Public Awareness of Atrial Fibrillation Is Low

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Contacts:
Penny Smith Tel: +44 (0)1243 770448 sciencenewsroom@wiley.com

In a Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis study that surveyed the general public in 10 countries, only 48% of people were aware of atrial fibrillation (AF), which is lower than the awareness of other common diseases. AF is an irregular, often rapid heart rate that commonly causes poor blood flow. The rapid heartbeat may also allow blood to pool in the heart, which can cause clots to form and travel to the brain (potentially causing a stroke) or other parts of the body.

Awareness about AF ranged from 25% to 69% across countries, while awareness of the risk factors for AF ranged from 8% to 52% and awareness that AF leads to stroke ranged from 36% to 46%. There is evidence that people were honestly assessing their awareness of AF because, of those who indicated they were aware of AF, 82% correctly identified palpitations as an important AF symptom.

There are an estimated 33.5 million people with AF around the world, with about 5 million new cases found every year. The rate of stroke or embolism in people with AF varies widely depending on the presence of other risk factors. Therefore, it is important to identify AF and provide appropriate preventive treatment against stroke for those at especially high risk.

“Recognizing atrial fibrillation is as easy as having a doctor feel your pulse. It doesn’t require an expensive diagnostic test,” said lead author Dr. Aaron Wendelboe, of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. “And since early recognition and treatment can be an easy way to prevent a stroke, then increasing the public’s awareness of atrial fibrillation should be a public health priority.”

Additional Information


About Journal

Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis (RPTH) is the newest journal of the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis (ISTH) and the newest journal in the field of thrombosis and hemostasis. Complementing its flagship journal, the Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis (JTH), RPTH provides a dedicated Open Access home for science and discourse among researchers, clinicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and patients.

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