6)</td>
<td>8.7 (7.6-9)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAC index, ml/mm Hg/m²</td>
<td>1.00 (0.79-1.25)</td>
<td>1.06 (0.88-1.32)</td>
<td>0.95 (0.73-1.17)</td>
<td>1.01 (0.77-1.33)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Values** are mean ± SD, n (%), or median interquartile range (25th, 75th percentile). **Bold** values indicate statistical significance.

*ACC/AHA* = American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association; AI = augmentation index; D/S = diastolic changes with structural remodeling; eGFR = estimated glomerular filtration rate; HbA1c = glycosylated hemoglobin; IMT = intima media thickness; IQR = interquartile range; LDL = low-density lipoprotein; PWV = pulse wave velocity; SP = systolic pressure; STANISLAS = Yearly non-invasive follow-up of Health status of Lorraine insured inhabitants; SVR = systemic vascular resistance; TAC = total arterial compliance.

### RESULTS

Participants with missing values of at least 1 echocardiographic parameter used in cluster analysis were excluded (Supplemental Table 4). Those individuals
more often had comorbidities (eg, obesity, hypertension, diabetes) than those with complete echocardiographic data. In a total of 827 participants included in the current analysis 60 ± 5 years (48.2% men), mean body mass index was 27 kg/m², 28.3% of participants had hypertension, 5.4% had diabetes mellitus, and mean LVEF was 66% (Tables 1 and 2). In the Malmö Preventive Project Cohort, a total of 1,394 participants were included (Table 3). Age was 67 ± 6 years, 70.0% of participants were men, mean body mass index was 28 kg/m², 63.7% had hypertension, and 34.3% had diabetes mellitus.

Clusters derived from echocardiographic data. The present cluster analysis identified 3

### Table 2: Echocardiographic Characteristics According to Echocardiographic Phenotypes in the STANISLAS Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Global (N = 827)</th>
<th>MN Phenotype (n = 334)</th>
<th>D Phenotype (n = 323)</th>
<th>D/S Phenotype (n = 170)</th>
<th>P Value Between D and D/S Phenotypes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LA structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA area, cm²</td>
<td>16.0 ± 6.0</td>
<td>16.0 ± 3.0</td>
<td>16.0 ± 3.0</td>
<td>19.0 ± 4.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAVI, ml/m²</td>
<td>75.0 ± 10.6</td>
<td>15.0 (4.5)</td>
<td>12.0 (3.7)</td>
<td>48.0 (28.2)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAVI &gt;34 ml/m²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LV systolic function</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVEF %</td>
<td>66.0 ± 6.0</td>
<td>67.0 ± 6.0</td>
<td>67.0 ± 6.0</td>
<td>62.0 ± 7.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVEF &lt;50%</td>
<td>10.0 (1.2)</td>
<td>0.0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0.0 (0.0)</td>
<td>10.0 (5.9)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLS %</td>
<td>21.0 ± 3.0</td>
<td>22.0 ± 3.0</td>
<td>20.0 ± 3.0</td>
<td>19.0 ± 3.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLS &gt;−16.8% in men or GLS &gt;−17.7% in women</td>
<td>97.0 (11.7)</td>
<td>11.0 (3.3)</td>
<td>43.0 (13.3)</td>
<td>43.0 (25.3)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LV diastolic function</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E wave, cm/s</td>
<td>65.0 ± 13.0</td>
<td>68.0 ± 13.0</td>
<td>66.0 ± 13.0</td>
<td>59.0 ± 12.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wave, cm/s</td>
<td>69.0 ± 16.0</td>
<td>62.0 ± 15.0</td>
<td>76.0 ± 16.0</td>
<td>68.0 ± 13.0</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/A ratio</td>
<td>1.0 ± 0.3</td>
<td>1.1 ± 0.3</td>
<td>0.9 ± 0.2</td>
<td>0.9 ± 0.2</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e'/mean, cm/s</td>
<td>9.6 ± 2.0</td>
<td>11.2 ± 1.4</td>
<td>8.3 ± 1.2</td>
<td>8.7 ± 1.7</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e'/septal &lt;7 cm/s or e'/lateral &lt;10 cm/s</td>
<td>378.0 (45.7)</td>
<td>28.0 (8.4)</td>
<td>249.0 (77.1)</td>
<td>101.0 (59.4)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E/e' mean</td>
<td>7.1 ± 1.8</td>
<td>6.1 ± 1.2</td>
<td>8.1 ± 1.8</td>
<td>7.0 ± 1.8</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/D ratio (N = 659)</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.4</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.4</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.5</td>
<td>1.4 ± 0.5</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak TR velocity, cm/s (N = 463)</td>
<td>2.18 ± 0.35</td>
<td>2.18 ± 0.36</td>
<td>2.17 ± 0.36</td>
<td>2.22 ± 0.31</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peak TR velocity &gt;2.8 cm/s (N = 463)</td>
<td>6.0 (1.3)</td>
<td>3.0 (1.4)</td>
<td>0.0 (0.0)</td>
<td>3.0 (3.0)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DD class 2016 assessment with conventional echo variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>777.0 (94.7)</td>
<td>332.0 (99.4)</td>
<td>309.0 (95.7)</td>
<td>136.0 (80.0)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>40.0 (5.2)</td>
<td>2.0 (0.6)</td>
<td>14.0 (4.3)</td>
<td>24.0 (14.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diastolic dysfunction</td>
<td>10.0 (1.2)</td>
<td>0.0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0.0 (0.0)</td>
<td>10.0 (5.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DD class 2016 assessment with additional echo biomarkers</strong></td>
<td>166.0 (20.1)</td>
<td>19.0 (5.7)</td>
<td>61.0 (18.9)</td>
<td>86.0 (50.6)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values are mean ± SD or n (%). *This variable was defined by a composite of DD class 2016 assessment with conventional echo variables, left ventricular hypertrophy (>95 g/m² in women and >115 g/m² in men) and/or LVEF <50% or impaired GLS (<−17.7% in women and <−16.8% in men). Bold values indicate statistical significance.

D = diastolic changes; D/S = diastolic changes with structural remodeling; DD = diastolic dysfunction; E/A = ratio of early and late diastolic velocities; E/e' ratio = ratio of early mitral inflow velocity and mitral annular early diastolic velocity; e'/mean = mean value of early diastolic velocity at the septal and lateral sites of the mitral annulus; GLS = global longitudinal strain; IQR = interquartile range; LAVI = left atrial volume index; LVEDD = left ventricular end-diastolic diameter; LVEDVi = left ventricular end-diastolic volume index; LVEF = left ventricular ejection fraction; LVMi = left ventricular mass index; MN = mostly normal; RWT = relative wall thickness; S/D = ratio of pulmonary vein peak systolic velocity and peak diastolic velocity; STANISLAS = Suivi Temporaire Annuel Non-Invasif de la Santé des Lorrains Assurés Socialement; TR = tricuspid regurgitation.
groups with different echocardiographic phenotypes (Tables 1 and 2, Figure 1, Supplemental Figure 2). The largest cluster (n = 334), labeled mostly normal (MN) phenotype, had the highest e’ and E/A ratio and the highest (absolute) LV systolic strain. The next largest cluster (n = 323), labeled “diastolic changes (D)” phenotype, had lower e’ and higher E/e’ ratio. The last cluster (n = 170), labeled “diastolic changes with structural remodeling (D/S)” phenotype, had the highest LV mass and volumes, highest LA volume, and lowest (absolute) LV systolic strain as well as lower e’ and higher E/e’ ratio. The prevalence of DD class 2016 assessment with conventional echo variables was very low in all 3 phenotypes (<5%), and approximately one-half of individuals with D/S phenotype had DD class 2016 assessment with additional echo biomarkers (Table 2).

Participant characteristics according to hierarchical clustering-derived echocardiographic phenotypes are presented, and similar patterns of echocardiographic phenotypes were observed between K-means clustering and hierarchical clustering (Supplemental Table 5, Supplemental Figure 3). In addition, the LCM approach provided the consistent phenotypes with the K-means clustering (Rand index: 0.83) (Supplemental Table 3).
When performing cluster analysis separately in men and women, similar patterns of echocardiographic phenotypes (i.e., phenotypes D and D/S) were observed (Supplemental Figure 3).

**CLINICAL CHARACTERISTICS ACCORDING TO ECHOCARDIOGRAPHIC PHENOTYPES IN THE STANISLAS COHORT.** The D phenotype consisted mainly of women, whereas the D/S phenotype included predominantly of men. The D and D/S phenotypes exhibited older age, higher body mass index, and more often cardiovascular risk factors than the MN phenotype; however, no significant differences among these clinical features were observed between D and D/S phenotypes (Table 1).

**VASCULAR PROFILES ACCORDING TO ECHOCARDIOGRAPHIC PHENOTYPES IN THE STANISLAS COHORT.** The MN phenotype had more favorable levels of central and peripheral pressure and vascular stiffness (PWV and IMT) than the D and D/S phenotypes, whereas no significant differences were observed between the D and D/S phenotypes (PWV [m/s], 8.6 [95% CI: 7.7 to 9.6] in D phenotype vs 8.7 [95% CI: 7.6 to 9.8] in D/S phenotype; \( P = 0.56 \)) (Table 1, Figure 1).

**CIRCULATING BIOMARKERS ACCORDING TO ECHOCARDIOGRAPHIC PHENOTYPES IN THE STANISLAS COHORT.** Of the 32 circulating biomarkers, 14 were significantly different across the 3 phenotypes. These

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**Figure 1** Radar Chart of Cardiovascular Parameters across Echocardiographic Phenotypes in the STANISLAS Cohort

Radar charts illustrate the differences in cardiac/vascular parameters across the 3 echocardiographic phenotypes. The points most distant from the center indicate higher values. The "diastolic changes" phenotype expressed lower \( e' \) and higher \( E/e' \) ratio, and the "diastolic changes with structural remodeling" phenotype displayed the highest left ventricular mass and volume and left atrial volume as well as lower \( e' \) and higher \( E/e' \) ratio. Similar impairments in vascular function were observed between these 2 phenotypes. E/A = ratio of peak early and late diastolic velocities; IMT = intima media thickness; LAV = left atrial volume; LVDV = left ventricle diastolic volume; LVEF = left ventricular ejection fraction; LVM = left ventricular mass; LSVV = left ventricle stroke volume; PWV = pulse wave velocity; S/D = ratio of pulmonary vein peak systolic velocity and peak diastolic velocity; SP = systolic pressure; SVR = systemic vascular resistance; TAC = total arterial compliance.
biomarkers were associated with different pathophysiological domains (ie, inflammation and extracellular matrix remodeling) (Figure 2, Supplemental Table 6). Overall, the D phenotype exhibited the highest levels of circulating biomarkers associated with inflammation (ie, FABP4, IL-6, and IL1RL2). Markers generally associated with remodeling (ie, GDF15, PIIINP, ST-2, troponin-I, and CNP, increased from the MN to the D and D/S phenotypes, with the highest ST-2, troponin-I, and CNP values observed in the D/S phenotype.

DECISION TREE AND RANDOM FOREST TO IDENTIFY ECHOCARDIOGRAPHIC PHENOTYPES IN THE STANISLAS COHORT: “eVM” ALGORITHM. The decision tree identified mean e’, LVEDVi, and LVMi as the most relevant variables to correctly classify participants in 1 of the echocardiographic profiles. The overall accuracy of the decision tree was good (79.0%) (Figure 3). Addition of clinical variables (ie, age, sex, body mass index, prevalence of hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, coronary artery disease, and smoking) to the candidate variables for decision tree building did not modify the decision algorithm; hence, these clinical variables were not retained by the algorithm as relevant additions to the decision tree. In the following sections, the authors refer to the constructed decision tree as the “eVM” algorithm. Furthermore, the random forest classifier (available at Gitlab software) for these echocardiographic phenogroups provided an overall accuracy of 0.86.

EXTERNAL VALIDATION OF eVM ALGORITHM IN THE MALMÖ PREVENTIVE PROJECT COHORT. Participant characteristics according to eVM algorithm phenotypes in the Malmö cohort are presented in Table 3. The MN phenotype (n = 440) displayed the most favorable values of clinical, biological, and echocardiographic profiles. The D phenotype
included 512 participants and displayed the lowest proportion of men, whereas the D/S phenotype \((n = 442)\) featured a high proportion of men, the highest NT-proBNP level, and the largest LV mass and LA surface area indices. Similar age, body mass index, cardiovascular risk factors and diseases (ie, hypertension, dyslipidemia and renal function) and diastolic function alterations were observed in the D and D/S phenotypes (Table 3).

SURVIVAL ANALYSIS IN THE Malmö Preventive Project Cohort. In the Malmö study, during a median follow-up of 10.3 years \((9.8 \text{ to } 11.1 \text{ years})\), 10.1% of participants met the primary outcome. Compared with the MN phenotype, both the D and D/S phenotypes were significantly associated with increased rates of the primary outcome (crude HR: 2.47; 95% CI: 1.38 to 4.41; \(P = 0.002\) for the D phenotype and crude HR: 4.67; 95% CI: 2.67 to 8.14; \(P < 0.001\) for the D/S phenotype) (Figure 4, Supplemental Table 7). After adjustment for the ARIC HF risk score plus NT-proBNP, the D and D/S phenotypes remained significantly associated with the primary outcome (adjusted HR: 1.87; 95% CI = 1.04 to 3.37; \(P = 0.03\) for the D phenotype and adjusted HR: 3.02; 95% CI: 1.71 to 5.34; \(P < 0.001\) for the D/S phenotype). Poor prognosis of the D/S phenotype persisted even in terms of the composite of cardiovascular hospitalization and mortality (Supplemental Table 7).

Echocardiographic phenotypes significantly improved prognostic performance on top of the ARIC HF risk score (increased C-index: 3.7; 95% CI = 1.3 to 6.1; \(P = 0.002\); NRI: 33.3; 95% CI = 0.3 to 55.0; \(P = 0.049\)). Furthermore, the discriminative values of these echocardiographic phenotypes were consistently observed on top of traditionally defined cardiac structure or function abnormalities (Supplemental Table 8).

DISCUSSION

The present analysis enabled identifying 3 echocardiographic phenotypes with differential biological characteristics and risk of HF, namely, “mostly normal (MN),” “diastolic changes,” and “diastolic changes with structural remodeling” phenotypes (Central Illustration). The D phenotype had the most abnormal diastolic function parameters and typically exhibited higher levels of inflammatory biomarkers, whereas the D/S phenotype expressed LV and LA remodeling as well as diastolic changes and was associated with higher levels of extracellular matrix remodeling. Both phenotypes were associated with vascular impairments as well as a higher risk of HF hospitalization and/or cardiovascular mortality. Our findings suggest that the easy-to-use e’VM echocardiographic-based algorithm presented herein may identify asymptomatic individuals with a higher
Importantly, this eVM algorithm was validated externally in an independent Swedish cohort, which suggests that this algorithm could be widely applicable in White populations.

**ECHOCARDIOGRAPHIC PHENOTYPES.** In the current study, LVEF and DD prevalence of the participants were similar to those of the general populations described in previous reports (45–48). Of note, in the present classification, both LVEDVi and LVMi were key components in classifying asymptomatic individuals into the proposed echocardiographic phenotypes. By contrast, GLS was not selected as a key marker for the eVM algorithm despite its well-known performance to detect early alterations of LV systolic function in a range of populations (49,50). The echocardiographic phenotypes identified in the present analysis were notably similar to the phenotypic patterns of early cardiac alterations reported in diabetic patients (14). Indeed, using a cluster analysis based on echocardiographic parameters in 842 diabetic patients, Ernande et al. (14,51) highlighted 3 echocardiographic phenotypes including a “diastolic dysfunction” phenotype and “LVH with systolic dysfunction” phenotype. Despite the differing settings (general population vs diabetic patients), these findings would appear to reinforce our results and the possible ubiquitous nature of the echocardiographic phenotypes based on early and/or asymptomatic cardiac dysfunction. Furthermore, the prevalence of DD class 2016 assessment with conventional echo variables was very low in our cohort and remained similar in both D and D/S phenotypes, suggesting that the current definition of DD may be less relevant in an asymptomatic population.

The D phenotype was more frequent in women, whereas men were more likely to express diastolic changes with structural remodeling. The results reported by Ernande et al. were perceived as sex-specific echocardiographic patterns (14,51). However, our analysis showed similar patterns of echocardiographic phenotypes derived from men and women subgroups. The echocardiographic phenotypes proposed herein could thus provide robust identification of individuals regardless of sex difference.

Arterial stiffness is a fundamental contributor to increasing diastolic pressure (16,17) as well as impairing early systolic function (52). In the present study, (proximal to distal) vascular deteriorations were observed in both the D and the D/S phenotypes. Of note, PWV was similar in these 2 phenotypes. Underlying mechanisms following vascular abnormalities may potentially occur in these 2 phenotypes: the D phenotype may exhibit an early increase in intracardiac pressures in the absence of structural remodeling, while the D/S phenotype may further compensate the increase in afterload using increased LV volume and mass. This hypothesis could shed new
light on the early stage of the inter-relationship between cardiac and vascular parameters.

**ECHOCARDIOGRAPHIC PHENOTYPES AND CIRCULATING BIOMARKERS ASSOCIATED WITH INFLAMMATION OR EXTRACELLULAR MATRIX REMODELING.** Inflammation and extracellular matrix remodeling have been found to be associated with diastolic function (30,53). Paulus and Tschope (29) proposed a paradigm for HFpEF which highlighted the importance of a systemic proinflammatory state related to ageing, hypertension and obesity, further leading to the development of DD. In the current analysis, our results show that the D phenotype was significantly associated with increased levels of inflammatory biomarkers such as FABP4. Indeed, FABP4 is mainly expressed in adipose tissue and is an important mediator of inflammation, showing a significant link with DD (54,55) and a higher risk of cardiovascular events (56).

The D/S phenotype, on the other hand, was significantly associated with increased levels of extracellular matrix remodeling biomarkers. Both echocardiographic phenotypes were associated with a higher risk of developing heart failure or cardiovascular death. CV = cardiovascular; HF = heart failure; IL1RL2 = Interleukin 1 Receptor Like 2; LVDVi = LVDV = left ventricle diastolic volume index; LVMi = left ventricular mass index; ST2 = soluble interleukin 2.

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**CENTRAL ILLUSTRATION** Echocardiographic Phenotypes in Asymptomatic Individuals

- **Mostly Normal** (e’ ≥10)
- **Diastolic Changes** (e’ <10)
- **Diastolic Changes with Structural Remodeling** (e’ <10)

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Among the 3 echocardiographic phenotypes, the e’VM echocardiographic-based algorithm (ie, mean e’, left ventricular volume, and mass) differentially identified asymptomatic individuals with the “diastolic changes” phenotype and those with the “diastolic changes with structural remodeling” phenotype. The “diastolic changes” phenotype, consisting predominantly of women, displayed higher circulating levels of inflammatory biomarkers, whereas the “diastolic changes with structural remodeling” phenotype, consisted predominantly of men, displayed higher circulating levels of extracellular matrix remodeling biomarkers. Both echocardiographic phenotypes were associated with a higher risk of developing heart failure or cardiovascular death. CV = cardiovascular; HF = heart failure; IL1RL2 = Interleukin 1 Receptor Like 2; LVDVi = LVDV = left ventricle diastolic volume index; LVMi = left ventricular mass index; ST2 = soluble interleukin 2.
Our results, hence, support the fact that systemic inflammation may be associated with rising LV pressure with changes in diastolic function, whereas microvascular endothelial dysfunction and myocardial damage may be more closely related to cardiac structural remodeling, even in asymptomatic individuals.

**CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS.** In the latest American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association guidelines, an echocardiogram screening is recommended to identify those at high-risk of developing HF in individuals with hypertension (59) or slightly increased natriuretic peptide level (BNP: >50 pg/mL [Class IIa to IIb recommendation]) (60). Importantly, we show that the simple e’VM echocardiographic algorithm improved risk stratification on top of currently available scores such as the ARIC HF risk score and traditionally defined cardiac structure/function abnormalities (including DD class 2016 assessment), thus suggesting that additional echocardiogram-based screening could be encouraged. Of further importance, among the presented “high-risk” subgroups, DD class 2016 assessment with conventional echo variables only diagnosed <5% of individuals. Our results consequently suggest the importance of re-assessing echocardiographic data using the e’VM algorithm despite the absence of cardiac dysfunction according to conventional recommendations. We believe our echocardiographic phenotypes may serve as a new evidence-driven, integrated classification of individuals in preclinical settings with plausible circulating biomarkers and notable prognostic implications. How to manage individuals identified at high risk based on our algorithms is yet unknown. At least, given the higher risk of these individuals, a more careful follow-up could be undertaken. Whether the use of cardiovascular drugs could reduce the occurrence of HF in asymptomatic individuals requires testing. Importantly, the random forest model we built could be imbedded in health record systems to provide an automated identification of high-risk patients, maximizing the usefulness of echocardiogram in asymptomatic individuals.

**STUDY LIMITATIONS.** The main limitation of this study is its inherent observational design, based on a cross-sectional assessment; causality cannot therefore be inferred. The number of individuals with incident HF was relatively low, leading to moderate statistical power. The e’VM algorithm was derived from only echocardiographic variables; however, when adding additional clinical variables (ie, age, sex, comorbidities), the algorithm remained unchanged, suggesting that echocardiographic variables alone better predicted our phenotypes. In addition, the decision tree had numerically lower accuracy than the random forest, but this difference was moderate. This may be caused by some overoptimism in the decision tree accuracy statistics, as random forest are expected to perform sizably better than decision trees. As the cohort included relatively young individuals with a low comorbidity burden, the generalization of this phenotypes should be limited to individuals aged 50 to 70 years without overt cardiovascular disease. Further research is warranted to explore the applicability of our echocardiogram-based algorithm in older and sicker populations. In the STANISLAS cohort, individuals who had missing values for echocardiographic parameters used in cluster analysis were excluded. These latter individuals more often had cardiovascular risk factors. Echocardiographic data were acquired at different time periods in the STANISLAS and Malmö cohorts. However, the recommended measurement of echocardiographic parameters has not changed in the last 20 years (9-12). In the Malmö cohort, peak TR velocity was not quantified and was considered >2.8 cm/s as only a few individuals (<2%) have been reported to have a peak TR velocity greater than >2.8 cm/s in a similar population-based cohort (45). Importantly, in the Malmö cohort, LV end-diastolic volume and LA volume were not quantified; hence, these values were respectively estimated from LV diastolic diameter and LA surface area using a linear equation. This important limitation should trigger other external validations in prospective multicenter studies to improve the generalization of the e’VM algorithm. However, despite this limitation, the e’VM algorithm predicted outcomes in the Malmo cohort.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The present analysis allowed highlighting 3 echocardiographic phenotypes than can be easily identified in clinical practice using a simple algorithm (the e’VM algorithm). The 2 most abnormal phenotypes, namely “diastolic changes” and “diastolic changes with structural remodeling,” exhibited significant differences in circulating biomarkers and the risk of HF and/or cardiovascular death. The authors believe that these echocardiographic phenotypes shed new light on our understanding of asymptomatic cardiac dysfunction, and our findings may have significant clinical implications in the design of HF prevention strategies. A further prospective multicenter study is...
needed to assess the applicability of this eVM algorithm.


FUNDING SUPPORT AND AUTHOR DISCLOSURES The STANISLAS Cohort visit 4 was sponsored by the Nancy CHRU and was funded in part by the Programme Hospitalier de Recherche Clinique Inter-régional. Biomarker studies are co-funded by the French National Research Agency Fighting Heart Failure (ANR-15-RHU-0004) and FEDER Lorraine, and all French co-authors are sup-ported by the French Programme d’investissements d’avenir project “Lorraine Université d’Excellence” GÉNANEX (ANR-15-IDEX-04-LUE) programs, and the Contrat de Plan Etat Région Lorraine and FEDER IT2MP. The research leading to these results also received support from the European Union Commission’s Seventh Framework program under grant 305507 (Heart OMics in Aging). Support was also pro-vided from the “EXPERT” ERA-CVD 2016 and MR-Focus (both grants managed by the French National Research Agency). Drs. Girerd, Rossignol, and Zannad are supported by the French National Research Agency Fighting Heart Failure (ANR-15-RHU-0004), the French PIA project Lorrain Université d’Excellence GÉNANEX (ANR-15-IDEX-04-LUE) programs, and the Contrat de Plan Etat Région Lorraine and FEDER IT2MP. Dr Girerd is a consultant for Novartis, AstraZeneca, and Boehringer Ingelheim. Dr Rossignol has received grants and personal fees from AstraZeneca, Bayer, CVRx, Fresenius, and Novartis; and personal fees from Grunenthal, Servier, Stealth Peptides, Vifor Fresenius Medical Care Renal Pharma, Idorsia, Novo Nordisk, Ablative Solutions, G3P, Corvida, and Relypsa. Dr Zannad has received personal fees from Boehringer Ingelheim, Janssen, Novartis, Boston Scientific, Amgen, CVRx, AstraZeneca, Vifor Fresenius, Cardior, Cerenio Pharmaceutical, Applied Therapeu-tics, Merck Sharpe and Dohme, Bayer, and Cellprothera outside the submitted work; and has received other support from CVCT and Cardiorenal, outside the submitted work. Dr Ferreira is a consultant for Boehringer Ingelheim. Dr Magnusson is supported by grants from the Medical Faculty of Lund University; Skane University Hos-pital; the Crafoord Foundation; the Emhoid Lundstroms Research Foundation; the Region Skane; the Hulda and Conrad Mossfelt Foundation; the Southwest Skanes Diabetes Foundation; the Kockskia Foundation; the Research Funds of Region Skane; the Swedish Heart and Lung Foundation; and the Wallenberg Center for Molecular Medicine, Lund University. All other authors have reported that they have no relationships relevant to the contents of this paper to disclose.

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COMPETENCY IN MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE: In asymptomatic individuals, a simple echocardiographic data-driven algorithm, based on e’, and LV volume and mass allows for identifying echocardiographic phenotypes with a high risk of developing HF.

TRANSLATIONAL OUTLOOK: Further research is needed to confirm the general applicability of the e’VM algorithm in the prevention of the development of overt HF in asymptomatic individuals.

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KEY WORDS biomarkers, cardiovascular diseases, cluster analysis, echocardiogram, heart failure, machine learning, prognosis

APPENDIX For supplemental figures and tables, please see the online version of this paper.