

US emergency room visits for irregular heartbeat soar

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Emergency room visits for atrial fibrillation have increased significantly in the United States—causing a major healthcare burden, according to research presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2014.

Atrial fibrillation (AF), the most common kind of arrhythmia or [irregular heartbeat](#), can lead to blood clots, stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications.

Researchers analyzed patients from the Nationwide Emergency Department Data who visited the emergency department with AF listed as the first diagnosis in 2006-11. They found:

- The average AF hospital admission rate was 65 percent.
- The admission rate for AF varied from 62.5 percent in 2006 to 67 percent in 2011.
- The rate of AF [emergency room visits](#) steadily increased 24 percent, from 133 visits per 100,000 persons in 2006 to 165 visits per 100,000 persons in 2011.
- The total admissions for AF (2006-11) was more than 2.7 million.
- While AF admission rates have risen, there was a decrease in in-hospital death rates (1.18 percent in 2006 to 0.97 percent in 2011) which points to improving care of hospitalized patients.

Patient characteristics associated with higher admissions rates include

those who were elderly, female, had Medicare or Medicaid insurance, lived in areas with low median income, or visited teaching hospitals and those in the northeast and metropolitan areas.

"The huge demographic and geographic variations highlight the unmet need for interventions to decrease hospitalization rates," said Sourabh Aggarwal, M.D., study lead researcher.

Provided by American Heart Association

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