

Are there guidelines about when to seek help from clinicians for an event?

There are two settings in which an individual might seek assistance from a clinician in regard to an AF event: this might be the first episode of AF for which medical assistance has been obtained; or alternatively the person with known AF has noticed a change in their condition.

In the first setting our professional community has strongly highlighted the need for the early detection and evaluation of AF. If AF can be identified and appropriate anti-thrombotic medication instituted, then this of itself can significantly reduce risk of AF-related stroke. We would therefore urge any patient who thinks they have AF through for example feeling an irregularity of the pulse or through some other awareness for the irregularity of the heartbeat should seek help at the earliest opportunity from healthcare professionals.

In the second setting, that is, in which a patient has already been assessed and is under treatment for AF then help should be sought if there is a sudden change in the condition. In general terms, in patients with AF there is an overall stability in the pattern of events over time so any deviation may be important. So if there is an unheralded change with significant symptoms that become protracted then contacting surgery or attendance at the nearest medical facility is likely to be wise.