

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“The Dangers of Atrial Fibrillation”

More than 40 million individuals worldwide have atrial fibrillation (AFib), which is the most common heart arrhythmia disorder. An arrhythmia is when the heart beats too slowly, too fast, or in an irregular way. Risk of developing the disorder rises with age and the number of other conditions including high blood pressure, diabetes, heart failure, coronary artery disease, kidney disease, obesity, and obstructive sleep apnea. AFib is a serious diagnosis. While this condition isn't fatal in itself, it can lead to potentially life-threatening complications. Two of the most common complications of AFib are stroke and heart failure. Medications and lifestyle habits can both help prevent these in people with AFib. Patients with atrial fibrillation have an average of five co-existing conditions and these comorbidities have a negative impact on survival. In addition, three-quarters of atrial fibrillation patients take at least five drugs. But if it's left untreated, atrial fibrillation can be serious and even deadly. A stroke happens as a result of a blood clot in the brain. Patients often require medications to control the heart rate and to prevent blood clots. In the first study looking at cessation of alcohol consumption and atrial fibrillation (AF) risk, UC San Francisco researchers have shown that the longer people abstain from drinking alcohol, the lower their risk of AF. In addition to causing high blood pressure, high sodium levels have been linked with a long-term risk of developing AFib. Avoid or reduce salty foods such as pizza, cold cuts, salad dressings, and soups to reduce your risk. Sleep deprivation, physical illness, and recent surgery are also common triggers for AFib. Whenever your body isn't running at 100 percent, you're suffering from physical stress. Stress makes the abnormal electrical activity in your heart more likely to occur. According to a focused update to the 2014 American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology/Heart Rhythm Society Guideline, non-vitamin K oral anticoagulants (NOACs) are now recommended as the preferred alternative to warfarin (such as Eliquis) for reducing the risk of stroke associated with atrial fibrillation (AFib). Some people who have atrial fibrillation need a pacemaker. The pacemaker does not treat atrial fibrillation itself. The pacemaker is used to treat a slow heart rate (bradycardia) that happens in some people who have atrial fibrillation. To correct the condition, doctors may be able to reset the heart to its regular rhythm (sinus rhythm) using a procedure called cardioversion, depending on the underlying cause of atrial fibrillation and how long you've had it. AFib episodes rarely cause serious problem.

In the America that I love, please take good care of your miraculous heart. Walking can prove quite beneficial to the health and longevity of a person living with AFib.

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