

## World Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Day: Creating Grassroots Level Awareness to Combat a Global Scourge

### Dear Colleagues

It needs no reiteration that atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common cardiac arrhythmia in the United States (US), affecting approximately 6-7 million individuals nationally and projected to increase in prevalence to nearly 16 million patients by the year 2050. The incremental cost of AF to the US healthcare system was last estimated to be on the order of US \$26 billion in the year 2005. Despite preponderance for developed countries, AF is very much a global epidemic, affecting an estimated 33.5 million individuals worldwide. Risk factors for AF include advancing age, elevated body mass index, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, heavy alcohol consumption, the presence of cardiovascular disease (e.g. coronary and/or valvular heart disease, heart failure), and obstructive sleep apnea. Importantly, many of these risk factors are modifiable, though lack of education and, often times, awareness of the diagnosis are major barriers for patients.

Thanks to the efforts of Global AF Alliance Foundation (GAFA), World Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Day is celebrated on the second Saturday of September each year for the last several years. The second Saturday of September each year has received official proclamations by Kansas Governor Sam Brownback, as well as Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson. GAFA is working on obtaining a national proclamation by the President of the United States. The event provides an opportunity for the AF community at-large, including patients and their families, healthcare providers, industry partners, and others to come together through a program of education and physical activity aimed at addressing this increasingly prevalent disease and its deleterious physical and emotional effects, including but not limited to stroke, heart failure, myocardial infarction, chronic kidney disease, and dementia.

GAFA a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization established by a group of volunteer physicians, nurses, patients and other health care providers (none has a paid position in the organization) aims to bring together all of these invested parties, with a mutual goal of increasing knowledge regarding AF and its sequelae, promoting awareness and early detection in an upstream approach, and providing support to

patients afflicted with AF and their loved ones. GAFA, JAFIB and the Electrophysiology Section of the American College of Cardiology are working together to improve the participation of all stake holders to make this grassroots effort more effective towards better patient education and access to care. In this vein, the GAFA chapter of the Greater Kansas City Area has been instrumental in planning and organizing a series of events including yearly commemorations of World Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Day.

We congratulate several other organizations who have supported this cause. StopAFib.org, Afibbers.org, Heart Rhythm Society and AF Alliance have all done various activities in September to energize this movement. So far this effort has been in silos. We need to bring all of these organizations together in working towards a common goal creating a world that are less burdened by AF. Over time, the reach of these World Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Day events has grown beyond Kansas City to include Tulsa, Oklahoma, Scottsdale, Arizona, and Little Rock, Arkansas, as well as international events in Hyderabad, India, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Taipei, Taiwan. In conjunction with educational and outreach efforts by physician-led organizations such as the Heart Rhythm Society, the American College of Cardiology, and the American Heart Association, as well as patient advocacy and charitable groups such as the Atrial Fibrillation Association and StopAFib.org, World Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Day represents another opportunity to unite patients, healthcare providers, other advocates, and industry partners in an effort to effectively combat the ill effects of atrial fibrillation at both an individual and societal level. There are several important educational



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events in the next few weeks. The 11th Annual VT symposium (October 7th-8th, New York City) and Asia Pacific Heart Rhythm Society Annual sessions (October 13th-15th, Seoul, Korea) are going to be great opportunities to learn.

New this year, JAFIB is proud to present a new feature called Story Core where we showcase the story of a patient whose life is affected by AF and their journey to recovery and remediation. This issue features a heart transplant patient with AF. On the other hand all of the articles in this issue are very interesting and will make a worthwhile read. We once again thank all of our contributors, reviewers, editorial staff, supporters and readers who help us stay the course and provide you the best education on Atrial Fibrillation and other cardiac arrhythmias.

Fall is already here. Enjoy your pumpkin spice lattes and have a terrific Halloween.

Best wishes