

Press release 23.06.2008

**EHRA-AFNET Summit:**

## **Framework for future research in the diagnosis and treatment of Atrial Fibrillation**

Seeking to set the agenda for urgent research in the field of Atrial Fibrillation, cardiologists from Europe and beyond will meet on 27 and 28 October 2008, at the European Heart House, headquarters of the European Society of Cardiology<sup>1</sup>.

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) affects several million people in the European Union. Its incidence increases in an ageing population. It is estimated that one in four 40-year olds will develop AF during his or her life<sup>2</sup>. Consequences of AF are diverse, ranging from severe limitations of exercise capacity to severe stroke and death.

New treatment and improvement of existing therapies for AF are being currently proposed and clinically evaluated at breath-taking speed. Today, the only treatment of AF that is associated with improved survival is continuous oral anticoagulation (aspirin).

Aiming to define new research perspectives and identify unresolved clinical issues in the diagnosis and treatment of AF, the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA)<sup>3</sup> and the German Atrial Fibrillation Network (AFNET<sup>4</sup>) have invited a panel of international experts on AF as well as representatives from regulatory bodies such as the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and representatives from pharmaceutical and medical device companies to meet at the European Heart House in Sophia Antipolis, France, on 27 and 28 October 2008. This will be the second joint conference organised by EHRA and AFNET<sup>5</sup>.

Among the topics included in the agenda for this meeting, experts will discuss: anticoagulation in patients at intermediate stroke risk; new concepts for rhythm control drug treatment; what do to if pulmonary vein isolation fails; relevance and intensity of ECG monitoring in clinical practice; relevance of clinically identifiable risk factors for AF progression; what causes the first episode of "idiopathic" AF, and novel therapeutic goals for AF treatment<sup>5</sup>.

Based on all available information, the panel will define perspectives for diagnostic classifications and new therapeutic options. The output from this consensus conference will include suggestions for urgent clinical studies. Conclusions will be summarized in a position paper to guide research on the development of better clinical diagnosis and treatment of AF which will be published in EuroPace Journal.

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup>The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) represents more than 50,000 cardiology professionals across Europe and the Mediterranean. Its mission is to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in Europe. See [www.escardio.org](http://www.escardio.org)

<sup>2</sup>"Outcome parameters for trials in atrial fibrillation" by Paulus Kirchhof, et al. Europace, Oxford Journals, Vol 9, Number 11, 2007

<sup>3</sup>The European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA) is an association specialising in electrophysiology and was created from the merger of two former Working Groups on 'Cardiac Pacing' and on 'Arrhythmias'. Its ambition is to serve as the leading organisation in the field of arrhythmias and electrophysiology in Europe, and to attract all physicians from Europe and beyond to foster the development of this area of expertise. Visit us at [www.escardio.org/EHRA](http://www.escardio.org/EHRA)

<sup>4</sup> AFNET: The German Atrial Fibrillation Network (AFNET) is an interdisciplinary research network located in Germany. AFNET aims at improving care of patients with atrial fibrillation by promoting research, medical services and information in emerging diagnostic and therapeutic fields in atrial fibrillation. The network is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education since 2003.

<sup>5</sup> A first successful joint conference hosted by AFNET and EHRA took place in January 2007, resulting in the definition of a set of relevant outcomes for controlled trials in AF. The full version of this document can be found in:

<http://europace.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/9/11/1006?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=Kirchhof&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&volume=9&resourcetype=HWCIT>

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