Call to GP on Call Service or NHS Direct or Pharmacy Enquiry

Call Received - Patient Complaining of Abnormal Heartbeat

Patient feeling acutely unwell

No

Go through
Palpitations Assessment List:
1) Check for presence of high risk factors 1-6
2) Is the rhythm fast and continuing?
3) Is the patient experiencing associated cardiac symptoms?
4) Is the patient alone or with someone who can help them?
5) Has the patient tried vagal manoeuvres?
6) Has there been a similar previous episode - Was a clear diagnosis made?

Are any of the risk factors 1 - 4 above present?

No

Yes

999 Call

999 Call Algorithm

VAGAL MANOEUVRES
1) Supine Valsalva
2) Inducing retching by tickling back of throat
3) Face immersion in cold water
4) Carotid sinus massage

If the abnormal rhythm is continuing
i) Despite having tried vagal manoeuvres
ii) Is not a recurrence of an arrhythmia that is benign and has occurred several times before with a clear diagnosis.
AND iii) Is causing distress

Arrange Urgent Medical Assessment

ARRANGE URGENT MEDICAL ATTENTION: EITHER GP VISIT OR SEND TO A&E

Developed and approved by the Dept of Health Expert Reference Group on Cardiac Arrhythmias & Sudden Cardiac Death (NSF Chapter 8)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/10/60/40/04106040.pdf