



News Release

AFA, PO Box 1219, Chew Magna, Bristol, BS40 8WB, UK
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Registered Charity Number 1122442

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AFA welcomes new guidelines for Treating Atrial Fibrillation

The Atrial Fibrillation Association is pleased to welcome new guidelines for the treatment of AF, published by the European Society of Cardiology.

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is the most common heart rhythm disorder, occurring in 1–2% of the general population. More than six million Europeans suffer from this cardiac arrhythmia, and it's estimated to at least double in the next 50 years as the population ages and increasingly survives previously life-threatening conditions. AF confers a five-fold risk of stroke, and between 20-30% of all strokes, in particular the most debilitating and life threatening type, are attributed to this arrhythmia.

The new guidelines are the first for four years and were needed to reflect extensive recent research into stroke prevention for AF patients as well as keep pace with new interventions such as advanced ablation techniques and new anti-arrhythmic drugs.

While the guidelines will need to be adapted for individual countries, they give an excellent overview of AF, recommendations for initial diagnosis and treatment. New drugs such as Dronaderone, are also featured, for rhythm control in AF.

The new guidelines also detail a more comprehensive assessment of stroke risk in AF, with an emphasis on the presence or absence of stroke risk factors, with newly published comprehensive stroke risk assessment scheme, the CHA₂ DS₂ VASc score, to be complementary to the existing approach using the CHADS₂ schema.

AFA also welcomes the inclusion of the HAS-BLED score, which is a simple bleeding risk assessment tool recommended for use before the start of anti-coagulation therapy. Both tools represent important aspects in reducing the risks of life threatening complications in Atrial Fibrillation.

The new guidelines and inclusion of these stroke and bleeding risk assessment tools will assist clinicians across the EU to improve and extend successful management of AF patients when deciding on approach to treatment and without doubt, significantly reduce the occurrence of a great number of strokes in AF patients.

Professor Gregory Y H Lip, who has played a key role in researching and developing the risk assessment schema, and member of the AFA Medical Advisory Committee, said, "The new 2010 ESC guidelines reaffirm the value of oral anticoagulation for stroke prevention, and more patients will require anticoagulation on the basis of the presence of stroke risk factors. Hopefully with the availability of the new oral anticoagulation drugs that overcome the disadvantages of warfarin, more AF patients will be able to reap the benefits of stroke prevention with oral anticoagulation therapy"



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AFA Trustee, Professor A John Camm presented the new guidelines at the recent congress for the European Society of Cardiology.

AFA Chief Executive, Trudie Lobban, said, "AFA is extremely pleased to welcome these guidelines which are much needed. We hope that they will help people with atrial fibrillation get the care they need wherever in Europe they live. The update is much needed to reflect the new advances in the treatment and care of AF and it gives physicians and nurses a clear pathway to follow when presented with different aspects of the condition."

Editor's Notes:

1. The guidelines can be found at this link: <http://www.escardio.org/guidelines-surveys/esc-guidelines/Pages/atrial-fibrillation.aspx>
2. For more information from the Atrial Fibrillation Association, contact Jo Jerrome at jo@atrialfibrillation.org.uk
3. The AFA website is at www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk where you can find further facts about the condition.