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Newsletter Spring 2024: Atrial Fibrillation (AF)

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- Paroxysmal AF is defined as AF that terminates spontaneously or with intervention within seven days of onset
- Persistent AF is defined as AF that fails to self-terminate within seven days
- Long-standing persistent AF refers to AF that has lasted for more than 12 months
- Permanent AF is a term used to identify persistent AF for which a joint decision by the patient and clinician has been made to no longer pursue a rhythm control strategy
- Pulse palpation to detect atrial fibrillation is recommended as part of physical examination
- There is insufficient evidence to support screening for AF with ECG of any type
- Prevalence of AF is 0.1% in <55 yo and 18 % in >85 yo
- In patients with no history of AF but with stroke or systemic embolism, subclinical AF has been detected in up to 50% of patients
- Most patients with newly diagnosed AF can be managed as outpatients
- Emergency Department presentation is indicated if:
 - Severe symptoms (palpitations, angina, dyspnoea, syncope or PRE syncope)
 - Symptomatic hypotension (e.g. confusion, acute kidney injury)
 - Acute mvocardial infarction
 - o thromboembolism
 - Heart failure
 - o Extreme tachycardia
 - o Intercurrent illness e.g. pneumonia
 - Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome
- Non specific symptoms of AF: Fatigue, weakness, increased urination

- Anticoagulation is indicated guided by the CHADS-VASC score
- 90% of patients with AF will have recurrent episodes of AF
- Reducing alcohol intake significantly reduces recurrence of AF
- Weight loss significantly reduces recurrence of AF
- Rhythm control (i.e. aiming to keep the patient in sinus rhythm through antiarrhythmic therapy or pulmonary vein isolation by ablation) is indicated in patients that are:
 - symptomatic, especially if the symptoms are present despite controlled ventricular rate
 - At high risk for cardiovascular disease. High risk defined as:
 - Age >80 years old
 - Prior TIA or stroke
 - 2 of
 - Age >65 years old
 - Female
 - Heart failure
 - Hypertension
 - Diabetes
 - Severe coronary disease
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Left ventricular hypertrophy
 - Rhythm control confers a survival benefit in these patients
- Ablation
 - o success rate is 70-80% for paroxysmal AF and 60-70% for persistent AF
 - 98% of patients have AF burden reduction
 - o Mortality 0.5%, stroke up to 2%