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AAA Peak Wall Stress Lacks Reproducibility in Rupture Risk Assessment

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Introduction
In the past, several research groups have focused on AAA wall stress in order to improve the rupture risk analysis [1-6]. In all studies, the reconstruction of the AAA from medical images required user-input, which may lead to uncertainties with respect to the real AAA geometry. However, the reproducibility of these analyses with respect to the peak stress has never been evaluated.

The purpose of this study is to assess the sensitivity of AAA wall stress analysis and to evaluate different stress parameters (peak stress and the 0.99 and 0.95 percentile of the stress) with regard to reproducibility and discriminatory power.

Materials and methods
Twelve patients with AAAs ranging from 44 to 57 mm in diameter were included. The CT scans were analyzed using the Hemodyn prototype software (PMS, Best, NL). After selecting the starting and end points, a fully automatic segmentation and meshing procedure was followed (fig 1). The resulting finite element wall meshes were used to compute stresses using Sepran (Sepralab, NL) as the finite element (FE) solver. The complete analysis procedure was repeated 5 times for each patient.

Results
When comparing the meshes for each AAA individually, only small and local differences can be seen. Figure 2 shows the mean and standard deviation (errorbars) for the peak, 0.99 and 0.95 percentiles stresses. The AAAs are ordered by maximum diameter.

Conclusions
Variation in user-input resulted in small and local variations in the meshes, causing large variations in peak stress. The influence on stress distribution and the 0.99 percentiles, however, is much smaller. Further analyses should elucidate whether the 0.99 percentile stress is able to distinguish between low and high risk patients.

References: