Everyone has ectopic beats and palpitations from time to time. Isolated ectopic beats and short episodes of palpitations are not serious, but if you have frequent or long lasting episodes of palpitations, these may indicate an underlying arrhythmia. Sometimes, however, arrhythmias can elude diagnostic tests. You may suspect that you have atrial fibrillation (AF), but clinicians may be difficult to convince if they cannot confirm a diagnosis of their own through tests such as an ECG or a 24 hour monitor.

If AF is ignored, it can lead to an AF-related stroke which can have serious or even fatal consequences. A doctor who is unable to diagnose the cause of your symptoms may consider an insertable cardiac monitor.

Traditionally doctors would have implanted an ILR (which is the size of a USB stick) under the skin on the left hand side of a patient’s chest in order to capture a recording of the heart rate and rhythm at the time of an episode of irregular rhythm. The device records on a continuous loop for up to three years. If you experienced a cardiac event such as an episode of palpitations, a separate device would freeze the recording and document the episode which would then be assessed by a heart rhythm specialist at a designated hospital.

**How is the ICM fitted?**

As this miniature monitor is so much smaller and easier to implant, it is intended that the procedure could be performed in a treatment room rather than a theatre setting. Implanting the device requires an incision of less than 1cm which can then be closed easily with medical adhesive, a thin adhesive strip or a single suture.

Fitting this device will take just a few minutes, with positive implications for waiting lists. In some cases the procedure could be undertaken on first attendance at a clinic, saving delay in reaching a diagnosis and the inconvenience of repeat visits.

**How is an episode captured?**

There would be no need to use a separate device to record an episode as the ICM is remotely monitored, wirelessly, through a receiver in your house. Any unusual heart activity will be transmitted via a 3G signal to a secure system which will alert a heart rhythm specialist. You would then be contacted if necessary. Inevitably this will provide more peace of mind for a patient.

**Removal of the ICM**

Once the reason for your heart rhythm problems has been identified through this device, it can be removed with another simple procedure.