**WASTING MILLIONS**

**Madeleine McCann’s dad warns thousands of people are having unnecessary heart op at £60m cost to NHS due to ‘highly inaccurate’ test**

By ANDREA DOWNEY

27th February 2017, 3:17 pm

Updated: 27th February 2017, 3:26 pm

* [Click to share on Facebook (Opens in new window)](https://www.thesun.ie/living/642248/madeleine-mccanns-dad-warns-thousands-of-people-are-having-unnecessary-heart-op-at-60m-cost-to-nhs-due-to-highly-inaccurate-test/?share=facebook&nb=1)
* [Click to share on Twitter (Opens in new window)](https://www.thesun.ie/living/642248/madeleine-mccanns-dad-warns-thousands-of-people-are-having-unnecessary-heart-op-at-60m-cost-to-nhs-due-to-highly-inaccurate-test/?share=twitter&nb=1)
* [Click to email this to a friend (Opens in new window)](https://www.thesun.ie/living/642248/madeleine-mccanns-dad-warns-thousands-of-people-are-having-unnecessary-heart-op-at-60m-cost-to-nhs-due-to-highly-inaccurate-test/?share=email&nb=1)

**NOW**

COMMENT

Each year in the UK about 10,000 aortic valve replacements are carried out at a cost of up to £15,000 per procedure

**AN approved heart test is “highly inaccurate” and could be causing thousands of patients to have unnecessary surgery, a heart doctor has warned.**

Professor Gerry McCann warned that the needless heart ops could be costing the NHS £60 million a year.

The cardiologist, who is the father of Madeleine McCann who has been missing since 2007, led a study by the University of Leicester to determine whether exercise testing was the best way to determine the need for surgery.

Exercise testing has been used to assess people with the heart valve condition aortic stenosis (AS) since 2012.

Patients are asked pedal a stationary bike to see if they require surgery to correct the problem, caused by a narrowing of the aortic valve opening.

But a study published in the European Heart Journal shows that the test only has a 60 per cent accuracy rate, suggesting many patients are sent for surgery prematurely.

Each year in the UK about 10,000 aortic valve replacements are carried out at a cost of up to £15,000 per procedure.

According to the new findings, roughly 40 per cent of these operations may be unnecessary.

Professor Gerry McCann, from the university department of cardiovascular sciences, who led the study of 174 patients, said: “There is no doubt that valve replacement therapy is highly effective for patients with symptoms, however there are risks involved.

“It’s a major operation and there’s a one per cent chance of people dying or having a stroke during or after.

“There’s also the chance they could develop an infection.

“It can often take six months to recover, but if they survive they tend to do very well afterwards.

“However, if we know a patient has AS and no symptoms and we do nothing, there’s also a one per cent chance they will die, so there’s a fine line between whether we should intervene or not.

“Our findings showed that this exercise test, which has been approved by the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology and the European Society of Cardiology, was highly inaccurate as almost twice the number of people who became breathless during the test did not develop symptoms within a year.”

Prof McCann plans to search for a more accurate way of deciding which patients with AS should undergo surgery.

A clinical study comparing early surgery with waiting for symptoms to develop is needed, he said.