

Global Support Increases to Combat Atrial Fibrillation (AF), a Heart Rhythm Condition that Raises the Risk of Stroke by 500%

Global AF Patient Charter now tops 10,000 Signatures

European Society of Cardiology, ESC Congress 2012 – 24 August 2012

Over 10,000 patients, caregivers, healthcare professionals, policy makers and the general public from 136 countries have signed the world's only Global Atrial Fibrillation Patient Charter calling for government action to help prevent millions of people from dying or becoming disabled by a stroke caused by Atrial Fibrillation (AF).

Atrial Fibrillation...More Dangerous Than Sometimes Thought

Tens of millions of people around the world are affected by AF, an under-diagnosed, under-treated and potentially life threatening condition characterized by an abnormal heart rhythm. The irregular heartbeat of AF causes blood to pool and this can result in the development of blood clots – these clots can potentially travel to the brain blocking the oxygen supply and triggering a major and often fatal stroke.

The Charter...Outlining Strategies to Prevent AF-Related Stroke

The Global AF Patient Charter defines strategies and solutions to reduce the number of these preventable strokes. Support for the Charter and the *Sign Against Stroke in Atrial Fibrillation* campaign has increased significantly since its launch just 18 weeks ago at the World Heart Federation's World Congress of Cardiology in Dubai. In addition to the growing public support, 90 global, regional and national medical and patient organisations representing all regions of the world have endorsed the Charter, a demonstration of the importance of detecting AF earlier and ensuring people receive the best possible care.

"All of the endorsing organisations are committed to supporting people with AF, stroke survivors and the medical professionals who care for them," said Maria Caporaso, from Stroke Alliance for Europe (SAFE). "We want to draw greater attention and action from national governments to the need to prevent AF-related strokes as they are more serious than those resulting from other causes, meaning that they are more devastating to the families affected and have a bigger cost impact on national healthcare budgets. We encourage everyone to visit www.signagainststroke.com and sign the Charter!"

Sign Against Stroke...Committed to Making a Difference

Whilst the *Sign Against Stroke* Campaign seeks to engage national governments to include AF-related stroke in national healthcare plans, endorsing organisations around the world are also taking steps to do what they can to implement the Charter recommendations. Patient groups, medical societies, physicians, and media from Poland to Mexico, and Germany to Indonesia have been working to drive public awareness through information campaigns, media coverage and discussions with national and local healthcare decision makers regarding implementing Charter recommendations.

Sign Against Stroke

in Atrial Fibrillation

AF is Indiscriminate...We Must All Act to Prevent AF-Related Strokes

From the age of 40, we all have a 1 in 4 lifetime risk of developing AF, a condition that causes up to 25 percent of all strokes caused by blood clots. This is why joint efforts among governments, medical and patient organisations and industry to make AF-related stroke prevention and care a national healthcare priority are critical in reducing the burden of this devastating condition at both individual and national levels.

There is no quick or easy solution to prevent AF-related strokes, but there are steps that can be taken to reduce the number of people whose lives are devastated every year. It is for this reason that the Charter is important...it outlines strategies to improve detection, diagnosis, care and treatment.

"With early diagnosis and appropriate medication a large number of such strokes could be prevented, but management of people with AF, as well as a greater use of anticoagulation, needs to be improved to remove the unnecessary and heavy burden currently placed on patients, their families and healthcare systems," said Eve Knight, Co-Founder and Chief Executive of the charity AntiCoagulation Europe (ACE). "The support of over 10,000 people who have signed the Charter demonstrates how much this issue means to people."

About The Global AF Patient Charter and Sign Against Stroke Campaign

The Global AF Patient Charter has been developed by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from patient organisations, including AntiCoagulation Europe, Arrhythmia Alliance, Atrial Fibrillation Association, Irish Heart Foundation, StopAfib.org and Stroke Alliance for Europe, in collaboration with 39 founding patient organisations from 20 countries. A full listing of collaborating organisations is available on the website, www.signagainststroke.com.

People can learn about AF and stroke, and read and sign the Charter, which is available in 22 languages, on the Campaign website, www.signagainststroke.com. All signatures contribute to driving action to prevent AF-related strokes and improving future outcomes and quality of life of people diagnosed with AF.

Bayer HealthCare is proud to support the Global AF Patient Charter and *Sign Against Stroke* Campaign.

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