FUNDRAISING CHAMPION
We catch up with the ‘Running Man’ who raised over £4200 for AF Association

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SAVE THE DATE
18 - 24 November 2019

Atrial fibrillation affects in excess of 16 million people worldwide. This year’s focus is the detection of atrial fibrillation (AF) through our Know Your Pulse campaign, encouraging supporters to know their pulse, to know their rhythm. For more information and ways to show your support, visit: www.gafaw.org

Visit our Online Shop
From heart monitors to t-shirts and collection boxes, you can find lots of things in our online shop all at fair prices. Every purchase helps us to continue providing you with the support you need.

www.heartrhythmalliance.org/afa/uk/shop-online

Find out more on Page 26
Arrhythmia Alliance
World Heart Rhythm Week 2019
‘Know Your Pulse to Know Your Rhythm’

3 – 9 June 2019 was Arrhythmia Alliance World Heart Rhythm Week (A-A WHRW). This year, the key message was We Hear(t) You. We asked people to ‘listen’ to their heart – is the rate too fast? Too slow? Is it irregular? That may be your heart telling you something is wrong.

Supporters were asked to spread the word by holding an awareness activity, sharing and displaying information or by fundraising and donating to Arrhythmia Alliance.

On Wednesday 5 June, AF Association assisted in hosting the annual A-A WHRW reception on the Terrace Pavilion at the Palace of Westminster, London. The event welcomed over 200 guests including a number of MPs and Lords.

The event demonstrated to MPs, medical professionals, patients and members of industry the need to raise awareness, educate and inform about heart rhythm disorders. It also enabled speakers to talk about the National Screening Committee – AF Consultation. In 2014 the National Screening Committee refused to support a national screening programme for AF, and have now put out an updated review for consultation.

This can be found at www.afa.org.uk
We have sent emails to everyone asking for your responses, and we would like to thank you all for your support. We hope to have a response soon and will keep you all updated.

SAVE THE DATE
A-A WHRW 2020
1 - 7 June
Know Your Pulse events were held around the world, including South Carolina, USA, Manchester UK, New Zealand, South Africa, Serbia and Brazil (see photos above).

Thank you to all who supported Arrhythmia Alliance World Heart Rhythm Week 2019.

For more information and to get involved in Arrhythmia Alliance WHRW 2020
Visit: www.heartrhythmalliance.org
UK, Call: +44 (0)1789 867501 or Email: info@heartrhythmalliance.org
USA, Call: +1 843-415-1886 or Email: info-us@heartrhythmalliance.org
A year ago, I wrote about a roller coaster ride along my journey from diagnosis of AF to a successful ablation in January 2017.

I had become very debilitated with frequent episodes of fast AF that required attendances at A&E. I lost a lot of confidence and lived in fear of when the next episode was going to strike. The recovery process has taken time; much of the first year was spent regaining my confidence and in the second year focusing on my physical fitness as well.

Two years ago, turning 60 with AF and a titanium knee joint, I never imagined that I would come to own a road bike and be taking part in a triathlon!

Last summer was perfect weather to start training for the Super Sprint section of the Brighton and Hove Triathlon. I met regularly with two friends for bike rides, walks (running not recommended with replaced knee joints) and swims in the sea. I discovered that training could be sociable, fun and we all enjoyed the feel-good factor to be had from regular exercise and improved fitness. We are also now well acquainted with all the seafront cafes between Rottingdean and Worthing!

My still dented confidence didn’t allow me to believe that I would actually be fit to take part on 16 September. The day was bright and sunny with a stiff breeze that made the sea very choppy. We were assured it was safe and there was no getting out of the 400m swim, the adrenalin kicked in and the 5k bike ride and 2.5k run/walk to complete the event were actually enjoyable.

Another organisation that was very valuable in enabling me to regain my fitness, along with British Triathlon (www.britishtriathlon.org), was Parkrun (www.parkrun.org.uk). Parkrun is a free event that takes place on Saturday mornings in parks around the world. You don’t have to run and many of us for varying reasons can only walk the 5K course. I have met lots of really interesting people at the back of the pack!

I have had one episode of sinus tachycardia since my ablation, which, with hindsight was possibly related to having a viral illness and exacerbated by my becoming acutely anxious, fearful that the AF had returned.
I had my heart monitored for a week with a small portable monitor, which reassuringly showed nothing untoward. My cardiologist reminded me that when we have a viral illness or become very stressed we do become vulnerable to the possibility of AF recurring.

I continue to be careful with what I eat, still avoiding known AF triggers such as cheese, gamey meat, aged beef and very processed or marinated foods.

I drink very little alcohol and keep well hydrated drinking plenty of water. Lapses do sometimes raise my heart rate and I take this as a warning sign. I try to make sure I get plenty of sleep and rest if I am unwell with a virus. I have the ‘flu vaccination every September, which is given at our local pharmacy. I continue to take the anticoagulant Apixaban, which I will take for life to reduce the risk of AF-related stroke.

I have now been discharged from the cardiology service, but know that our local arrhythmia nurses remain just a phone call away if I have any worries.

I am becoming a more active supporter of the AF Association, doing my bit to raise awareness of the Detect, Protect and Correct campaign, to reduce the incidence of AF-related strokes. Following the launch of The White Paper in November 2018 on inequalities and unmet needs in the detection and use of therapies to prevent AF related stroke in Europe.

I have regained a good quality of life, but I have had to work to get there and will continue to respect and take care of my precious heart.

Gillian (middle) with her two triathlon friends.
Streetly Lodge Masonic Lodge, Walsall raised a wonderful £891 during the 2018 – 2019 year.

Thank you to Pat from Bristol for making a generous donation of £150 in memory of her Aunt Mary, who passed away aged 101!

Ian ran the Virgin Money London Marathon in 5 hours and 45 minutes and raised a whopping £4,281.80 for AF Association. Ian has come to be known as “The Running Man” in the AF Association office, and we are extremely grateful for all his support. Turn to page 18 to read Ian’s interview once he’d caught his breath.

Maggie from Northern Ireland held a jumble sale at two of her dance classes, and raised an incredible £129! Maggie also highlighted the importance of knowing your pulse. She says, “I showed the dancers (all pensioners), how to take their pulse and explained it should beat like a clock ticking. I am delighted with the amount I raised by holding a simple jumble sale! AF Association has given me so much support over the last 10 years, it feels good to give something back!”
We want to support all our fundraisers as much as possible, so for everyone who takes part in an event to raise money for AF Association, we will send you a fundraising pack.

Each pack will contain sponsor forms, booklets and educational resources, a t-shirt, balloons and a collection box.

Call: +44 (0)1789 867502
or Email: info@afa.org.uk

ROLL OF HONOUR
Thank you to all those who have donated to AF Association in the last six months:


Scott of the Scottish Police College raised £112.50 during his collection events. In this photo we see Scott, who is the training development Officer, with Sergeant Sandra Flemming, the Healthy Working Lives Coordinator. Thank you Scott and all your colleagues for all your work.
AF Association IN THE USA
An update from our US team

It’s been a busy few months for our American team

**AF Symposium**
**January 24-26, 2019 Boston, MA**

AF Association staff attended the 24th Annual International AF Symposium.

This event provided the most current review of new information on the clinical science and pathophysiology of atrial fibrillation and AF-related stroke, together with the latest treatments and procedures for the management of atrial fibrillation.

We are looking forward to attending the 25th Annual International AF Symposium.

**April Highlights**
**AF Association Presentation**

We want to say a big THANK YOU to Kadin who chose to present about the AF Association!

Kadin, a high school freshman, was tasked with promoting an organization. Knowing what it is like to have a family member with atrial fibrillation, he chose to present on the AF Association. Kadin provided his classmates with an overview of the organization, distributed AF Association resources and informed his classmates on ways to get involved. Once again, thank you Kadin for assisting the AF Association with increasing awareness and education of atrial fibrillation.
29th Annual Art & Science of Health Promotion Conference

Our amazing US Community Education Manager, Sharonica Gavin, attended the Art and Science Health Promotion Conference showcasing research on ‘Adapting Know Your Pulse Events to Benefit Young Adults.’

For 30 years, the Art & Science of Health Promotion Conference has been presenting the very best in health promotion. Providing practical strategies and research to make health programs for patients more effective.

Ted Talks Tedx Hilton Head

We are happy to announce one of our dedicated volunteers, David Premo was selected as a speaker for Tedx HiltonHead. He focused his presentation on his AF journey to recovery.

In 2017, David suffered a significant AF-related stroke with aphasia. He shares decision points, plans and actions taken to regain speech, resume his position as a university professor and gain recognition as a Division Director of Toastmaster.

David’s success is a result of following the advice of Abraham Lincoln, “If it is going to be, it is up to me.”
Volunteers offer so much to non-profits by dedicating their invaluable time, skills and experience to community projects. It is important as a non-profit to also consider what is offered to volunteers and how they are rewarded for their contribution.

At the AF Association we offer a range of unique benefits, for our volunteers, that allow us to thank them for their time and recognize their service to our life-saving work.

This is why they volunteer...

I volunteer because I want to make a difference. When I first started with the AF Association (AF-A) I wasn’t sure that I was going to be able to make a noticeable contribution to our patients and the community, but five months later, I feel like I’ve done so much more than I could have ever imagined. Not only is AF Assoc an incredible organization, doing important work, but it provides us volunteers with opportunities to grow and flourish in this field. Everything I have experienced here at AF-A will be beneficial to me in all walks of life. I have lived in the Low country for 12 years in August and I have connected with the community more in my tenure here at AF-A than ever before.

Michael, Public Health Senior Internship, USCB

April Highlight, National Volunteer Month
I attended Sophia University in Tokyo for Asian Studies and received a B.A. in Sociology from North Central College in Illinois. I also have a Master’s degree in Organizational Development from National Louis University in Illinois.

I volunteer for AF Association because education really can and does save lives. We can do so much for so many, so quickly, with a new but powerful alliance.

David is an atrial fibrillation patient, AF-related stroke survivor and one of our dedicated volunteers. In 2017, David suffered a significant AF-related stroke with aphasia. Since then he has worked tirelessly to share his story and help others on their road to recovery.

David attributes his success to the advice of Abraham Lincoln, “If it is going to be, it is up to me.”

AF Association has taught me the importance of just how critical it is to take care of your heart. I volunteer because I enjoy helping others and sharing with my friends and family what the AF Association stands for. I have met so many people and built strong relations with this non-profit organization. This is such a rewarding experience that I will never forget.
Arrhythmia Alliance World Heart Rhythm Week 2019 - Event Overview

**June 4 - Know Your Pulse**  
Hilton Head Library

Arrhythmia Alliance World Heart Rhythm Week (A-A WHRW) 2019 kicked off with a free “Know Your Pulse” event at Hilton Head Island Library. Participants received free pulse checks, educational resources and complimentary cupcake coupons from Sweet Carolina Cupcakes, located in the Coligny Plaza Shopping Center, it was an honor to partner with them to help increase awareness for A-A WHRW.

We distributed dozens of educational resources and conducted a total of 17 pulse screenings that helped to raise awareness of the symptoms of irregular heart rhythms. Many thanks to everyone that stopped by our table including Mr. Bojangles the Golden Retriever!

**June 5 – Know Your Pulse**  
Coligny Beach, Hilton Head Island

The Coligny Beach “Know Your Pulse” event was a huge success with a total of 26 pulse checks and distribution of water, koozies, pens, coupons and educational resources. Each participant was made aware of the importance of A-A World Heart Rhythm Week and spreading the word in regards to arrhythmias. We are extremely grateful to our sponsors including Piggly Wiggly, Sweet Carolina Cupcakes and Rita’s Italian Ice for helping us encourage others to be apart of our #knowyourpulse campaign. It means the world to us that these community partners believe in our mission to enhance the lives of those affected by arrhythmias.
June 6 – Know Your Pulse
Hilton Head Hospital

The aim of A-A World Heart Rhythm Week is to raise awareness of the symptoms of arrhythmias in both the general public and medical profession. As we extended our reach into the medical population, we were able to educate healthcare professionals and patients at Hilton Head Hospital about arrhythmias and the importance of checking your pulse. We were able to complete 18 pulse checks and distribute 50 resources. Each pulse check participant received a complimentary cupcake coupon from Sweet Carolina Cupcakes.

June 7 – Heart to Heart Game Night

We closed out A-A WHRW 2019 with the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals for our “Heart to Heart” Game Night. Our games centered around heart-related trivia facts. Participants were grouped into teams and given a variety of questions that helped to increase their knowledge regarding matters of the heart. We were able to complete over 26 pulse checks, distribute informative resources and educate young professionals about the importance of A-A WHRW. Many thanks to the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals for their partnership in making this night a success!

For the latest news and events from our US team, follow their social media pages:
Facebook: @atrialfibrillationUS   Twitter: @AtrialFib_US
New to the Team
Meet our newest staff members

Beth
UK
Programme Coordinator

Hi! My name is Beth, and I joined the team at the beginning of January 2019. I enjoy providing a friendly service and am extremely motivated in supporting my colleagues here at AF Association. I love exploring; whether that be a new city, country or getting out and about in the countryside with my dog, Betty. I also love to dance, and I have done since a young age.

Maddy
UK
Administration Assistant

Hello! My name is Maddy and I joined the team as the Admin Assistant in August 2019. I’m excited to get involved with this wonderful charity and help in any way I can to keep up the amazing things they achieve. Outside of work, I really enjoy travelling and have just returned from 3½ months exploring Asia and Oceania. I am also a keen runner and completed the London Marathon in 2018 with the hope to run another next year.

Jennifer
US
Communications Coordinator

Hi, I’m Jennifer, I was the Creative Marketing Director for T.H.A. Group, a local in-home health care company, for 11 years and have over 14 years of experience in design, marketing and community outreach. I have served as a volunteer for Shelter From the Rain Inc., T.H.A. Group’s Island Hospice, Savannah Church of God, The Living Vine Christian Maternity and several other non-profits. I am the mother of an amazing son, Jalin, who plays the viola and is a senior at Savannah Arts Academy. I am extremely excited to join the team and work towards enhancing the lives of those affected by arrhythmias.
I have been a Cardiac Physiologist for many years and my job has always been hugely important to me. It’s fascinating, enjoyable and rewarding and the patient’s experience has always been a priority.

In the Echo Clinic environment, especially, I meet many people, day to day, with the diagnosis of Atrial Fibrillation (AF). It is obvious that patient numbers are increasing. Moreover, many of these patients don’t really know what AF is. They are left feeling confused and alone with no information.

I wanted to change this for the people I meet and so, when I learned of the AF Association, I began to direct patients to the website, so they could learn more about their condition and dispel some of their fears. They were so grateful that, in short, this sparked my interest to have a more direct involvement.

In 2017, as part of AF Association Global AF Aware Week, I organised a pulse check event. A few work colleagues and myself held the event on a very cold November day in my home town, Frome, and spoke to 85 people who were queuing to talk to us!

From this point on I realised that more was needed, and decided the next step was to set up an AF Patient Support Group. With the aid of numerous local sources and the AF Association, a date was set, and patients turned up enthusiastically. In fact, we ran out of chairs at that first meeting! That was in June 2018 and since then, we have met regularly to learn about medications, diet and exercise; we have a website and plan more for the future.

I am grateful to the AF Association for the encouragement I received to ‘get involved’, not only because I have found it so rewarding but, more importantly, because patients are really benefiting.

Help us to help others - share your story
UK, Call: +44 (0)1789 867502 or Email: info@afa.org.uk
USA, Call: +1 (843) 415 1886 or Email: info@afa-us.org
The Running Man
Fundraising Champion
- Ian, Scotland

Ian finished the Virgin Money London Marathon 2019 in 5 hours and 45 minutes. We caught up with him afterwards to ask him a few questions.

Q Why did you choose to fundraise for AF Association?

Several people I know, including my wife, have AF and I have seen how AF impacts their lives. On learning about the condition after attending the AF Association Patients Day event in Birmingham in 2018, I saw how important their excellent work is.

They explained how fundraising is essential to continue their work in providing up to date information and support to those living with AF. So, the opportunity to do something that would help raise funds, by doing the London Marathon, was an opportunity for me to help the AF Association.

The AF Association is a very important resource for those who have the condition. It needs support and I just wanted to do something to help. The iconic London Marathon also helps bring awareness of the condition into the public domain, which has to be a benefit for everyone in the long term.

Q What was your biggest challenge?

It started with the training which was tough and did not go to plan. My 18-week preparation schedule saw me running over 350 miles in the first 13 weeks before injuring my Achilles tendon. The injury prevented me from any running for the next five weeks leading to the London Marathon.

After weekly physio on my injury I managed to get to the start line but was not able to run on my ankle. I went into the Marathon having to, at best, do a fast walk and did not know how long my ankle would last.

On the day, I succeeded in getting around in 5hrs 45 min but had to battle on with very sore knees for the last 10 miles. The fast walk technique, which I only ever did for four miles during the preparation, put a lot of strain on my knees. Something I had not thought about when deciding on the race strategy.

Anyway with the help and encouragement of the fantastic crowd you somehow overcome the pain and find a way to finish. It’s something I’ve never experienced before and don’t want to again!
Seeing the finish straight ahead on The Mall and finally crossing the line was one of the best moments of my life. As this was my first ever marathon I’d never thought it possible I could do one. Not knowing if my injuries would hold before and during the race made it extra special.

It was a very emotional moment, hard to describe and something I’ll never ever forget. London is special and having just finished was so amazing.

Q How did you feel crossing the finish line?

Knowing I had such fantastic support certainly helped me keep going. Believe me that’s a big thing when you know so many people have been so kind and generous in the support. The donations were incredible and before starting the race, we had raised £3600 which has risen to more than £4200 since the race finished.

Your kind words of encouragement gave me so much motivation. It was a privilege to be able to help the association and hopefully help those who need it.

So, thank you, thank you and thank you once more!

Q Do you have any messages for your supporters?

Help us to help others - share your story

UK, Call: +44 (0)1789 867502 or Email: info@afa.org.uk
USA, Call: +1 (843) 415 1886 or Email: info@afa-us.org
Meditation, Mindfulness and AF

AF can not only have a huge physical impact on your life and body but can also cause havoc in your mind. Common reactions to AF include worry, fear, anxiety, depression, sadness, and even anger. The diagnosis of AF can come as a shock, especially if you have been conscious of your diet and tried to be fit and active. It is important to know that these are common and very normal reactions.

However, a lot of people do not realise that emotional stress and anxiety play a huge role in what is happening in our bodies. Stress and anxiety can cause an increased release of stress hormones into our bloodstream and this interferes with normal heart rhythm and pumping strength.

For people with AF, anxiety surrounding their condition can almost become part of the condition itself. The experience of having an AF episode can lead to anxiety about having another episode, where and when it might be, how it might feel, or how they will control it. This creates more anxiety, which can have a negative impact on AF, raising your heart rate, creating stress and sometimes is the cause of an episode. Although it is far easier said than done, the best thing to do is to take control of your life, and try to manage any anxiety, stress, fear or anger you might be feeling. Meditation has many benefits, one of which, is reducing anxiety and stress. Meditation is an age-old practice in which you relax the body and calm the mind. During meditation, the body systems will slow down, the heart rate will slow and our breathing slows as our body relaxes and our mind lets go of stress.

Studies have found that gentle forms of yoga and exercises can help patients with AF. Practising yoga can lead to a slight drop in systolic and diastolic blood pressure and can have beneficial effects on heart rate. Yoga is easy to learn, and can be practised while sitting in a chair. There are many different types of yoga, but all focus on three main practices: breathing, posture and meditation. It is widely accepted that yoga can dramatically reduce anxiety and stress, and in turn can help with your AF. Yoga can help provide a powerful connection between the mind and the body, which can be very helpful for those with AF.

Studies have shown that practising yoga for twice per week for 60 minutes at a time can help to lessen the frequency of AF episodes, as well as reduce blood pressure and heart rate. It is recommended for beginners to start out by practising yoga for 15 minutes once a week, building up to as much as 90 minutes per day.

If yoga or meditation does not suit you, try using some simple relaxation techniques to help clear your mind and lower your heart rate and breathing. Relaxation can help to combat stress, anxiety and worry, by releasing physical and mental tension. It is also very beneficial to your mental health and well-being, and helps you sleep better and improve your mood. Some relaxation tips include listening to some music, lighting a candle or some incense, having a massage, deep breathing, going for a walk, reading a book or simply talking to a friend or settling down to watch a film.
AF – Identifying Your Triggers

When you are first diagnosed with AF, you often don’t realise what is causing your episodes. Is it genetic? Is it because you exercise too much? Or not enough?

Common triggers for AF may include:

- Caffeine (this includes cola and energy drinks, as well as tea and coffee)
- Alcohol
- Tonic Water
- Stress
- Large, carb-heavy meals
- Icy cold or very hot food and drinks
- Laying on your left side
- Exercise

Unfortunately, this list could be endless. Each person will find that something different triggers their episodes of AF. For example, John Smith at Number 1 might find that he is able to go for a daily jog or bike ride, and lead an active lifestyle, but his afternoon cup of tea triggers an episode of AF strong enough to require a trip to see the doctor and his neighbour Jane Jones, might struggle to reach the garden gate!

To identify these, it is recommended that you keep a food and activity diary for a few months. You should record all food and drink, and all activities – particularly those that you don’t undertake every day. You will also need to be aware of your heart rhythm and note in your diary when you notice that you have gone into AF.

It might be something as simple as a glass of wine or beer with your friends, a large plate of pasta, or your weekly jog around the park with the dog that triggers your AF, but you never realised it before.

You can then share your diary with your doctor to identify YOUR triggers and discuss how or if you can cut them down. This could hopefully avoid future episodes, and even perhaps lower your medication dosage in some cases!
We are often contacted by people with AF who are taking anticoagulant therapy to prevent AF-related stroke but are due to visit their dentist. Many ask “should I stop taking my anticoagulants before my appointment?”

It is important that your dentist knows what medication you are taking and what medical conditions you have.

- Tell your dentist which anticoagulant you are taking: warfarin, apixaban, dabigatran, edoxaban or rivaroxaban
- Show your dentist your INR record booklet if you are taking warfarin
- Tell your dentist about all other medications you are currently taking, both prescribed and non-prescribed aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, all of which can cause you to bleed more
- You should also inform your dentist about any herbal or complimentary medicines you are taking

Make sure to tell your dentist about any medical conditions that you have, particularly if you have a kidney or liver condition as these can cause you to bleed more.

This information will allow your dentist to decide on the most suitable treatment for you. Your dentist may contact your doctor if he/she requires more information.

In most cases your dentist will be able to carry out your dental treatment as usual and will not advise you to alter or pause your medication. For some procedures though, your dentist may advise you to delay or miss taking your anticoagulant drug on the morning of your procedure (or longer if you are taking warfarin). Your dentist will tell you when to take the next dose after the procedure.

Your dentist may offer to put some sutures (stitches) in to help stop any bleeding. We highly recommend that whatever procedure you are having, if it involves a local anaesthetic, to give your dentist at least 24 hours’ notice and request an “adrenaline free anaesthetic”. It is common for the adrenaline in anaesthetic to trigger an episode of AF, or at the very least, palpitations.
Atrial Fibrillation and Anaesthesia
- Dr Charlotte D’Souza, Anaesthesiologist

If you have Atrial Fibrillation (AF) and need to have an operation of any sort, there are a few special considerations to make, so be sure to inform your surgeon that you have AF prior to your operation. You will most likely meet with an anaesthetist leading up to your operation as they will determine what management is the safest option for you leading up to and during your surgery.

Patients with AF are usually taking anticoagulants to lower their risk of AF-related stroke. However, this means that they are at greater risk of bleeding during the operation. Therefore, your medication may be changed or stopped altogether a few days prior to surgery if it is deemed that the risk of bleeding outweighs the risk of stroke. It is very important that you understand what the plan is leading up to your operation to ensure a safe and timely procedure. You should also discuss with the anaesthetist what the plan is with your medication after the operation, such as when to recommence your anticoagulation therapy.

Your anaesthetist will need to consider all medications that you are on, to ensure the safest possible anaesthetic is delivered. When you meet with the anaesthetist pre-operatively, take along a list of all the medications that you take.

Having AF is not a contraindication to having surgery, but it does put you at greater risk of certain complications, due to both the irregular heart rhythm itself, medication that you are on, and the subsequent conditions that can result from AF such as heart failure. Your anaesthetic needs to be tailored to you; you may need to temporarily change or stop certain medication, be admitted the night before surgery, have additional blood tests and/or other investigations, and/or may have a slightly longer than normal stay in hospital. You may require increased monitoring during your operation such as an arterial line in your wrist to continuously and closely monitor your blood pressure, and you may require admission to the High Dependency Unit (HDU) afterwards, depending on the severity and stability of your condition.

Inform your surgeon at the earliest possible opportunity that you have AF so that you can see an anaesthetist and a plan can be made. Remember, doctors see patients with AF on a daily basis so have lots of experience in delivering safe operations and anaesthesia. Talk through the different options so you understand the decisions being made.
AF Association
Global AF Aware Week 2019
‘Detect, Protect, Correct, Perfect’

SAVE THE DATE 18 - 24 November 2019

AF Association Global AF Aware Week (GAFAW) is an annual awareness week that raises awareness of Atrial Fibrillation (AF), the most common arrhythmia (irregular heart rhythm). Over 1.5 million people have been diagnosed with AF in the UK alone, although experts estimate that at least 500,000 people remain undiagnosed. This number is expected to double by 2050.

Every 15 seconds someone suffers an AF-related stroke, in the UK alone costing the NHS over £2.2 billion each year. However most can be prevented using appropriate anticoagulation therapy.

Help DETECT undiagnosed patients with AF and raise awareness during AF Association Global AF Aware Week 2019!

Get involved with AF Association GAFAW 2019:
UK, Email: info@afa.org.uk or Visit: www.gafaw.org
USA, Email: info@afa-us.org or Visit: www.gafaw.org/usa
AF Association Healthcare Pioneers
Showcasing Best Practice in AF in 2019

The AF Association Healthcare Pioneers Report recognises best practice in the identification, diagnosis, treatment and care of patients with Atrial Fibrillation (AF) and is used as a benchmark to improve services and care for patients with AF.

AF-related stroke is a clear challenge to the future sustainability of healthcare systems and demands high-level attention in every nation in Europe. Due to this, we urge you to bring this vitally important publication to the attention of your local MP/GP and healthcare professional.

Order your copy of the Healthcare Pioneers Report to share with your GP and healthcare professionals by contacting us;

UK, Email: info@afa.org.uk
USA, Email: info@afa-us.org

Visit www.heartrhythmalliance.org/afa/uk/healthcare-pioneers for more information and to see how you can get involved.
Your Questions Answered
Our Patient Services team answers your questions about living with Atrial Fibrillation (AF)

Q I still have the feeling of missed heartbeats four months after my ablation, even though I know it’s not AF, should I be worried?

A It is quite common to still experience missed beats after an ablation, sometimes for months afterwards. As long as you know your pulse is regular, this is not your AF returning. It can sometimes take a while for things to settle down. However, if you are truly concerned, you could speak to your consultant. Read our “Recovering from Ablation for AF” factsheet for more information.

Q My symptoms have been under control with the same strength beta blockers for five years, but recently, I’ve found that I am becoming breathless after my usual walk with the dogs. Is this normal?

A AF is a progressive condition, and we would suggest that you talk to your doctor to ensure that there is no underlying condition causing these recent symptoms. Also, check with your doctor that your medication is still correct.

Q My doctor wants me to take anticoagulants now that I have turned 70. I do have high blood-pressure, but it’s controlled by medication. Why does he want me to take these tablets now?

A The CHADSVASC score now that you have reached 70, indicates that you are at a slightly higher risk of an AF-related stroke. Your doctor has highlighted that he would like you to be anticoagulated to ensure that you are at a lower risk. You can find out more in our “Preventing AF-related Stroke” booklet, which also explains the CHADSVASC scoring system.

Q I am due to go for an operation on my knee and will be going under general anaesthetic. The last time I had a general anaesthetic, I woke up in AF. How can I avoid that happening this time?

A You must explain to your surgeon that you have AF, and that he needs to advise the anaesthetist. The anaesthetist will then be sure to monitor you throughout the procedure and ensure that you are well looked after.

For more information, turn to page 23
My friend who has AF finds that she only has episodes if she drinks coffee or alcohol. My AF comes when I am sleeping. We don’t understand why we don’t have the same triggers.

Different people will experience differing symptoms. Likewise, triggers can vary from person to person. It is a good idea to keep a diary and note anything that triggers your episodes to help you avoid them in future.

Why do I find that I have more episodes at night when in bed? I wake up most nights in AF.

Do you sleep on your left side? It is quite common when laying on your left, to irritate your vagus nerve, and trigger an episode of AF. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to retrain ourselves how to sleep, but when you are conscious of it, it is possible.

I live in Scotland and there is no support group in my area, how can I get involved in setting one up?

Sadly, there are no support groups affiliated to us in Scotland at all, but if you would like to help set one up, please speak to Charlene at c.payne@hearthrhythmalliance.org who will be able to advise you on what is required.

In the meantime, you can speak to people on our online community support forum.

www.healthunlocked.com/afassociation

To have your question answered in our next newsletter, send to AF Association – Question and Answer Page, Unit 6B, Essex House, Cromwell Business Park, Chipping Norton, OX7 5SR or email r.harris@ hearthrhythmalliance.org with the subject line “Newsletter Q&A Page”

We cannot guarantee an answer to all enquiries, if you feel it is urgent, please seek medical advice ASAP.
Maureen’s Poetry

We have been sent a wonderful poem by one of our long-term friends, Maureen. She would love for us to share with you all.

I now have a heart condition, I’ve inherited it in my genes, I look so incredibly fit, but I’m not all that it seems,

I no longer walk those miles beside the beautiful sea, A flight of stairs so steep defeat even little old me,

The Milford Track, The Lewis Pass, are a dream gone by, Now I watch the raucous ravens soaring in the dark blue sky.

I bought a zippy car to get me out and about, It takes me to places where I can stand and shout,

I can visit local beauty spots and chat to fellow men, It sharpens up my mind and makes me use my pen, What a lovely world we live in, no limits here!

A heart condition makes you value life and see things all that much clearer,

Another day dawns that much nearer, Never say “what if” but “when” and listen to your past, and take each opportunity until you reach the end at last.

Help us to help others - share your story
UK, Call: +44 (0)1789 867502 or Email: info@afa.org.uk
USA, Call: +1 (843) 415 1886 or Email: info@afa-us.org
Healthy Living with AF

You might be aware that eating a healthy diet is good for reducing your risk of heart disease, but did you know that it can also be of benefit even if you already have heart disease?

Lifestyle is a huge factor in any condition, it is important to improve not only quality of life, but also length of life. A large percentage of people who adapt their diet and lose weight can significantly decrease the burden of AF.

This can also:

• Help lower your blood pressure
• Help reduce your cholesterol
• Help you control your weight
• Help reduce the risk of other conditions such as diabetes

A basic idea is to increase whatever vegetables you are already eating, if possible multiply by two or three!

Also, you should consider reducing processed carbohydrates as well as sugar. Carbohydrates such as flour or wheat become sugars once digested and will increase your blood glucose levels.

Lifestyle changes can reduce the need for medication and ablation. On the occasions when ablation is required, they are more likely to be successful when weight loss has been achieved and you are eating healthily.

It is also important to get regular, healthy cardiovascular exercise. This can be in the form of walking, cycling, swimming or visiting the gym. It is a suggestion that as long as you can recite your telephone number without pausing for breath, you are not overdoing it. If you would like to try more strenuous exercise such as sports or going to the gym, you should discuss with your clinician before participating.

You can order our triple DVD “Make Your Heart Feel Good” by visiting our online shop at www.heartrhythmalliance.org/afa/uk/shop-online
Connect with us

Social Media

You can always connect with us and other patients through various forms of social media. For instant updates and extra information, follow us:

**UK** Facebook: @atrialfibrillation Twitter: @atrialfibUK

**USA** Facebook: @atrialfibrillationUS Twitter: @AtrialFib_US

You can also connect with us on HealthUnlocked: www.healthunlocked.com/afassociation

Support Groups

For more information about arrhythmia and AF support groups in your local area, please look on our website: www.afa-international.org

UK, Call: +44 (0)1789 867502
USA, Call: +1 (843) 415 1886

To find out about setting up a support group in your area:

UK, Email: Charlene c.payne@heartrhythmalliance.org

USA, Email: Sharonica s.gavin@heartrhythmalliance.org

Dates for your Diary

*AF Association Global AF Aware Week, 18 - 24 November 2019*

*Arrhythmia Alliance World Heart Rhythm Week, 1 - 7 June 2020*

*Heart Rhythm Congress, 27 - 30 September 2020*
New Resources

We have worked together with patients to create two brilliant new resources;
- Atrial Fibrillation (AF) and Heart Failure
- Mindfulness and Healthy Living with AF

These resources will help you to better understand and manage your condition and to adapt to a new lifestyle.

We have also amalgamated some of our more popular booklets to have all information in just three handy booklets;
- Treatment Options for Atrial Fibrillation
- Living with AF and Atrial Flutter
- Preventing AF-related stroke

To download these resources visit:
www.afa.org.uk
or to request a copy
Call: +44 (0)1789 867502
Email: r.harris@heartrhythmalliance.org
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT
AND RAISE AWARENESS OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

18 - 24 NOVEMBER 2019

DONATE
Help Save Lives

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Patient Resources

There are so many ways you can get involved and support GAFAW 2019
Help us to raise awareness all around the world by;

Sharing and displaying our information • Making a donation
Fundraising • Holding a ‘Know Your Pulse’ event • Connecting on social media

Contact us today to make a donation and show your support

UK, Visit: www.gafaw.org or Call: +44 (0)1789 867502
USA, Visit: www.gafaw.org/usa or Call: +1 (843) 415 1886