Patient Atrial Fibrillation Toolkit
What is atrial fibrillation?

• “AFib” (short for atrial fibrillation) is the most common type of irregular heartbeat, affecting literally millions of men and women.

5.1 MILLION IN US

4.5 MILLION IN EUROPE

In the US the prevalence is projected to be more than DOUBLED by 2050

Today 5.1m

2050 12.1m

ONE IN FOUR ADULTS AGED OVER 40 DEVELOPS AF IN THEIR LIFETIME

~2% GENERAL POPULATION AFFECTED BY AF

~140,000,000 WORLDWIDE
What is atrial fibrillation?

• AFib occurs when the upper chambers of the heart (called the atria) no longer contract in an orderly and regular manner, but rather twitch rapidly and uncontrollably.

• AFib can be intermittent, lasting for minutes, hours or days at a time, but it can also become a permanent heart rhythm.

ECG of a normal heart rhythm showing regular heart beats

ECG of AFib showing “twitching” or fibrillation between irregular heart beats
What causes atrial fibrillation?

- The actual cause of AFib is not known, but is probably related in part to genetics and risk factors like older age, high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes and other factors that cause heart disease.
How can I tell if I have atrial fibrillation?

• AFib can be “silent” and detected by your doctor on an electrocardiogram (ECG)
• Most people with AFib have symptoms of palpitations (skips in the heart beat); some may also feel weak, tired, dizzy, short of breath or have a reduced ability to exercise

**AFib Feels Like...**

...**DRUMS POUNDING IN MY CHEST.**

...**THUNDER RUMBLING IN MY CHEST.**

...**FISH FLOPPING IN MY CHEST.**

• But the worst and most dangerous presentation of AFib is **stroke**
What is it about AFib that causes stroke?

- Afib is a very common cause of stroke
- Stroke in AFib results from blood clots that form in the heart as a result of the rhythm and are ejected into body, most often to the brain where they block blood vessels and damage the brain.
What are the signs of stroke?

- Know the signs of stroke by memorizing the F.A.S.T. algorithm
  FACE – ask for a smile. Does one side of the face droop unevenly from the other?
  ARMS – can both arms be raised? Does one arm drift downward?
  SPEECH – do words sound slurred, garbled or make no sense?
  TIME – time is brain. Call 911 immediately for help.
What can be done to prevent strokes from AFib?

- Strokes from AFib are preventable
- Your doctor may prescribe a medication (called an anticoagulant) that helps prevent blood clots from forming in the heart
- Though sometimes called “blood thinners” these medications do not actually affect blood thickness or thinness; rather they reduce the blood’s ability to form clot making it harder for clots to form in AFib
### What factors increase my risk of stroke from Afib?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>If Yes add:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congestive Heart Failure</td>
<td>Do you have a history of congestive heart failure?</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>History of high blood pressure?</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Are you 75 yrs of age or older?</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Do you have diabetes?</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>Have you ever had a stroke or mini-stroke (TIA)?</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vascular disease</td>
<td>Do you have vascular disease such as prior heart attack or peripheral vascular disease?</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Are you between 65 and 74 years of age?</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex category</td>
<td>Are you female?</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score: _____**

- If you have AFib and a score of more than 1, you may be a candidate for anticoagulation.
What can I do to reduce my risk of stroke?

- **Take the medication to prevent stroke exactly as prescribed:**
  - Aspirin
  - Warfarin (Coumadin)
  - Apixaban (Eliquis)
  - Edoxaban (Savaysa)
  - Dabigatran (Pradaxa)
  - Rivaroxaban (Xarelto)

- **Promote a healthy lifestyle**
  - Exercise regularly
  - Maintain healthy weight
  - Control blood pressure
  - Quit smoking
  - Eat a heart healthy diet
How can I track my progress?

Example of AF Journal Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Medicine</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>What’s it for?</th>
<th>Dose</th>
<th>How often &amp; what time</th>
<th>Special instructions</th>
<th>Side effects</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirin</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Stroke prevention</td>
<td>325 mg pill</td>
<td>One daily at night</td>
<td>Take with food</td>
<td>Stomach upset</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metoprolol</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Control heart rate</td>
<td>50 mg pill</td>
<td>One daily in morning</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Tiredness</td>
<td>Ask doc about taking lower dose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Exercise Activity</th>
<th>Signs and symptoms</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Heart Rate</th>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/1/2015</td>
<td>1200 cal today</td>
<td>Walked 2 miles</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>140 lbs</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>120/84</td>
<td>INR 2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where can I get more information?

**Websites**
- NATIONAL STROKE ASSOCIATION: www.stroke.org
- AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION: www.heart.org
- HEART RHYTHM SOCIETY: www.hrsonline.org
- Stop Afib: www.stopafib.org

**Smartphone Apps**
- inrpro.com/anticoagulation_apps.asp