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Scientific editorial

Lessons learned during my collaboration with Alain Carpentier: A 25-year perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Heart team
 Intraoperative echocardiography
 Mitral valve reconstruction
 Education
 Transmission

Over the past three decades, mitral valve repair has undergone a profound transformation, driven by an increasingly close collaboration between surgeons and imaging specialists. In this evolution, intraoperative echocardiography has progressively evolved from a purely diagnostic modality into a central tool for surgical planning and quality control.

My collaboration with professor Alain Carpentier, initiated in the early 1990s and continuing for more than 25 years, provides a unique perspective on this transformation [1]. It illustrates how the integration of echocardiography within surgical decision-making processes has contributed to improving both procedural success and long-term durability of mitral valve repair.

Four key lessons can be identified from this experience: understanding the surgeon's needs through a functional and pathophysiological approach, developing a standardized intraoperative echocardiographic protocol based on a common language, actively contributing to surgical innovation and ensuring effective transmission of knowledge to future young generations.

Beyond technical considerations, these lessons reflect a broader paradigm: the heart team as a unified entity, in which echocardiography acts simultaneously as a guide and a safety net.

1. Understanding the surgeon's needs: the pathophysiological "triad"

A major conceptual advance in mitral valve repair has been the introduction of a structured framework or pathophysiological "triad" based upon the clear distinction between aetiology, lesion and dysfunction.

Each of these components carries specific implications: aetiology determines prognosis, lesions guide surgical techniques and dysfunction defines the objectives of repair.

This framework marked a shift from purely anatomical descriptions toward a functional analysis centred on leaflet motion. In this context, Carpentier's classification remains fundamental, particularly in clarifying terminology and avoiding confusion between prolapse, billowing and flail. Importantly, prolapse must be defined as a dysfunction rather than a disease.

The functional approach has clarified a complex field and enhanced surgeon – echocardiographer communication. It is based upon three essential principles for a durable mitral valve repair: restoration of an adequate coaptation surface, preservation or recovery of leaflet mobility and systematic annular remodelling using ring annuloplasty.

For echocardiographers involved in intraoperative imaging, understanding these principles is essential. Their role is not to replicate surgical analysis but to provide complementary information, particularly regarding functional assessment in a beating heart.

2. Developing a standardized intraoperative echocardiographic protocol

Effective collaboration within the operating room requires a shared and structured language. Early experience highlighted the need to improve echocardiographic reporting so that it would be precise, concise, reproducible and directly relevant to surgical decision-making. This led to the development of a dedicated intraoperative protocol structured around key elements: dysfunction, lesion, aetiology, risk of systolic anterior motion (SAM) and associated valve assessment.

In the seminal paper, "The French Correction", published in 1983 [2], Alain Carpentier clearly mentioned that "Surgeons are not concerned with lesions. We care more about function". This standardized approach enables a clear and efficient dialogue between echocardiographers and surgeons, a true partnership (Fig. 1).

The "6 views – 5 measurements" protocol constitutes the backbone of this methodology. It ensures systematic evaluation of the mitral valve using multiplane 2D transoesophageal echocardiography, enabling accurate segmental analysis and reliable quantification of key parameters.

Three-dimensional echocardiography has further enhanced this approach. By providing a surgical view of the valve, it improves spatial understanding and facilitates communication within the team. It is particularly valuable in complex lesions, such as commissural involvement,

Abbreviation: SAM, Systolic anterior motion..

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acvd.2026.06.001>

Received 4 May 2026; Received in revised form 9 June 2026 Accepted 15 June 2026

Available online xxx

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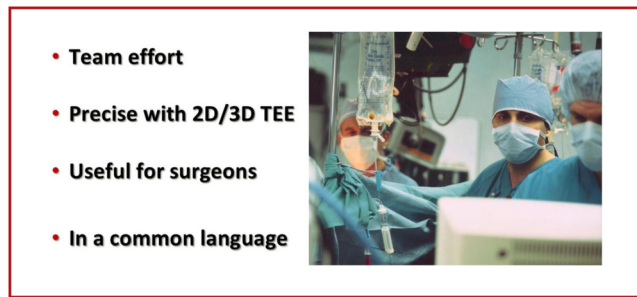


Fig. 1. IOE in mitral valve reconstruction: the power of partnership. TOE: transoesophageal echocardiogram.

in the assessment of indentation and a unique ventricular view of mitral valve. Importantly, 3D imaging complements rather than replaces 2D echocardiography. A combined approach ensures both diagnostic accuracy and intuitive interpretation.

3. The two-step intraoperative strategy: pre-pump and post-pump assessment

Intraoperative echocardiography plays a pivotal role at two key stages of mitral valve repair.

The first stage, pre-pump evaluation, consists of a detailed analysis of valve pathology. This step is crucial, as it provides the surgical roadmap and enables a shared understanding between the surgeon and the echocardiographer. The second stage, post-pump evaluation, is equally critical. It allows assessment of the immediate result of repair under physiological conditions and ensures that the repair meets quality criteria before completion of the procedure.

Post-repair assessment must be rigorous and standardized. Optimal haemodynamic conditions are mandatory and several parameters must be systematically evaluated, including coaptation height (≥ 8 mm), leaflet mobility and presence of residual mitral regurgitation and/or SAM.

A key challenge is distinguishing transient from permanent residual regurgitation. Only permanent defects should prompt immediate surgical correction. More importantly, identifying the mechanism of residual regurgitation, rather than assessing severity alone, is essential to guide appropriate corrective strategies. In this setting, echocardiography becomes a true decision-making tool and confirms its key role within the Heart Team.

4. Contributing to surgical innovation

Echocardiography has both enabled and advanced mitral valve reconstructive techniques. A prominent example is the understanding of SAM. Echocardiographic analysis has demonstrated that SAM results from an imbalance between excessive leaflet tissue and reduced mitral orifice size, frequently associated with undersized annuloplasty. This insight has led to major modifications in surgical strategies, including appropriate ring sizing and reduction of posterior leaflet height.

Similarly, echocardiography has contributed to redefining the approach to Barlow disease. Identification of specific echocardiographic patterns has allowed simplification of repair techniques in selected patients, emphasizing the importance of annular dynamics rather than solely valvular anatomical lesions.

These observations illustrate that innovation in mitral valve repair arises from continuous interaction between imaging and surgery. Echocardiography not only evaluates outcomes but also informs surgical concepts and techniques.

The ultimate objective of mitral valve repair is long-term durability. Beyond immediate surgical success, the goal is to achieve a lasting correction that provides sustained clinical benefit. Echocardiography plays a key role in this context by enabling accurate long-term follow-up and early detection of recurrent mitral regurgitation. It also reinforces adherence to fundamental principles, particularly the importance of annuloplasty in maintaining valve competence.

Despite considerable advances, “real-world” data indicate that early referral and repair rates remain suboptimal. This finding highlights the need for better dissemination of expertise and wider implementation of standardized approaches in specialized heart valve centres.

5. Ensuring transmission of knowledge to young generations

Sustained progress in mitral valve repair depends on effective transmission of knowledge. Education was a central element of Carpentier’s vision and remains a major priority.

Training initiatives, including dedicated courses and international collaborations, have contributed to disseminating expertise and promoting the Heart Team approach. More recently, simulation-based training has emerged as a powerful tool to teach intraoperative echocardiography and surgical techniques.

Standardized protocols can also be transmitted through simulation, improving reproducibility and accelerating learning curves. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, are expected to further enhance training and predictive capabilities. However, beyond technological innovation, education remains fundamentally a human process based on mentorship, experience and shared commitment.

6. Conclusion

The experience gained over 25 years at the interface between echocardiography and mitral valve reconstruction underscores the importance of full integration and partnership within the Heart Team in expert mitral valve centres. Understanding surgical needs, establishing a common language, contributing to innovation and ensuring effective transmission of knowledge are major lessons learned with Alain Carpentier. I owe my entire professional career to him. Beyond that, we have forged an unbreakable bond, a relationship that is not only scientific but also deeply human. This filial bond will last forever.

Sources of funding

None.

Disclosure of interest

The author declares that he has no competing interest.

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Clinical Research

Global adoption of TRI-SCORE digital tools for the risk stratification of patients with tricuspid regurgitation

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

TRI-SCORE

Tricuspid regurgitation

Digital

Management

Guidelines

ABSTRACT

Background: The TRI-SCORE is a dedicated risk-stratification tool for patients with isolated severe tricuspid regurgitation (TR) that is freely accessible via a web-based platform or mobile application.

Aims: To evaluate the global uptake of the TRI-SCORE and to describe the clinical characteristics of patients considered for intervention.

Methods: We collected all TRI-SCORE calculations and related parameters entered by users into the web-based calculator or mobile application between June 2024 and June 2025, along with the users' geographic location. The clinical profiles derived from these data were compared with those of the TRIGISTRY cohort.

Results: Overall, 36,001 calculations were recorded across 117 countries, with 83% performed through the web-based platform. Most patients were aged ≥ 70 years (70%), 58% were women and 70% had atrial fibrillation or flutter. TR was functional in 73% of cases. Patients were generally severely symptomatic (58% in New York Heart Association class III–IV, 58% with right heart failure signs) and many presented with advanced disease stages, with 33% and 27% falling into intermediate (4–5 points) and high (≥ 6 points) TRI-SCORE categories, respectively. Patient profiles were broadly consistent with those in TRIGISTRY, although left ventricular, hepatic and renal dysfunction were less commonly encountered.

Conclusion: These findings demonstrate the widespread adoption of the TRI-SCORE through free, user-friendly digital platforms and suggest its potential utility as a tool to monitor disease stage when considering interventions in patients with TR.

1. Background

With the advent of transcatheter therapies and building on the established trajectories of aortic and mitral valve interventions, tricuspid regurgitation (TR) has gained unprecedented clinical attention [1,2]. Our work – and that of others – has demonstrated that it is the clinical presentation and stage of TR disease rather than the intervention itself that primarily drives the high or prohibitive surgical mortality reported in many observational studies [3–5]. The TRI-SCORE, which integrates the severity of TR clinical presentation and its end-organ consequences, is a dedicated risk model designed to predict in-hospital mortality following isolated tricuspid valve surgery [6]. The TRI-SCORE is based on eight easy to ascertain clinical, biological and echocardiographic para-

eters (age, New York Heart Association [NYHA] class, signs of right heart failure, daily dose of loop diuretics, renal function, liver function, left ventricular function and right ventricular function).

Initially developed in a French cohort of patients who underwent isolated tricuspid valve surgery for both functional and organic TR, the TRI-SCORE has since been validated in multiple external cohorts encompassing wide geographical areas including in Asia [7]. Its predictive value has also been extended to patients managed conservatively or referred for transcatheter interventions [8,9]. In practice, three TRI-SCORE risk categories have been defined, low (≤ 3 points), intermediate (4–5 points) and high (≥ 6 points), to support decision-making in patients with TR. The TRI-SCORE is now incorporated into the TR management algorithm of the 2025 European Society of Cardiology (ESC)/European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery (EACTS) guidelines [10].

To facilitate access, we launched a free web-based calculator (<https://www.tri-score.com/>) followed, in June 2024, by a mobile application for iOS and Android. These digital tools offer a unique opportunity to collect information regarding the clinical presentations and

Abbreviations: CIED, cardiac implantable electronic device; EACTS, European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery; ESC, European Society of Cardiology; NYHA, New York Heart Association; TR, tricuspid regurgitation.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acvd.2026.04.003>

Received 26 November 2025; Received in revised form 6 April 2026 Accepted 7 April 2026

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Table 1

Characteristics of patients for whom the TRI-SCORE was calculated using digital platforms, overall and according to the mechanism of tricuspid regurgitation.

Characteristics	Overall (n = 36,001)	Functional (n = 26,123)	Organic (n = 5504)	Mixed (n = 4374)	P*
Clinical					
Age ≥ 70 years	25,183 (70)	18,936 (72)	3,359 (61)	2,888 (66)	< 0.001
Female sex	20,782 (58)	14,937 (57)	3,214 (58)	2,631 (60)	< 0.001
Prior left heart valve intervention	8,577 (24)	6,199 (24)	1,024 (19)	1,354 (31)	< 0.001
Surgery	6,465 (18)	4,600 (18)	805 (15)	1,060 (24)	
Transcatheter	2,112 (6)	1,599 (6)	219 (4)	294 (7)	
Permanent CIED	7,197 (20)	4,950 (19)	852 (15)	1,395 (32)	< 0.001
Pacemaker	5,615 (16)	3,875 (15)	685 (12)	1,055 (24)	
Defibrillator	1,582 (4)	1,075 (4)	167 (3)	340 (8)	
NYHA functional class III–IV	20,924 (58)	15,344 (59)	2,957 (54)	2,623 (60)	< 0.001
Right-sided heart failure signs	20,828 (58)	15,023 (58)	3,074 (56)	2,731 (62)	< 0.001
Daily dose of loop diuretics ≥ 125 mg	7,664 (21)	5,492 (21)	1,017 (18)	1,155 (26)	< 0.001
Atrial fibrillation or flutter	25,062 (70)	18,429 (71)	3,397 (62)	3,236 (74)	< 0.001
Laboratory parameters					
Glomerular filtration rate < 30 mL/min	1,212 (3)	927 (4)	135 (2)	150 (3)	< 0.001
Elevated total bilirubin	6,791 (19)	4,925 (19)	1,037 (19)	829 (19)	0.99
Echocardiographic parameters					
Left ventricular ejection fraction < 60%	15,119 (42)	10,986 (42)	2,082 (38)	2,051 (47)	< 0.001
Moderate/severe right ventricular dysfunction	13,239 (37)	9,404 (36)	1,923 (35)	1,912 (44)	< 0.001
TRI-SCORE					
Low (≤ 3)	4 (2–6)	4 (2–6)	4 (2–5)	4 (3–6)	< 0.001
Intermediate (4–5)	14,325 (40)	10,306 (39)	2,461 (45)	1,558 (36)	< 0.001
High (≥ 6)	12,069 (33)	8,809 (34)	1,819 (33)	1,441 (33)	
	9,607 (27)	7,008 (27)	1,224 (22)	1,375 (31)	

Data are expressed as number (%) or median (interquartile range). CIED: cardiac implantable electronic device; NYHA: New York Heart Association; TR: tricuspid regurgitation; *: P-value calculated for comparison between the three TR mechanisms (functional, organic and mixed).

risk profiles of patients being considered for a tricuspid valve intervention. In the present study, we aimed to evaluate the global adoption of the TRI-SCORE digital tools across web-based and mobile platforms over a recent 12-month period, and to characterize the clinical profiles of patients for whom the tool is used in routine practice.

2. Methods

We collected all TRI-SCORE calculations and related parameters entered by users for the calculation of the TRI-SCORE through either the official web-based calculator or the dedicated mobile applications between June 2024 (date of the release of the mobile application) and June 2025. All TRI-SCORE calculations were included but as the data were fully anonymized, there may have been repeated entries for some patients. In both the web-based and mobile applications, all TRI-SCORE variables encoded as binary (present/absent) are by default set to absent unless actively selected by the user. All patient-related data were collected in a fully anonymized manner, without any patient identifiers. Geographic location and professional background were collected only for users of the mobile application, for which explicit user consent was obtained.

The clinical profiles derived from the digital calculators were compared with those of patients included in TRIGISTRY, a contemporary international real-world registry comprising 2,413 patients with isolated functional TR, defined by the absence of significant left-sided valvular disease, in whom the TRI-SCORE was available. These patients were recruited from more than 30 heart valve centres across 10 countries and managed with medical therapy, isolated tricuspid valve surgery (repair or replacement without concomitant procedures) or transcatheter tricuspid valve repair [9].

3. Results

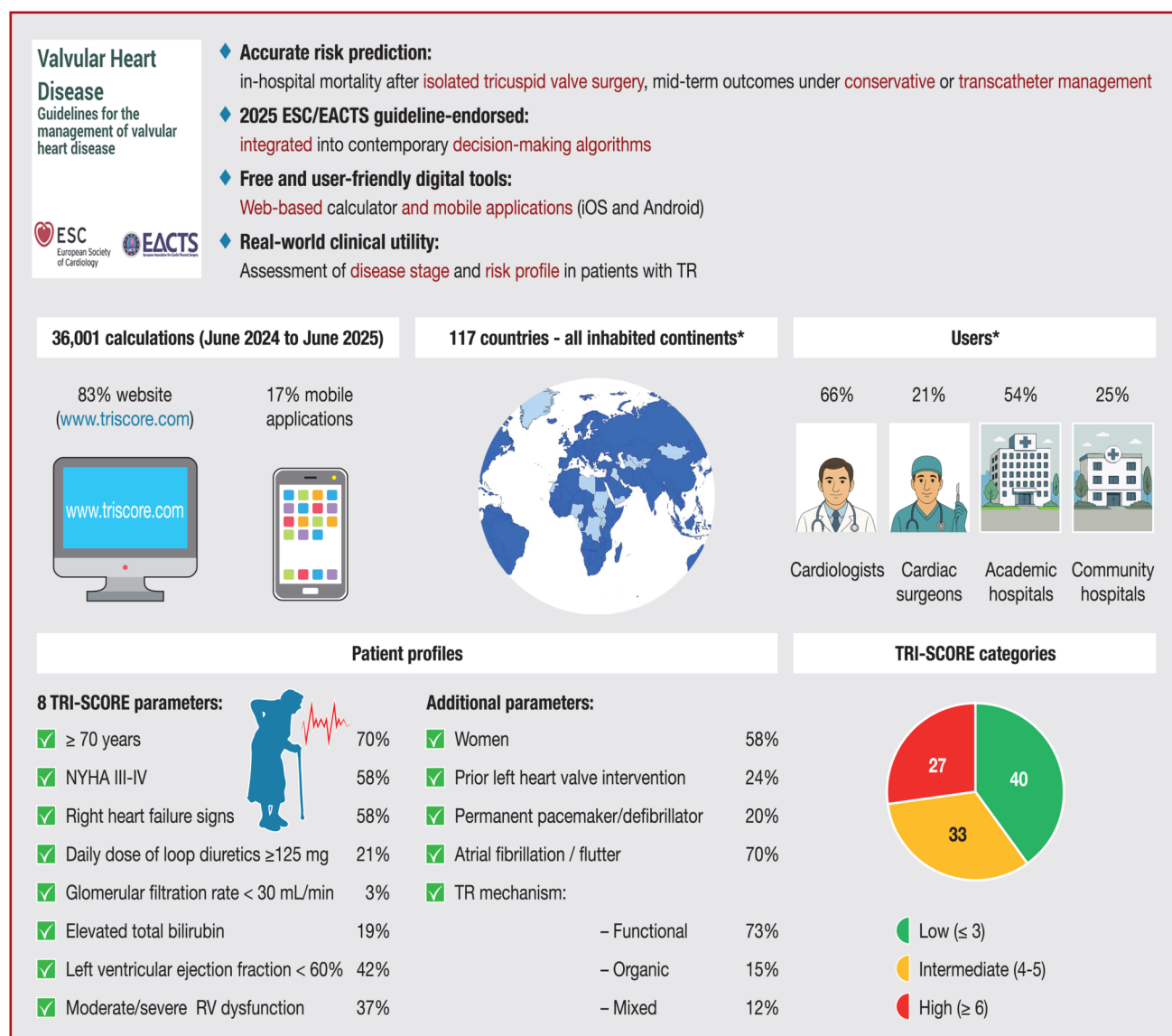
Between June 2024 and June 2025, 36,001 TRI-SCORE calculations were performed, corresponding to an average of approximately 100 per day. The majority were completed via the web-based platform

(n = 29,734, 83%), while the mobile applications accounted for the remaining 17% (n = 6,267). Data on country of origin and professional background of mobile users showed that the TRI-SCORE was calculated in 117 countries across all five continents, with 66% of users identified as cardiologists and 21% as cardiac surgeons. Most calculations were performed in academic hospitals (54%), followed by community hospitals (25%) (Central Illustration).

Regarding patient characteristics, 70% were aged ≥ 70 years, 58% were women and 70% had atrial fibrillation or flutter (Table 1, Central Illustration). A prior left-sided valve intervention was reported in 24% and 20% had a cardiac implantable electronic device (CIED). Most patients were severely symptomatic: 58% were in NYHA class III–IV, 58% presented with signs of right-sided heart failure, and 21% were receiving ≥ 125 mg of loop diuretics daily. Severe renal dysfunction (glomerular filtration rate < 30 mL/min) was observed in 3%, while 19% had elevated total bilirubin. Left ventricular ejection fraction was < 60% in 42% of patients, and moderate/severe right ventricular dysfunction was reported in 37%. The median (interquartile range) TRI-SCORE was 4 (2–6). According to TRI-SCORE categories, 40% of patients were classified as low risk (≤ 3 points), 33% as intermediate risk (4–5 points) and 27% as high risk (≥ 6 points).

Functional TR was the predominant mechanism (reported in 73% of calculations, n = 26,123 patients), while organic and mixed TR accounted for 15% (n = 5,504) and 12% (n = 4,374), respectively (Central Illustration). Compared with patients with functional or mixed TR, those with organic TR were younger, less frequently in atrial fibrillation or flutter, less likely to have a CIED or a prior left-sided valve surgery, were overall less symptomatic, and consequently presented with lower TRI-SCORE risk (P < 0.001). Compared with those with functional TR, patients with mixed TR were also younger but had more prior left-sided valve surgery, more frequent CIED, more pronounced symptoms, had higher rates of atrial fibrillation or flutter, left ventricular and right ventricular dysfunction, and had higher TRI-SCORE risk (P < 0.001) (Table 1).

The 26,123 patients with functional TR collected via the digital platforms and the 2413 enrolled in TRIGISTRY showed some overall similarities in their profiles. Nevertheless, differences were observed



Central Illustration. Global adoption of the TRI-SCORE powered by digital tools. ESC: European Society of Cardiology; EACTS: European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery; NYHA: New York Heart Association; RV: right ventricular; TR: tricuspid regurgitation. *: based on mobile application data only.

across the majority of baseline parameters, including lower rates of left ventricular, renal and hepatic dysfunction in the digital cohort (all $P < 0.001$), as well as a higher proportion of low TRI-SCORE and a lower proportion of high TRI-SCORE ($P < 0.001$).

Patient characteristics were overall similar between the web-based platform and the mobile application (Online supplement Table A.1). Although multiple differences reached statistical significance, these were largely driven by the large sample size and were associated with broadly comparable absolute proportions across groups.

4. Discussion

Although relatively recent, the TRI-SCORE has quickly become an essential tool in the decision-making process for patients with isolated TR [6,10]. Amid increasing recognition of TR and the rapid development of transcatheter therapies, this study demonstrates the widespread global uptake of the TRI-SCORE. The TRI-SCORE calculator was used in 117 countries across all inhabited continents, underscoring the value of accessible digital tools to enhance patient care regardless of national

wealth or healthcare infrastructure. This is particularly noteworthy given that TR has historically been under-recognized and undertreated, with limited therapeutic options until recently. Interestingly, the majority of calculations were performed through the website, with relatively limited use of the dedicated mobile applications. This lower uptake of the applications was somewhat unexpected but may be explained by the fact that most calculations are performed during consultations, where clinicians already have a computer open, making the web platform more convenient. Nevertheless, offering both formats remains important to ensure clinicians can access the tool in the way that best suits their workflow.

Beyond its global uptake, this registry provides important epidemiological insights into contemporary real-world practice. It captures a large and geographically diverse population of patients, including clinical characteristics extending beyond the variables required for TRI-SCORE calculation, such as mechanisms of TR. This breadth makes the dataset particularly informative for characterizing current patterns of TR assessment worldwide. When comparing patients with functional TR identified through the digital platforms with those enrolled in TRI-GISTRY, overall profiles were broadly comparable, although patients in

TRIGISTRY more frequently exhibited markers of advanced disease. This difference is consistent with the distinct nature of the two data sources. TRIGISTRY predominantly includes patients referred to expert centres for advanced evaluation or intervention, whereas the digital tools are used by a broader spectrum of clinicians across outpatient settings, community hospitals and academic centres, and therefore may capture patients at earlier stages of the disease course. Importantly, despite this broader and less selected population, nearly two-thirds of patients (60%) in the digital cohort fell into intermediate or high TRI-SCORE categories, highlighting that a substantial proportion of patients remain assessed at an advanced stage of the disease.

This analysis has several limitations. First, as the data were fully anonymized, no patient-level identifiers were available, precluding the identification of repeated calculations performed for the same patient. In real-world practice, repeated entries may occur to explore the impact of modifying one or more clinical parameters during a single hospitalization or when the same patient is assessed by different clinicians (e.g. junior and senior physicians or during Heart Team discussions). Thus, TRI-SCORE calculations might be slightly different from individual calculations. Although the exact magnitude of such duplication cannot be quantified, the very large number of calculations and the wide geographic and institutional distribution of users make it unlikely that repeated entries substantially influenced the overall distribution of clinical characteristics, with any potential effect expected to introduce random variability rather than systematic bias. In both the web-based and mobile applications, all TRI-SCORE variables were encoded as binary (present/absent) and by default set to absent, potentially resulting in underestimation of the TRI-SCORE in some patients. Second, the population captured through digital tools reflects voluntary use by clinicians and is therefore subject to selection bias, potentially limiting its representativeness of the overall population of patients with TR. Accordingly, differences between these populations should be interpreted with caution. Third, no information was available regarding patient management after the TRI-SCORE calculation. While such data would have been valuable, it would have required patient identifiers and repeated follow-up connections (as management decisions may occur weeks or months after the calculation), along with ethics approval not compatible with maintaining free and unrestricted access to the digital platforms. Finally, geographic and professional information were collected only through the mobile application and therefore reflects a subset of users. Nevertheless, these data should be interpreted as a qualitative indicator of the global reach of the TRI-SCORE rather than as a precise quantitative representation of country-level usage.

5. Conclusions

Our results, based on TRI-SCORE calculations performed through a free and user-friendly website and mobile application, highlight its widespread adoption. The ability to extract aggregated data from these digital tools provides insights into real-world patient profiles. The potential impact of such tools on clinical decision-making and timing of intervention warrants further investigation. Adoption of the TRI-SCORE is expected to grow further, supported by the expansion of transcatheter treatment options and its integration into the 2025 ESC/EACTS guidelines (Central Illustration).

Data availability

The data underlying this article will be shared upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Funding

The development of the TRI-SCORE mobile application was financially supported by Abbott and Edwards Lifesciences.

Disclosure of interest

J.D. has received consulting or proctoring fees from Abbott and Edwards Lifesciences. D.M.-Z. has received an unrestricted research grant from Edwards Lifesciences.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Maxence Banegas and Richard Partamian for developing the TRI-SCORE website and mobile applications, as well as for implementing the infrastructure that enabled data collection for this study. The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by Abbott and Edwards Lifesciences for the development of the mobile applications.

Online supplement. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acvd.2026.04.003>.

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