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Citation for final published version:

Okosieme, Onyebuchi, Usman, Danyal, Taylor, Peter N. , Dayan, Colin , Lyons, Greta, Moran, Carla, Chatterjee, Krishna and Rees, Dafydd Aled 2023. Cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients in Wales, UK with resistance to thyroid hormone β (RTH β): a linked-record cohort study. *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* 11 (9) , pp. 657-666. 10.1016/S2213-8587(23)00155-9

Publishers page: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-8587\(23\)00155-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-8587(23)00155-9)

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Cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients with Resistance to Thyroid Hormone β (RTH β): a linked record study

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Short title: Morbidity and mortality in Resistance to Thyroid Hormone β

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Keywords: Resistance to thyroid hormone; Hyperthyroidism, Hypothyroidism, Cardiovascular disease; Mortality; Atrial Fibrillation, Heart Failure

Word count: 3829

Abstract word count: 277

Number of tables: 3

Number of figures: 3

Number of supplementary tables: 6

Number of supplementary figures: 2

1 **ABSTRACT**

2 **Background:** Individuals with Resistance to Thyroid Hormone due to mutations in the
3 thyroid hormone receptor- β gene (RTH β) exhibit impaired tissue sensitivity to thyroid
4 hormones but retain sensitivity in cardiac tissue. Long-term health and survival
5 outcomes in this rare disorder have not been evaluated. We investigated all-cause
6 mortality and cardiovascular event risk in an RTH β patient cohort, followed-up in
7 Welsh endocrine clinics.

8

9 **Methods:** In a retrospective cohort design, genetically confirmed RTH β patients
10 (n=55) with age- and sex-matched population controls (n=2750), were linked to
11 outcomes in datasets within the Welsh Secure Anonymised Information Linkage
12 (SAIL) Databank. Kaplan-Meier and Cox regression models analysed associations of
13 RTH β with all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events.

14

15 **Findings:** Compared to controls, patients exhibited increased risks for all-cause
16 mortality (Hazard ratio [HR] 2.84, 95% Confidence Interval [95%CI] 1.59–5.08), atrial
17 fibrillation (HR 10.56, 95%CI 4.72–23.63), heart failure (HR 6.35, 95%CI 2.26–17.86),
18 and major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE) comprising cardiovascular death,
19 acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, or strokes (HR 3.49, 95%CI 2.04–5.99). The
20 median age of first occurrence of any adverse event was 11 years earlier in patients
21 (56 yrs, 95%CI 44, 65) compared to controls (67 yrs, 95%CI 65, 70). Cubic spline
22 analyses showed positive associations between FT4 concentrations at diagnosis and
23 mortality or MACE, with FT4>30 pmol/L conferring increased risk. Compared to no
24 intervention, treatment with antithyroid drugs, surgical/radioiodine gland ablation or
25 thyroxine did not control thyroid hormone excess.

26

27 **Interpretation:** We have documented reduced survival and increased cardiovascular
28 morbidity in an RTH β cohort for the first time. These outcomes may be driven by
29 lifelong cardiac exposure to thyroid hormone excess, and effective therapies, targeting
30 hormone resistant pathways, may potentially curtail this risk.

31

32 **RESEARCH IN CONTEXT**

33 **Evidence before the study**

34 Resistance to Thyroid Hormone- β (RTH β) is a rare genetic disorder in which hormone
35 resistance in the pituitary-thyroid axis results in elevated, circulating thyroid hormones.
36 Although a subset of affected individuals exhibit features of hyperthyroidism, whether
37 the condition increases long-term risks of cardiovascular disease or death is unknown.
38 We searched PubMed, without date or language restrictions, for articles assessing
39 cardiovascular morbidity or mortality outcomes in this disorder. We used the search
40 terms (“Resistance to Thyroid hormone” OR “Thyroid Hormone Resistance”) AND
41 (“mortality” OR “survival” OR “Cardiovascular” OR “Atrial fibrillation” OR “Heart Failure”
42 OR “Myocardial Infarction” OR “Stroke”). Most studies were case reports or small case
43 series which reported cardiovascular manifestations in individual patients. We found
44 no previous study evaluating cardiovascular risk or mortality in this disorder.

45 **Added value of this study**

46 This study represents the first assessment of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality
47 outcomes in an RTH β patient cohort. Using a linked health record approach, we have
48 documented reduced survival and increased cardiovascular risk in RTH β patients in
49 Wales over a 22-year period. Compared to the background population, RTH β patients
50 exhibited a three-fold increase in all-cause mortality or major cardiovascular events,
51 including excess risks of atrial fibrillation and heart failure. In addition, we observed
52 positive associations between thyroid hormone (FT4) levels at diagnosis and
53 subsequent cardiovascular morbidity or death, suggesting that lifelong exposure to
54 elevated thyroid hormones mediates the excess morbidity and mortality in RTH β .
55 Furthermore, we observed that conventional treatments for hyperthyroidism (i.e.,
56 antithyroid drugs, radioiodine ablation of the thyroid gland, or thyroidectomy) did not
57 control thyroid hormone levels effectively.

58 **Implications of all the available evidence**

59 Individuals with RTH β exhibit a significant burden of excess cardiovascular disease
60 that is not mitigated by current therapies. Our findings suggest that aggressive
61 management of cardiovascular risk in RTH β patients is indicated. Clinical trials,
62 addressing an unmet need for effective therapies that target hormone resistant
63 pathways, are warranted in this disorder.

64

65

66 **INTRODUCTION**

67 Resistance to Thyroid Hormone β (RTH β) is a dominantly-inherited disorder due to
68 mutations in the thyroid hormone receptor β (TR β) gene. Affected individuals exhibit
69 impaired sensitivity of target tissues to thyroid hormones, with reduced intracellular
70 action of the biologically active hormone triiodothyronine (T3) (1, 2). The mutant
71 receptor also exerts dominant-negative effects in the hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid
72 axis, thus disrupting feedback regulation and giving rise to the biochemical hallmark
73 of the condition, i.e., elevated circulating thyroid hormones, free thyroxine (FT4) and
74 free triiodothyronine (FT3), with non-suppressed thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH)
75 (2). RTH β is estimated to occur in about 1-2 per 40,000 live births and affects both
76 sexes equally (1). To date, more than 3000 cases, involving over 1000 families
77 harbouring 240 different TR β mutations, have been recorded (2-4). The clinical
78 phenotype is variable, ranging from asymptomatic cases to patients exhibiting clinical
79 and metabolic features of hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism (5). Some patients also
80 display cardiovascular manifestations of thyrotoxicosis, such as tachycardia, heart
81 failure (5, 6), or myocardial dysfunction (7-9). In addition, rare patients with
82 homozygous RTH β can develop life-threatening and sometimes fatal cardiomyopathy
83 (6, 10).

84 Despite these recognised cardiovascular manifestations, long-term outcome data is
85 lacking, and it is unknown whether RTH β is associated with excess cardiovascular
86 morbidity and mortality risk. Patients with hyperthyroidism due to intrinsic thyroid gland
87 disease such as Graves' disease or toxic nodular goitre have an increased risk of
88 cardiovascular death (11), an outcome that is driven by thyroid hormone excess (12-
89 14) and prevented by controlling biochemical hyperthyroidism (12). Current treatment
90 strategies for RTH β are inconsistent and range from no treatment at all, to controlling

91 autonomic symptoms with beta blockade, limiting circulating thyroid hormone excess
92 with antithyroid drugs, or ablating the thyroid gland with radioiodine or surgery followed
93 by Levothyroxine replacement (6). However, while these therapies have proven
94 efficacy in conventional hyperthyroidism, their effectiveness in controlling thyroid
95 hormone levels in individuals with RTH β is unproven. Here, using linked health records
96 in a genetically-confirmed cohort of RTH β patients in Wales, we have compared
97 cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients to that of a background population
98 and examined the relationship between thyroid hormone levels and health outcomes.

99 **METHODS**

100 *Patients and controls*

101 The study is a retrospective cohort study using linked datasets within the Secure
102 Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank (Swansea University, Swansea,
103 UK) (15). We identified records of all RTH β patients in Wales, without age exclusion,
104 in whom this disorder was suspected and then diagnosed in research or clinical
105 genetic laboratories at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge, UK between January
106 1997 and December 2019. Patients in whom RTH β was suspected clinically but not
107 confirmed by genetic testing, were excluded. Demographic, clinical, and laboratory
108 records of patients with a confirmed diagnosis of RTH β were collected from routine
109 hospital records using a questionnaire. Age and sex-matched population controls for
110 RTH β patients were obtained from the background population in the Welsh
111 Demographic Service and were matched to patients on birth-year (+/- 1 year) and sex
112 within SAIL at a ratio of 50 controls per patient using a greedy matching algorithm with
113 random matching without replacement (16). A matching ratio of 50:1 was chosen to
114 optimise statistical power based on our power calculation which showed benefits to
115 study power of increasing control to patient ratios, as has previously been shown in

116 power calculations of data with limited number of cases (17). Power considerations in
117 the study design are detailed in page 3 of the supplementary appendix and in
118 supplementary figure 1.

119 *Data linkage*

120 SAIL is a privacy-protecting database of routinely collected health data run by the
121 Population Data Science Group at Swansea University, Wales (15). The databank
122 contains over two billion anonymised, person-based records, including approximately
123 3.1 million individuals resident in Wales and registered with a GP practice. SAIL is
124 linked to other health and social care datasets including the Patient Episode Database
125 for Wales (PEDW), the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and the Primary Care
126 database (PCD) (18). In SAIL, records with a valid NHS number are linked
127 deterministically following which unmatched records are subjected to probabilistic
128 linkage using surname, forename, date of birth and postcode (15). Data anonymity is
129 ensured through multi-party encryption together with a split-file data management
130 procedure (15). For the study, clinical data (genetic, laboratory, and treatment) of the
131 RTH β cohort was imported into the SAIL databank, de-identified with an encrypted
132 identification number, and then matched to controls within SAIL. Patients and controls
133 were then linked to the study outcomes using the same datasets within SAIL. Mortality
134 data was obtained from the ONS which contains individual records for all death
135 registrations in England and Wales, including an underlying cause of death. Data on
136 comorbidity and cardiovascular events were obtained from the PEDW and PCD
137 datasets, comprising coverage of all attendance in participating general practices
138 (80% of practices) as well as all inpatient admission episodes in Welsh NHS hospitals.
139 These datasets include information on diagnoses, treatment, and surgical procedures.

140 *Outcomes*

141 All-cause mortality was the primary outcome, with secondary outcomes being hospital
142 admissions with acute myocardial infarction, atrial fibrillation, heart failure, stroke or
143 major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE) – a composite of cardiovascular death,
144 acute myocardial infarction, heart failure and stroke. Cardiovascular death was any
145 death attributed to acute myocardial infarction, heart failure, strokes, arrhythmias or
146 sudden cardiac death. .

147 *Follow-up definitions*

148 For the main survival analysis we compared mortality and cardiovascular outcomes in
149 patients versus controls using age as timescale to account for variability in disease
150 detection times. Both patients and controls entered the study from 1st January 1997,
151 or from their date of birth if this was after January 1997. The start date of January 1997
152 was chosen to correspond with the availability of complete hospital admission records
153 in PEDW. Patients and controls were followed up till outcome event, emigration from
154 Wales, or end of study period in April 2021. In a separate analysis we compared
155 outcomes according to baseline characteristics including thyroid hormone levels at the
156 time of RTH β diagnosis. This analysis was confined to the RTH β patient group alone
157 and follow up time was from the date of genetic diagnosis of RTH β until outcome
158 event, emigration from Wales, or end of study period in April 2021.

159 *Data analysis*

160 Baseline data was summarised as means (standard deviation, SD) for normally
161 distributed values or median (interquartile range, IQR) for data that is not normally
162 distributed. Baseline differences between groups were analysed with chi-squared test,
163 2-tailed t-test, Mann-Whitney tests, or Kruskal Wallis tests as appropriate. We
164 compared event rates in RTH β patients versus age- and sex-matched controls using

165 Kaplan-Meier survival curves and the log rank test for significance. . Cox regression
166 models, adjusted for sex and for baseline age, were also used to determine hazard
167 ratios for mortality and cardiovascular outcomes. In sensitivity analyses, survival
168 analyses was repeated using the Fine and Gray competing-risk sub-hazard model with
169 non-cardiac death as a competing risk event (19).

170 In the second analysis confined to the RTH β patient group alone, we used a Cox
171 regression model to ascertain event risk in relation to baseline characteristics at the
172 time of diagnosis, namely age, sex, comorbidity and circulating thyroid function
173 measurements (FT4,FT3,TSH). Univariate and multivariate Cox-regression models
174 were developed comprising age, comorbidity scores, and thyroid function tests as
175 continuous variables, while sex was handled as a dichotomous variable (male vs.
176 female). Comorbidity scores were derived using a modification of the Charlson
177 Comorbidity Index (20) ([supplementary table 1, appendix](#)). FT4 and FT3 were
178 analysed in separate models due to collinearity. Missing thyroid function data (FT4
179 $\leq 5\%$, TSH $\leq 5\%$, FT3 10.9%) was addressed using a complete case analysis and in
180 sensitivity analysis we also analysed missing data using the method of multiple
181 variable imputation by chained equations (details described in the appendix, page 4).
182 The validity of the proportional hazard assumption was tested by Schoenfeld residuals
183 test. To account for minor differences in laboratory reference ranges across laboratory
184 sites and over time-periods of tests, the regression models for thyroid function were
185 corrected for treatment centre and year of laboratory test, and additional analyses
186 were conducted using multiples of the upper-reference limit for individual assays.
187 Assay reference ranges are described in the appendix ([supplementary table 2](#)). The
188 year of diagnosis was also evaluated to determine if changes in cardiovascular risk
189 management strategies over time had any effect on outcomes.

190 Restricted cubic splines were used to model a possible non-linear relationship
191 between baseline thyroid hormone concentrations and health outcomes. Four equally
192 spaced knots were set at the 5th, 35th, 65th, and 95th percentiles according to
193 Harrell's recommendation (21) (model described in the [appendix, page 3-4](#)). In
194 addition, the relationship between thyroid hormone levels and age was examined
195 using quantile mixed-effects models with baseline age and sex as fixed effects and
196 participants as random effects (22). β -coefficients and 95% confidence intervals were
197 derived from the mixed models to represent the change in thyroid hormone level per
198 year of age. Lastly, we examined any potential impact of treatment on thyroid hormone
199 levels using multiple linear regression models, with follow-up thyroid hormone levels
200 (last available outpatient test) as the dependent variable and treatment modality, age,
201 sex and baseline thyroid hormone levels as independent variables. Statistical analysis
202 was performed via remote desktop with the SAIL Databank using Stata version 17.0
203 for Windows (Stata Corp., College Station, TXS, USA).

204 *Ethics and Governance*

205 Approval for access to anonymised linked data in the SAIL databank was granted by
206 an independent Information Governance Review panel (SAIL-IGRP reference no:
207 0954). All proposals to use SAIL data are subject to review by the panel which
208 comprises representatives from various public and health sectors including the
209 National Research Ethics Service, Public Health Wales, and NHS Wales Informatics
210 Service. Approval for clinical data collection for the RTH cohort was obtained from the
211 Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Clinical Audit Department (reference no:
212 9392). Genetic investigations for the RTH β mutation were undertaken with prior,
213 informed written consent at the clinical genetics laboratory at Addenbrookes Hospital

214 in Cambridge, either for clinical indications or as part of ethically approved research
215 protocols (Cambridgeshire LREC 98/154).

216 **RESULTS**

217 *Cohort characteristics*

218 Sixty-one patients, referred from Welsh hospital clinics, in whom a genetic diagnosis
219 of RTH β had been made in research or clinical genetic laboratories at Addenbrookes
220 Hospital, Cambridge were identified. Of these, 55 patients were registered in the SAIL
221 databank, the remainder either lacking sufficient linkage details or not being registered
222 in the databank ([supplementary figure 2](#)). Patients (n=55) and age and sex matched
223 controls (n= 2750) were linked to outcomes using the same datasets in the databank
224 and the characteristics of the cohort and controls (n=2750) are presented in [Table 1](#).
225 The majority of patients were female (60%), with a median age of 29 years at the
226 beginning of study follow-up, median age of 43 years at the time of genetic diagnosis,
227 and most patients being between age 40 and 60 years at the end of follow-up. Patients
228 with RTH β exhibited more significant comorbidities at the time of genetic diagnosis;
229 as expected, median, circulating thyroid hormones (FT4, FT3) were elevated with non-
230 suppressed TSH levels at baseline. A proportion of patients were treated with
231 antithyroid drugs (13%), levothyroxine (24%) or radioiodine/thyroidectomy (11%),
232 including patients who received multiple treatments concurrently or sequentially.

233 *Thyroid hormone receptor β mutations*

234 Sixteen different heterozygous TR β mutations, localising to its hormone binding
235 domain, were identified. Amino acid codons most frequently mutated were Arg243
236 (n=6), Arg338 (n=6), Arg383 (n=15), and Arg438 (n=8). Most mutations mapped to
237 three, previously established, hotspots or clusters in the TR β hormone binding
238 domain, namely cluster 1 (A268D, A268G, R243W, R243Q), cluster 2 (A317T, D351G,

239 R333W, R320C, R338P, R338W), and cluster 3 (I431M, P453T, R438C, R438H). In
240 addition, several patients harboured mutations (n=7, R383C; n=8, R383H) involving a
241 hotspot residue outside the three clusters.

242 *Mortality and cardiovascular events in patients and controls*

243 All-cause mortality and cardiovascular event outcomes are presented in survival
244 curves ([Figure 1](#)). Overall, there were 320 deaths, with greater mortality in RTH β
245 patients (n=12, 22%) than in controls (n=308, 11%). In addition, cardiovascular events
246 (MACE) were more frequent in RTH β patients (n=14, 25%) than in controls (n=252,
247 9%). Kaplan Meier curves showed increased risk for all-cause mortality, MACE, atrial
248 fibrillation, and heart failure, but not for acute myocardial infarction or stroke, in RTH β .
249 Median age of any first adverse event including death was 56 yrs (95%CI 44, 65) in
250 RTH β patients compared to 67 yrs (95%CI 65, 70) in controls, reflecting an 11-year
251 difference between patients and controls. Median survival times could not be
252 calculated for individual outcomes since less than half of patients or controls
253 experienced outcomes by the end of follow-up. Increased mortality and cardiovascular
254 hazards remained significant in the adjusted Cox regression model ([Figure 1](#)) as well
255 as in the competing risk regression model that incorporated non-cardiac death
256 ([supplementary table 3](#)). Cox regression models stratified by sex showed no
257 interaction of outcomes with sex apart from a marginally increased hazard for atrial
258 fibrillation in men compared to women (P-value for interaction, 0.048) ([supplementary](#)
259 [table 4](#)).

260 *Baseline characteristics, mortality and cardiovascular events*

261 We examined associations between baseline characteristics (age at diagnosis, sex,
262 comorbidity score, TR β mutation cluster, year of diagnosis, FT4, FT3, TSH) and all-
263 cause mortality and MACE in the RTH β cohort, using Cox regression models. Survival

264 time denotes the period from diagnosis to event or censor. Older age at diagnosis and
265 increased comorbidity score were associated with increased mortality and adverse
266 cardiovascular events, whereas no association was seen with sex, TR β mutation
267 cluster type, or year of diagnosis (Table 2). FT4 concentration at baseline was
268 associated with modest increases in mortality and MACE risk, both in an unadjusted
269 model and in models adjusted for age, sex, baseline comorbidity, laboratory centre,
270 and diagnosis year (Table 2). Hazard ratios for baseline FT3 concentration were also
271 increased but did not reach statistical significance. No association between baseline
272 TSH and outcomes was observed (Table 2). Due to small numbers in subgroups, other
273 variables including treatment modality in subsets of the RTH β cohort, were not
274 examined further. The results remained unchanged when thyroid hormones were
275 converted to multiples of the upper reference limit to account for assay differences
276 (supplementary Table 5). In addition, hazard ratios for baseline thyroid hormones were
277 also unchanged in the sensitivity analysis using multiple imputation (supplementary
278 table 6 in the appendix).

279 Using a model with four, equally spaced, cubic splines, we explored a non-linear
280 relationship between baseline FT4 concentration and mortality or MACE. We observed
281 a positive, non-linear relationship between FT4 and both outcomes, with modest
282 increases in risk with FT4 >30pmol/L (Figure 2). We also examined the relationship
283 between age and thyroid hormones using mixed quantile mixed-effects models, with
284 age and sex as fixed effects and subject as a random effect. This showed a reduction
285 in median FT4 and FT3 but not TSH levels with age, with decline being most marked
286 between childhood (0-19 years) and early adult life (20-39 years) and continuing into
287 older (>60 yrs) age (Supplementary Figure 2).

288 Lastly, we examined the association between thyroid hormone and TSH
289 concentrations and treatment modalities (antithyroid drugs, radioactive iodine,
290 surgery, or levothyroxine) (Table 3). Patients commenced on Levothyroxine had
291 higher TSH and lower FT4 concentrations at baseline than untreated patients.
292 However, a multiple linear regression model showed that treatment modality did not
293 influence subsequent thyroid hormone levels. This model, which included age, sex,
294 baseline thyroid hormones and TSH, and treatment modality as independent
295 variables, with thyroid hormones and TSH at follow-up as dependent variable, showed
296 no difference in subsequent FT4, FT3, or TSH concentrations between treated and
297 untreated patients (Table 3).

298 **DISCUSSION**

299 Using a linked health record approach, we have shown an increased risk of
300 cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in an RTH β patient cohort in Wales. Compared
301 to an age and sex-matched background population, RTH β patients exhibited three-
302 fold increased risk of all-cause mortality or major cardiovascular events, including
303 excess risks for atrial fibrillation and heart failure. These risks were most marked in
304 older individuals and in individuals with pre-existing comorbidities at the time of
305 diagnosis. In addition, associations between FT4 concentrations at diagnosis and
306 subsequent cardiovascular morbidity or death were observed, with a 7% increased
307 risk of mortality per pmol/L rise in FT4. The relationship between FT4 and outcomes
308 was non-linear, with FT4 concentration >30 pmol/L conferring increased risk. Our
309 observations suggest that lifelong exposure to the high, circulating thyroid hormones
310 characteristic of this disorder, mediates the excess mortality seen in our RTH β cohort.
311 For the first time in an RTH β patient cohort, we have documented survival and
312 cardiovascular outcomes using a unique dataset captured over many years with a

313 robust record linkage approach. As would be expected for a rare disease study of
314 lifetime outcomes, our sample size was small, precluding robust subgroup analysis on
315 the effects of TR β mutation type or treatment modality on outcomes. An estimated
316 prevalence of 1 in 40,000 predicts 75 individuals with RTH β in Wales, indicating that
317 we captured about 80% (n=61) of our potential RTH β population. A higher estimated
318 prevalence (1 in 19,000) reported in a different study might suggest that some affected
319 individuals in our population were not ascertained (4). Nevertheless, our patient
320 sample was adequately powered to show significant differences for our primary
321 mortality and cardiovascular outcomes. Future studies in a larger RTH β cohort may
322 discern further relationships in terms of genetic sub-types, clinical phenotypes
323 including mode of presentation, and the impact of treatment modality on outcomes.

324 Cardiovascular manifestations of thyroid hormone excess are well recognised in both
325 heterozygous and homozygous RTH β patients (5, 6, 23). Kahaly *et al*, have previously
326 documented elevated heart rate, cardiac output, stroke volume, and systolic aortic flow
327 velocity in RTH β patients, with cardiac indices showing positive correlations with
328 elevated circulating thyroid hormone (8). Occurrence of tachycardia, rhythm
329 disturbance (in up to 20% of cases) and impaired cardiac function in other RTH β
330 cohorts, has been reported (24, 25). On the other hand, elevated levels of circulating
331 thyroid hormone with non-suppressed TSH or raised serum cholesterol and
332 triglyceride in RTH β patients, signify the presence of hormone resistance and a
333 relative hypothyroid state in some target tissues or organs (26). Differential expression
334 of TR β isoforms likely accounts, in part, for such variable sensitivity to thyroid
335 hormones in target tissues. Thus, inhibition of wild-type receptor action by dominant-
336 negative TR β mutants mediates hormone resistance in TR β 1 (liver, kidney) or TR β 2

337 (pituitary, hypothalamus) expressing tissues. Conversely, TR α -expressing tissues
338 (e.g. heart) retain sensitivity to elevated, circulating thyroid hormones (3).

339 Consistent with the above notion, previous studies in RTH β patients have shown
340 positive correlations between the degree of mutant TR β dysfunction and raised
341 circulating thyroid hormones and elevated low-density-lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol
342 (reflecting hormone resistance within the pituitary-thyroid axis or liver) (27) or elevation
343 of resting metabolic rate (reflecting actions of elevated thyroid hormones on TR α -
344 expressing skeletal muscle and possibly myocardium) (28). Thus, it is conceivable that
345 the excess cardiovascular risk in RTH β we have observed in this study is mediated by
346 direct effects of elevated thyroid hormones on cardiac rhythm and contractility or via
347 increased atherosclerosis risk secondary to known dyslipidaemia and systemic insulin
348 resistance (28). However, given the strong risks for disordered cardiac rhythm (atrial
349 fibrillation) and contractility (heart failure) observed in our RTH β cohort in this study,
350 we favour deleterious cardiac effects of lifelong elevation in thyroid hormones as the
351 dominant mechanism.

352 Our observations are also biologically plausible in the wider context of well-established
353 associations between thyroid dysfunction and cardiovascular disease (29). Thus,
354 reduced survival in our RTH β cohort is comparable to that of patients with conventional
355 hyperthyroidism (11). Using the same data-linkage approach as this study, we have
356 shown previously that cardiovascular events and mortality are increased in patients
357 with Graves' disease, with early, effective control of hyperthyroidism improving survival
358 (12). Furthermore, in hyperthyroidism, hazard ratios (HRs) for cardiovascular events
359 and mortality were particularly high in patients who responded poorly to treatment,
360 comparable to the magnitudes of the HRs observed in our RTH β cohort (12). As seen
361 with RTH β patients in this study, an association between the degree of exposure to

362 hyperthyroidism and reduced survival has been documented in several cohorts with
363 hyperthyroidism (12-14), including positive associations between FT4 and adverse
364 outcomes (12). Overall, our observations indicate that adverse cardiovascular
365 sequelae and reduced survival in our RTH β patient cohort is comparable to that of
366 uncontrolled, conventional hyperthyroidism.

367 Our findings have implications for the management of RTH β patients. Current
368 treatment strategies are inconsistent and largely pragmatic in approach. Definitive
369 treatment with surgery or radioiodine is ineffective, with frequent recurrence of
370 thyrotoxicosis after radioiodine or thyroidectomy, due to growth of remnant thyroid
371 tissue (6). Post ablation, levothyroxine replacement in markedly supraphysiological
372 dosage is required to normalise TSH levels, with failure to achieve this predisposing
373 to pituitary enlargement due to thyrotroph hyperplasia (30). Conversely,
374 supraphysiological hormone replacement, restoring elevated pre-ablation thyroid
375 hormone concentrations, carries attendant cardiac risks. Antithyroid drug treatment
376 also evokes exaggerated increases in TSH production, stimulating goitre formation
377 and ongoing, excess thyroid hormone synthesis (6). In our study, intervention with
378 antithyroid drugs, radioiodine/surgical ablation or levothyroxine, either alone or in
379 combination, had no sustained impact on elevated, thyroid hormone concentrations.
380 It is interesting that thyroid hormone levels remained high even in patients that had
381 some form of intervention, and it is likely that both exogenous and endogenous thyroid
382 hormones may play a role as discussed above. However, our analysis was limited to
383 evaluations of baseline and final thyroid hormone levels and further detailed analyses
384 that accounts for repeated measures will be useful to confirm these findings. Overall,
385 there was a gradual decline in circulating FT3 and FT4 concentrations at an older age

386 (supplementary figure 2), with baseline thyroid hormone levels best predicting thyroid
387 status at long-term follow-up, and various treatments having no discernible effect.

388 Accordingly, in RTH β , we suggest that there is an unmet need for treatments targeting
389 thyroid hormone resistant pathways, including exploring the therapeutic potential of
390 thyroid hormone analogues (3, 31). TRIAC (3,3',5-triiodothyroacetic acid), a thyroid
391 hormone analogue which exhibits greater affinity for TR β than TR α , with preferential
392 activation of some TR β mutants, acts centrally to inhibit TSH secretion thereby
393 lowering thyroid hormone levels, while devoid of peripheral thyromimetic activity (32,
394 33) (3). In individual RTH β patients, TRIAC treatment in varying dosage and duration
395 lowers circulating FT4 and FT3, reduces goitre size and improves hyperthyroid
396 features, but its effect on health outcomes remains unknown (3, 34, 35). However,
397 patients in our cohort were not treated with TRIAC and so we could not assess its
398 efficacy on thyroid hormone levels.

399 Pending future clinical trials, using standardised protocols, to evaluate effectiveness
400 of TRIAC in controlling adverse cardiac sequelae or altering outcomes in RTH β , we
401 suggest that regular monitoring of cardiac health (e.g., electrocardiogram, cardiac
402 telemetry, echocardiography), with aggressive modification of other risk factors in
403 patients with cardiac dysfunction, may be warranted. Future studies will be needed to
404 explore the impact of other factors relevant to cardiovascular outcomes such as socio-
405 economic class and ethnicity which were not captured in our dataset or incorporated
406 in our matching algorithms. Ultimately, effective therapies that target hormone
407 resistance within the pituitary-thyroid axis, thereby lowering and curtailing adverse
408 cardiac effects of thyroid hormone excess, are needed in this disorder.

409

Acknowledgements and funding information

This work was funded by grants from the Royal College of Physicians (grant number 515842, DAR), a Wellcome Trust Investigator Award (210755/Z/18/Z, KC) and the NIHR Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre (KC, CM).

Author contributions

Aled Rees, Peter Taylor, Onyebuchi Okosieme, Carla Moran, and Krishna Chatterjee, conceived and designed the study. Onyebuchi Okosieme undertook the statistical analysis with contributions from Peter Taylor and Aled Rees. Onyebuchi Okosieme wrote the first draft of the manuscript with revisions from Aled Rees, Krishna Chatterjee, Carla Moran, Pete Taylor, Greta Lyons, Danyal Usman, and Colin Dayan. All authors contributed to the final draft of the manuscript and approved the manuscript before submission for publication. Onyebuchi Okosieme and Aled Rees had full access to the study data and vouch for the integrity and accuracy of the data analysis.

Data sharing statement

The data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available due to privacy and data disclosure restrictions.

Declaration of interests

CM is an independent contractor to Egetis therapeutics, providing clinical perspectives on MCT8 deficiency and other potential rare diseases. She has received speaking fees from Bahrain Diabetes & Endocrine Review Conference, 2022, Qatar Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolic conference, 2022, Indiana University, USA, 2022, Indonesian society of Endocrinology meeting, 2022, 1st Annual Arab Thyroid Association Congress, 2022, European College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Annual Congress, 2021, Thyroid Disease, MSc Clinical Chemistry program, Trinity College Dublin 2016 to present. She is Chair, Study Review Committee on TRIAC withdrawal study (ReTRIACt), an international trial assessing effect of TRIAC withdrawal in patients with MCT8 deficiency. She is an expert endocrine advisor, Health products regulatory authority (HPRA), Ireland. She serves as Society for Endocrinology Program Committee Member (2019-2023). She was Secretary/Assistant Secretary, British Thyroid Association (2017 – 2022). She is Lead, European Thyroid Association Taskforce on Guidelines for Interference in Immunoassays of Hormones used in Thyroid Function Tests (2023 to present). She is Member of Committee, European Thyroid Association Guideline on Diagnosis and Management of Syndromes of Resistance to Thyroid Hormone. She is Member, expert working group on rare thyroid disorders for the European Reference Networks (2018 to present). She was National convenor, Society for Endocrinology Thyroid Network (2015 to 2020).

CMD has received travel and accommodation fees for speaking at the symposium of the European Thyroid Association (Sept 2022).

PNT is a member of the Clinical committee of the Society for Endocrinology and committee member of the British Thyroid Association

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Figures and Tables Legend

Table 1: Cohort characteristics

Legend: a. Some patients received treatment with multiple modalities either concurrently (e.g., Levothyroxine plus antithyroid drug treatment) or sequentially (e.g., RAI or thyroidectomy after antithyroid drug treatment, or Levothyroxine after RAI or thyroidectomy), b. Antithyroid drugs for more than 3 months' duration, c. RAI, radioactive iodine

Table 2: Mortality and MACE outcomes according to baseline characteristics at the time of RTH β diagnosis

Legend: a, CHR, crude hazard ratio, b, AHR, adjusted hazard ratio. Adjusted models were corrected for age, sex, comorbidity, and diagnosis year. In addition, thyroid hormones were adjusted for laboratory site. c, Thyroid hormone measurements were available for 53 (FT4, TSH) and 49 (FT3) patients respectively. Nomenclature of mutation clusters corresponds to previously defined hotspots in the TR β hormone binding domain (clusters 1-3) and an additional amino acid position (cluster 4), outside the established hotspots. Age and thyroid hormones were handled as continuous variables and HR are as per year of age and per pmol/L (FT4, FT3) and mU/L (TSH), respectively. d, Diagnosis year was divided into tertiles from the earliest to the most recent diagnosis.

Table 3: Baseline and Follow-up thyroid hormone levels by treatment modality

Legend: Treatment groups comprised patients who had: (1) no treatment, (2) antithyroid drugs alone, (3) RAI (radioactive iodine)/surgery, or (4) Levothyroxine alone. Thyroid hormones (median, interquartile range) are presented at baseline and at follow-up (last available outpatient test). * β -coefficient, 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) are derived from multiple linear regression models examining the impact of treatment group (independent variable) on follow-up thyroid hormone levels (dependent variable), with models adjusted for age, sex, and baseline thyroid hormone level. P values for trend denote differences across groups while the regression P value is derived from the linear regression model. a, Levothyroxine vs. No treatment or vs. RAI/Surgery, b, Levothyroxine vs. No treatment or vs. antithyroid drugs, c, Levothyroxine vs. no treatment.

Figure 1: Selection of study population

Figure 2: Kaplan Meier curves for mortality and cardiovascular events in patients with RTH β .

Legend: Survival curves for all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events are plotted for patients with Resistance to Thyroid Hormone β (RTH β) compared to age and sex-matched controls from the background population. Log-rank p values are presented for the difference in survival between patients and controls while Hazard ratios (HR), 95% confidence intervals are derived from Cox regression models corrected for sex. MACE, major adverse cardiovascular events. Risk tables are not presented due to privacy restrictions.

Figure 3: Cubic splines for baseline FT4 and outcomes in the RTH cohort

Legend: Curves represent association between baseline FT4 and log hazard ratios (HR, line) with 95% confidence intervals (95% CI, shaded areas) for the risk of all cause mortality (panel A) or major adverse cardiovascular events (panel B). Curves were derived from restricted cubic splines with 4 equally spaced knots at the 5th, 35th, 65th, and 95th percentiles. Hazard ratios were based on a Cox regression model corrected for sex, baseline comorbidity, treatment with antithyroid drugs, Levothyroxine, and thyroidectomy.

Supplementary Table 1: Modified Charlson Comorbidity Scores

Supplementary Table 2: Thyroid hormone assay reference ranges

For all assays the coefficient of variation was <10%; CCIA, competitive chemiluminescent immunoassay, CMIA, chemiluminescent microparticle immunoassay; ECLIA, electrochemiluminescence immunoassay; MEIA, Microparticle Enzyme Immunoassay; 1. Bayer Diagnostics, Newbury, UK; 2. Abbott Diagnostics, Maidenhead, Berks, UK; 3. Diagnostics Product Corporation, Llanberis, Wales; 4. Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Mannheim, Germany, *from January to December 2013 the reference range for this assay was changed to 9.2—21.0 pmol/L, **from September 2009 to April 2011, reference range for this assay was 0.3-6.0 mU/L

Supplementary Table 3: Sub-hazard ratios for cardiovascular events stratified by sex incorporating non-cardiac death as competing risk

Sub hazard ratios (HR) and 95% Confidence intervals (95%CI) were derived from Competing risk regression models according to the Fine and Gray sub-distribution hazard model with non-cardiac death as a competing risk. MACE, major adverse cardiovascular events, P-int, P value for the interaction with sex. Numbers (%) are the number of events (%) in the group, S, small cells (count < 5) are suppressed due to privacy restrictions.

Supplementary Table 4: Supplementary Table 3: Hazard ratios for mortality and cardiovascular events stratified by sex

Hazard ratios (HR) and 95% Confidence intervals (95%CI) were derived from Cox regression models. MACE, major adverse cardiovascular events, P-int, P value for the interaction with sex. Numbers (%) are the number of events (%) in the group, S, small cells (count ≤ 5) are suppressed due to privacy restrictions.

Supplementary Table 5: Mortality and MACE outcomes in RTH β by baseline characteristics with thyroid hormones analysed as multiples of the upper reference limits

a, CHR, crude hazard ratio, b, AHR, adjusted hazard ratio. Adjusted models were corrected for age, sex, comorbidity, and diagnosis year. In addition, thyroid hormones were adjusted for laboratory site. c, Thyroid hormones were available for 53 (FT4, TSH) and 49 (FT3) patients respectively. Nomenclature of mutation clusters corresponds to previously defined hotspots in the TR β hormone binding domain (clusters 1-3) and an additional amino acid position (cluster 4), outside the established hotspots. Age and thyroid hormones were treated as continuous variables and HR are as per year of age and per pmol/L (FT4, FT3) and mU/L (TSH), respectively. d, Diagnosis year was divided into tertiles from the earliest to the most recent diagnosis.

Supplementary Table 6: Mortality and MACE outcomes in RTH β depending on baseline thyroid function at the time of diagnosis by missing imputation method

Supplementary Figure 1: Power calculation estimates

Figure shows number of patients (black labels) and controls (blue labels) needed at various patient vs. control ratios to demonstrate a hazard ratio of 2.5 for mortality or MACE with a two-sided α of 0.05 and power (β) of 0.8.

Supplementary Figure 2: Thyroid hormone levels by age group

Legend: Box plots illustrate median and inter-quartile range for thyroid hormone levels (FT4, FT3, TSH) by age-group using all available data. β coefficients (95% confidence intervals) are estimates of the change in median hormone level per year and are derived from quantile mixed-effects models with age (years) as a fixed effect and subject as a random effect.

	RTH β	Controls	Total	P value
No	55	2750	2805	
Age at last follow-up, yrs				
Mean (SD)	48.8 (17.1)	51.7 (18.6)	51.6 (18.6)	0.26
Median (IQR)	52 (36, 65)	53 (36, 67)	53 (36, 67)	0.50
<40 yrs	15 (27.3)	706 (25.7)	721 (25.7)	0.71
40–60 yrs	23 (41.8)	1046 (38.0)	1069 (38.1)	
>60 yrs	17 (30.9)	998 (36.3)	1015 (36.2)	
Age at start of follow-up				
Mean (SD)	30.8 (13.8)	33.1 (14.8)	33.1 (14.8)	0.24
Median (IQR)	26 (20, 39)	29 (20, 40)	29 (20, 40)	0.23
Sex, N (%)				
Female	33 (60)	1650 (60)	1683 (60)	1.00
Male	22 (40)	1100 (40)	1122 (40)	
Baseline Comorbidity, N (%)				
Charlson score 0	48 (87.3)	2596 (94.4)	2644 (94.3)	0.02
Charlson score \geq 1	7 (12.7)	154 (5.6)	161 (5.7)	
Person years of follow-up	2685	142056	144741	
Age at diagnosis of RTH β	43.4 (33.0, 56.4)	—	—	—
Baseline thyroid hormones				
FT4, pmol/L	31.0 (26.8, 39.1)	—	—	—
FT3, pmol/L	10.0 (7.7, 11.9)	—	—	—
TSH, mU/L	2.47 (1.50, 4.89)	—	—	—
Treatment ^a				
Beta-blockers	14 (25.5%)	—	—	—
Antithyroid drugs ^b	7 (12.7%)	—	—	—
RAI ^c or thyroidectomy	6 (10.9%)	—	—	—
Levothyroxine	13 (23.6%)	—	—	—

Table 1: Cohort characteristics

a. Some patients received treatment with multiple modalities either concurrently (i.e., Levothyroxine plus antithyroid drugs) or sequentially (i.e., RAI or thyroidectomy after antithyroid drugs or Levothyroxine after RAI or thyroidectomy), b. Antithyroid drugs for more than 3 months' duration, c. RAI, radioactive iodine

	N (%)	Mortality				MACE			
		CHR (95% CI) ^a	P-value	AHR (95% CI) ^b	P-value	CHR (95% CI)	P-value	AHR (95% CI)	P-value
Age	55	1.07 (1.03–1.10)	<0.001	1.05 (0.99–1.11)	0.067	1.05 (1.02–1.08)	<0.001	1.06 (1.02–1.10)	0.004
Sex									
Male	22 (40)	Ref		Ref		Ref		Ref	
Female	33 (60)	1.18 (0.36–3.93)	0.786	0.73 (0.19–2.80)	0.651	0.81 (0.33–2.01)	0.653	0.55 (0.18–1.68)	0.30
Comorbidity									
Charlson 0	38 (87)	Ref		Ref		Ref		Ref	
Charlson ≥1	7 (13)	1.53 (1.11–2.12)	0.010	1.52 (0.93–2.47)	0.093	1.40 (1.08–1.82)	0.012	1.40 (0.78–2.50)	0.26
Thyroid hormones ^c									
FT4	53	1.07 (1.02–1.11)	0.004	1.07 (1.02–1.13)	0.005	1.04 (1.00–1.07)	0.024	1.04 (1.01–1.08)	0.02
FT3	49	1.12 (0.97–1.29)	0.124	1.15 (0.98–1.35)	0.252	1.05 (0.94–1.18)	0.361	1.08 (0.95–1.22)	0.26
TSH	53	1.05 (0.84–1.30)	0.685	1.13 (0.91–1.40)	0.080	0.96 (0.79–1.15)	0.639	0.97 (0.81–1.16)	0.71
Mutation cluster									
Cluster 1	10 (15)	Ref		Ref		Ref		Ref	
Cluster 2	18 (34)	2.52 (0.28–22.84)	0.413	1.72 (0.05–58.31)	0.762	1.90 (0.39–9.25)	0.428	2.12 (0.28–15.92)	0.46
Cluster 3	12 (23)	0.73 (0.06–8.44)	0.800	2.09 (0.10–43.28)	0.632	0.90 (0.16–5.12)	0.904	3.38 (0.46–24.69)	0.23
Cluster 4	15 (28)	1.26 (0.13–11.80)	0.842	2.52 (0.14–45.76)	0.531	1.05 (0.20–5.47)	0.958	1.01 (0.16–6.26)	0.99
Diagnosis year ^d									
1st tertile	19 (35)	Ref		Ref		Ref		Ref	
2nd tertile	18 (33)	0.69 (0.20–2.39)	0.553	1.55 (0.07–36.00)	0.783	0.90 (0.33–2.47)	0.844	1.47 (0.13–17.12)	0.76
3rd tertile	18 (33)	0.32 (0.36–2.85)	0.307	0.72 (0.24–21.70)	0.851	0.48 (0.12–1.85)	0.283	1.16 (0.07–19.47)	0.92

Table 2: Mortality and MACE outcomes in RTHβ depending on baseline characteristics at the time of diagnosis

a, CHR, crude hazard ratio, b, AHR, adjusted hazard ratio. Adjusted models were corrected for age, sex, comorbidity, and diagnosis year. In addition, thyroid hormones were adjusted for laboratory site. c, Thyroid hormones were available for 53 (FT4, TSH) and 49 (FT3) patients respectively. Nomenclature of mutation clusters corresponds to previously defined hotspots in

the TR β hormone binding domain (clusters 1-3) and an additional amino acid position (cluster 4), outside the established hotspots. Age and thyroid hormones were treated as continuous variables and HR are as per year of age and per pmol/L (FT4, FT3) and mU/L (TSH), respectively. d, Diagnosis year was divided into tertiles from the earliest to the most recent diagnosis.

	No treatment	Antithyroid Drugs	RAI/Surgery	Levothyroxine	P value for trend
Number	34	6	6	9	
FT4, pmol/L					
Baseline	30.8 (26.8, 36.8)	32.0 (28.2, 35.1)	37.7 (31.1, 59.0)	25.1 (20.2, 41.0)	0.10
Follow-up	28.3 (24.1, 35.7)	26.0 (20.2, 32.0)	36.1 (34.0, 59.0)	23.4 (20.0, 25.9)	0.03 ^a
β-coefficient (95%CI)*	Reference	-3.4 (-8.9, 2.1)	-1.2 (-7.3, 4.9)	-3.5 (-8.6, 1.5)	
Regression P value	Reference	0.22	0.70	0.16	
FT3, pmol/L					
Baseline	9.0 (8.3, 11.8)	11.3 (7.6, 11.7)	11.3 (7.1, 16.6)	10.0 (6.8, 12.0)	0.94
Follow-up	8.8 (7.3, 10.4)	11.3 (7.9, 11.6)	9.0 (6.5, 11.9)	7.5 (5.7, 11.9)	0.68
β-coefficient (95%CI)*	Reference	0.4 (-1.8, 2.6)	-1.1 (-3.4, 1.3)	-0.9 (-2.8, 1.1)	
Regression P value	Reference	0.76	0.36	0.36	
TSH, mU/L					
Baseline	2.3 (1.2, 3.5)	1.2 (0.7, 3.5)	5.5 (1.5, 10.4)	5.3 (3.2, 7.0)	0.01 ^b
Follow-up	2.1 (1.5, 3.5)	3.2 (0.7, 4.5)	6.2 (1.5, 12.5)	4.3 (3.3, 6.4)	0.06 ^c
β-coefficient (95%CI)*	Reference	1.4 (-1.1, 4.0)	2.5 (-0.6, 5.5)	-0.1 (-2.5, 2.4)	
Regression P value	Reference	0.26	0.11	0.96	

Table 3: Thyroid hormone and TSH concentrations in RTHβ at baseline and follow-up following different treatment modalities

Treatment groups comprised patients who had: (1) no treatment, (2) antithyroid drugs alone, (3) RAI (radioactive iodine) or surgery, or (4) Levothyroxine alone. Thyroid hormones (median, interquartile range) are presented at baseline and at follow-up (last available outpatient test). *β-coefficient, 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) are derived from multiple linear regression models examining the impact of treatment group (independent variable) on follow-up thyroid hormone levels (dependent variable), with models adjusted for age, sex, and baseline thyroid hormone level. P values for trend denote differences across groups while the regression P value is derived from the linear regression model. a, Levothyroxine vs. No treatment or vs. RAI/Surgery, b, Levothyroxine vs. No treatment or vs. antithyroid drugs, c, Levothyroxine vs. no treatment.

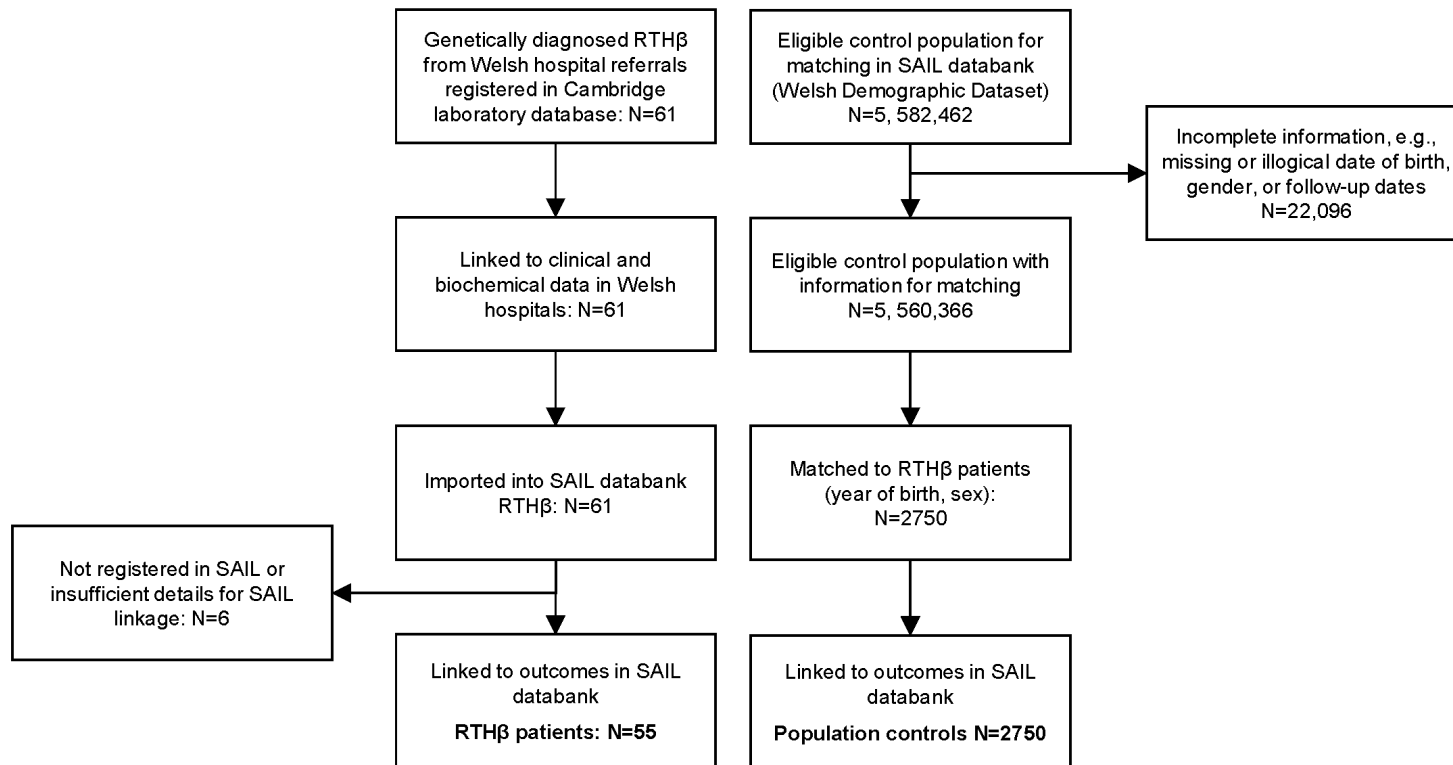


Figure 1: Selection of study population

Figure 2: Kaplan Meier curves for mortality and cardiovascular events in patients with RTH

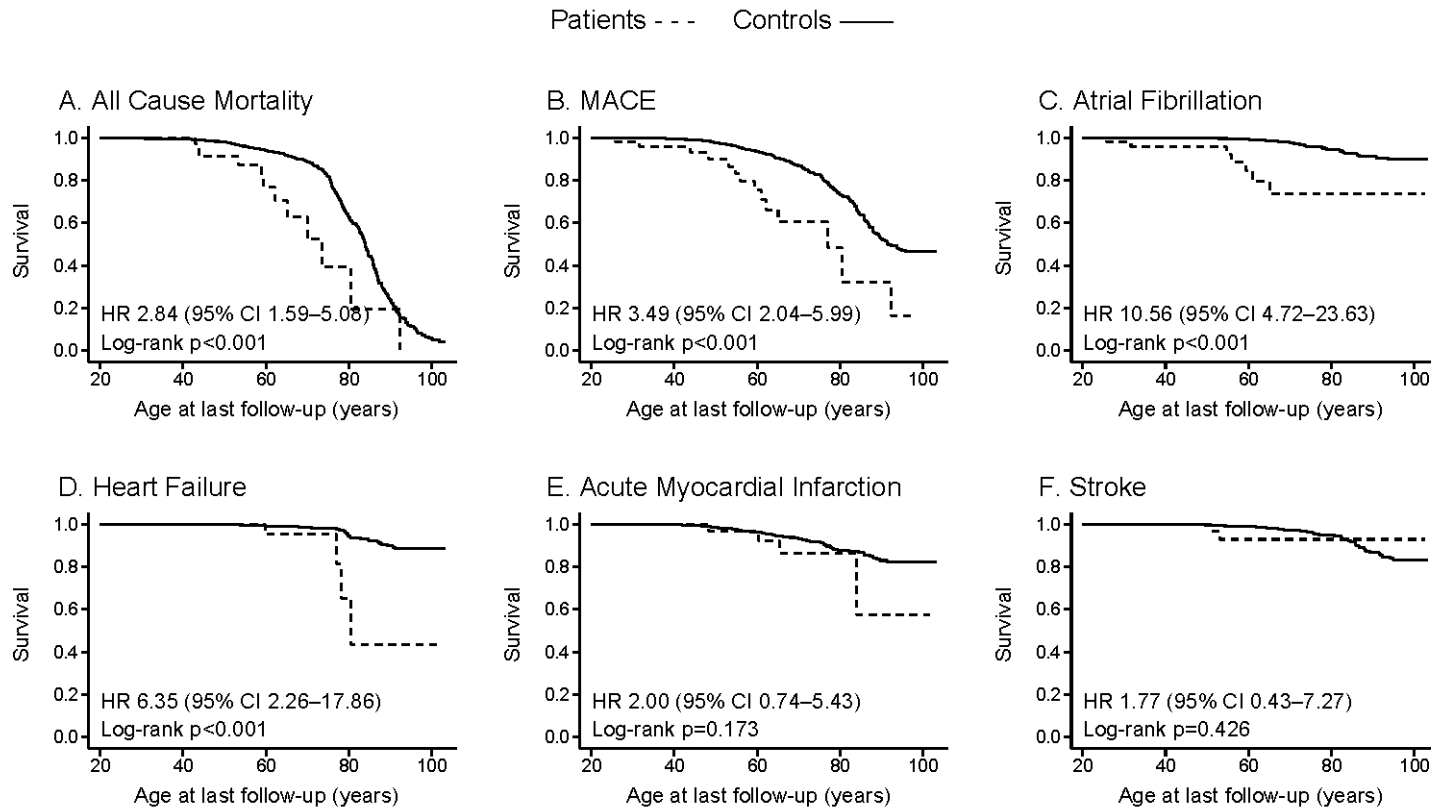


Figure 3: Cubic splines for baseline FT4 and outcomes in the RTH cohort

