

Screening for NVAf: Identifying Individuals at Risk While Considering Health Disparities



Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common cardiac arrhythmia globally, and large percentages of individuals are undiagnosed due to lack of symptoms. Identifying individuals who are appropriate for screening is an integral part of caring for an aging population, and special attention should be paid to health disparities.

AF at a glance, 2010-2020:

- **750,000** hospitalizations/year
- **130,000** deaths
- **1%** in-hospital mortality
- **\$28 billion**/year in the US
- Estimated to increase to **16 million** persons in the US by 2050

Evaluate risk factors when considering AF screening:

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ✓ Obesity | ✓ Thyroid disease |
| ✓ Diabetes | ✓ Chronic kidney disease |
| ✓ Smoking | ✓ Toxin and pollution exposure |
| ✓ Sleep disordered breathing | ✓ Heart failure |
| ✓ ASCVD | ✓ Valvular heart disease |
| ✓ Hypertension | ✓ Vascular disease |
| ✓ Physical inactivity | ✓ Pulmonary disease |
| ✓ Alcohol use | ✓ Age |

Assess social determinants of health that may have been previous barriers to screening:

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| ☐ Assess health literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ Education level as a barrier to care☐ Perception of AF and associated complications may be limited☐ Medication adherence and interactions with the healthcare system may be decreased☐ Limited access to enroll in clinical trials | ☐ Evaluate social and community ties <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ Interpersonal connectedness☐ Knowledge of available digital health tools☐ Partner, caregiver, or family support |
| ☐ Determine financial barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ Assess economic stability (wealth, employment status, occupational category, job security)☐ Barrier to healthcare (insurance, appointments, prescriptions) because of prohibitive costs☐ Risk factors because of lack of access to healthy food, outdoor spaces, exercise programs | ☐ Review environment and neighborhood impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ Rates of violence☐ Geography (walkability, parks, playgrounds)☐ Higher rates of pollution in urban areas☐ Transportation barriers (urban and rural settings)☐ Access to high quality healthcare |
| | ☐ Include race and ethnicity in your assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">☐ Structural racism☐ Bias and discrimination☐ Decreased access to care, including specialty care |



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Addressing the social determinants of health when considering screening provides a critical opportunity to reduce substantial risks and complications associated with atrial fibrillation.