

Study sheds light on atrial fibrillation symptoms, quality of life

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Most patients with atrial fibrillation—the most common type of abnormal heart rhythm—experience multiple symptoms and decreased quality of life, according to a large, nationally representative study. The findings may lead to more targeted interventions in these patients, says a Yale researcher.

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is an irregular, [rapid heart rate](#) that affects circulation and raises the risk of stroke and death in patients. Prior to the study, research on AF symptoms and quality of life had generally been done on smaller, select patient groups, said lead author and assistant professor of medicine (cardiology) Dr. James V. Freeman. To confirm previous findings and evaluate [patient outcomes](#) in a larger population, the researchers used data on more than 10,000 patients from the Outcomes Registry for Better Informed Treatment of AF.

The researchers found that in most cases—62%—patients had symptoms (palpitations, difficulty breathing with exertion, fatigue, lightheadedness) and 17% had severe or disabling symptoms. They noted a clear correlation between the burden of the AF symptoms and patient reports of diminished quality of life.

The most novel finding was that patients with the worst symptoms were younger and generally healthier, yet more likely to be hospitalized. "That's unusual," said Freeman. "This means that by targeting interventions to control the AF rhythm and impact symptoms, we may be able to keep these patients out of the hospital and have an impact on healthcare utilization."

The study published this week online in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*.

More information: "Association Between Atrial Fibrillation Symptoms, Quality of Life, and Patient Outcomes: Results From the Outcomes Registry for Better Informed Treatment of Atrial Fibrillation (ORBIT-AF)." *Circ Cardiovasc Qual Outcomes*. [DOI: 10.1161/CIRCOUTCOMES.114.001303](https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCOUTCOMES.114.001303)

Provided by Yale University

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