

# Rugby legend helping get to the heart of the matter

FORMER England rugby skipper and Fylde resident Bill Beaumont is calling on others to get with the beat and know their heart rhythm.

Bill, of Lytham, suffers from atrial fibrillation – the most common cause of the heart beating irregularly.

He wants to make others aware of heart rhythm disorders, or cardiac arrhythmias.

The sporting legend has lent his voice to a campaign for Arrhythmia Awareness Week (September 12-19) in a bid to increase people's knowledge of one of the UK's biggest killers.

Bill, patron of the Arrhythmia Alliance, said: "I am well aware of the effect that an arrhythmia can have on people's lives.

"Even if they are not immediately or directly threatened by an arrhythmia, it can still be very disruptive.

"I have a business to run, duties in the sporting world and in

the media.

"These commitments can suffer greatly if an arrhythmia takes hold.

"Also, you never know when it's going to strike, so planned meetings and events can be disrupted.

"I am lucky that my atrial fibrillation is more of a nuisance than a threat. Many families are struck by sudden unexpected death, which can affect people in the prime of life, in childhood or as young adults, causing terrible bereavement.

"I really feel for the families who have lost loved ones. I have been lucky to get help from a cardiologist with a special interest in cardiac arrhythmias.

"Arrhythmias have been regarded as less important than heart attacks until now. Thankfully, the Government is now focusing its efforts and resources on increasing the awareness of the potential effects of arrhythmias, the need for better services to detect and correct them, and the need to grow the workforce to ensure that every patient has had the expert care that I have received."

Put simply, a cardiac arrhythmia is a fault in the heart's electrical system that makes it beat too slowly, too fast or irregularly.

It is responsible for the

sudden cardiac arrests that kill 100,000 people every year – more than lung cancer, breast cancer and Aids combined.

But in 80 per cent of cases an early diagnosis can mean survival with a choice of treatment options including drugs, devices or surgery.

It is these early warning signs that Jeannie Hayhurst, Ischemic Heart Disease Co-ordinator for Wyre Primary Care Trust, will be telling people all about as she mans the stand on Friday, between 9.30am and 4pm.

She said: "We'll also be inviting visitors to fill in a short survey to discover what they actually know about arr-

hythmias.

"It is the biggest killer in the country and cardiac arrhythmias vary widely in type and severity.

"We want people to be aware that heart rhythm irregularities can be fatal

and what sort of symptoms should always be checked out by a medical professional."

Jeannie will also have information for people already living with an arrhythmia.

More information about Arrhythmia Awareness Week can be accessed via a dedicated website at [www.aaaw.org.uk](http://www.aaaw.org.uk).



'DISRUPTIVE': Bill Beaumont

