Remote Monitoring

The Heart Rhythm Charity
Promoting better understanding, diagnosis, treatment and quality of life for individuals with cardiac arrhythmias

Remote Follow-up and Remote Monitoring

www.aa-za.org
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Introduction to Remote Monitoring

This booklet is intended to be used by people who have, or are about to have, an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) or pacemaker implanted. Usual care of implanted pacemakers and ICDs involves regular attendances at the hospital clinic to make sure that all is well with the device, and the leads connecting it to the heart. This is done by communicating with the generator of the device, through the skin, using a short-range radio link. These visits to the hospital are needed between 1 and 4 times a year, or more frequently if a problem is detected, or if there are signs that the battery is beginning to run down, and the timing of replacement of the battery needs to be carefully planned. In the last few years, the radio link has been extended, and it is also now possible to communicate with the device at home, and pass the important information to the hospital via the internet. In this way, in some cases, it is possible for the routine checks on the device to be done at home, without the need for routine visits at the hospital. This leaflet explains in more detail how remote monitoring can help you if it is available on your device.

It may also be useful to obtain copies of the booklets “Pacemaker Patient Information” or “ICD Patient Information” for further information on the implant procedure and implants themselves.

The information in this booklet should be used in addition to the information given to you by your doctors, nurses and cardiac physiologists. If you have any questions about any of the information provided in this booklet, please ask your nurse, doctor or cardiac physiologist.

Arrhythmia Alliance (A-A) is a coalition of charities, patient groups, patients, carers, medical groups and allied professionals. These groups remain independent, however, work together under the A-A umbrella to promote timely and effective diagnosis and treatment of arrhythmias. A-A supports and promotes the aims and objectives of the individual groups.
Arrhythmia Alliance patient booklets are reviewed annually.

This booklet will next be updated April 2018,

if you have any comments or suggestions

please contact A-A.

Glossary of terms

**Arrhythmia**
An abnormal heart rhythm.

**Defibrillation**
The use of a higher energy shock to stop fast heart rhythms.

**ICD**
Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator.
What is remote monitoring?

The term remote monitoring means exactly what it implies: monitoring your heart and implanted device while you are at home, and “remote” from the care-team at your hospital. Remote monitoring pacemakers and ICDs are equipped with a special transmitter. Using an integrated aerial, the implant automatically sends medical and technical information from your heart, to your doctor, arrhythmia nurse and the cardiac physiologists who are treating you. This allows your heart rhythm specialists to monitor your condition based on accurate, up-to-date clinical information at any time – not just when you are at the hospital. Remote monitoring will not replace the first visit after the device is implanted, which is important to check that the wound is well-healed, and you may still need to attend the clinic on an annual or 18-monthly basis. However, if all is well, and no problems are detected, it may take over the routine checks on your device, which relieves you and your care-team from having to attend to these checks at the hospital.

How does remote monitoring work?

Information will be sent from your device via whatever transmission system you are linked to by arrangement with your implanting centre. This is usually on a 3 monthly basis but can also be done more or less frequently by arrangement. The information received at the centre will allow them to look at any changes that
may have occurred in your heart rhythm or with the battery and lead status. In order to send the signals from your ICD or pacemaker you will need a special transmitting device. This may look like a large mobile phone or may be a box which you will need to plug into your telephone line.

The type of transmitter you receive will depend on which company made your implantable device. Your implanting centre will provide you with full details of how to send transmissions.

The transmitter works similarly to a mobile phone and automatically forwards the data to a computerised server. The data is coded during transmission in order to maintain confidentiality. The pacing/ICD clinic staff is then able to view and evaluate the data on a special, secure internet site.

**Can remote monitoring be used with any ICD or pacemaker?**

Pacemakers and ICDs are very complex medical devices and are subject to continual evaluation and improvement. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, not all devices have the option of remote monitoring.

Many centres are currently evaluating the possibility of using remote technology, but not all devices have this option. If your implanting centre is one of the evaluation centres, or is using devices with this facility, you may be offered the opportunity to have this function.
The potential benefits of remote technology

Whether you are using remote monitoring or remote follow-up technology, your doctor, arrhythmia nurse and physiologist can be kept up-to-date about changes in your heart rhythm. This enables them to schedule your hospital appointments or your remote follow-up appointments as part of your follow-up regime.

Should you need to contact your follow-up clinic because you are experiencing symptoms that cause you concern, they can evaluate your cardiac condition remotely and decide what course of action, if any, to take.

Travelling and remote monitoring

You should contact your follow-up clinic if you are travelling abroad, as some of the remote monitoring systems use different telephone networks and so may not function in some countries. You may also choose not to take your remote monitor on holiday with you.
Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Is remote monitoring safe?

Yes, remote monitoring/follow-up technology has been in use since 2000 and has been proven to be safe, secure and reliable.

Do I still need to attend the usual follow-up clinics?

You may not need to attend as frequently as you do currently. However, you will still need to attend the follow-up clinic if any changes to your programmed settings are required or to perform certain measurements that may be necessary.

The interval between follow-ups is dependent on many factors, including your individual condition and the device implanted. It is very important that you attend all follow-up clinic appointments that may be recommended by the doctors, arrhythmia nurses and cardiac physiologists caring for you.

Where should I place my transmitter?

Your implanting centre will give full instructions on where to put your transmitter and how to send any messages.

Do I need any other equipment for remote monitoring / remote follow-up?

If you and your pacing/ICD clinic staff decide remote monitoring or remote follow-up may be beneficial to you, then it is possible that you can be enrolled today, or that you can have a device implanted with this capability. The aerial is hidden inside the device, therefore the implant will look and feel like any other.

In order to send the signals from your ICD or pacemaker you will need a special transmitting device. This may look like a mobile phone or a small box which you will need to plug into your telephone line.
Is there a risk the encrypted data will be mixed up?

No. Your data cannot be mixed up during transmission. Your implant and transmitter are clearly allocated to each other using their respective serial numbers.

Is my data safe from unauthorized persons?

Yes. Your cardiac physiologist/arrhythmia nurse/doctor views your data via the internet through a secured connection. The server and all systems have been CE certified and comply with the UK data protection act.

Will I be able to access the data myself?

No. The information is only available to the medical team treating you; security measures ensure it is not accessible to anyone else.

Is there a danger from radiation during data transmission?

No. The implant transmits data with an extremely low power on a frequency specially allocated to medical devices, so there is no danger.
Useful websites

A list of useful sites can be found at:- www.aa-za.org This list is not exhaustive and it is constantly evolving. If we have excluded anyone, please accept our sincerest apologies and be assured that as soon as the matter is brought to the attention of the Arrhythmia Alliance, we will quickly act to ensure maximum inclusiveness in our endeavours.

If you wish to contact us direct please phone on +27 82 8061599 or email info@aa-international.org.

Please feel free to discuss any concerns with your doctor, physiologist or specialist nurse, at any time.
Further reading

The following list of Arrhythmia Alliance Patient booklets are available to download from our website or to order please call +27 82 8061599.

- Arrhythmia Checklist - Could your heart rhythm problem be dangerous?
- Atrial Fibrillation (AF)
- AF Checklist
- Blackouts Checklist
- Bradycardia (Slow Heart Rhythm)
- CRT/ICD
- CRT Patient Information
- Catheter Ablation
- Drug Treatment for Heart Rhythm Disorders (Arrhythmias)
- Electrophysiology Studies
- Exercising with an ICD
- FAQs
- Genetic Testing for Inherited Heart Disorders

- Highlighting the Work of Arrhythmia Alliance
- ICD
- Implantable Device Recall
- Implantable Loop Recorder
- Long QT Syndrome
- National Service Framework Chapter 8
- CRT/Pacemaker
- Pacemaker
- Palpitation Checklist
- Remote Monitoring for ICDs
- Sudden Cardiac Arrest
- Supraventricular Tachycardia (SVT)
- Tachycardia (Fast Heart Rhythm)
Please remember these are general guidelines and individuals should always discuss their condition with their own doctor.

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