

Preface

“Fast”, “chaotic”, and “elusive” are used respectively to characterize the rate, rhythm, and presence of atrial fibrillation (AF). These same terms can be used to express the effect that AF has had on individuals, the healthcare industry, and society. The AF epidemic is a “ticking time bomb.” It affects approximately 2.5 million individuals in the United States and is projected to affect 15 million individuals by 2050. Moreover, evidence is emerging that not only is AF associated with increased mortality and morbidity, but also it can be considered an independent risk factor as well. Therefore, there is an intense interest in this topic by clinicians, researchers, and patients. A clear understanding of the nature of AF may have a substantial impact on patient lives and may help lessen the societal and economic burden that AF currently causes. However, at present the mechanisms of AF are poorly understood, the number of individuals affected with AF is still rapidly increasing, and there is considerable debate regarding which treatment strategy is best for patients with AF. It is therefore important that clinicians thoroughly understand the indications for treatment, the latest technologies, the fundamental physiological principles, the epidemiology, and the pathogenesis of AF so that patients can be optimally managed and so that more discoveries can be made toward preventing and eradicating AF.

Our goal is to provide the latest information that is critically important in the daily care and for the potential cure of patients with AF. In essence, we have attempted to organize knowledge of a “disorganized rhythm.” Each chapter deals with a different aspect of AF and is authored by internationally recognized experts in the evolving field of cardiac electrophysiology. Atrial fibrillation is a multidimensional disorder. To understand AF and to decide what is best for each patient one must understand the nature of AF from as many angles as possible. This book is a single source that provides a multiperspective look at and approach to AF. Because AF is so prevalent and affects all areas of medicine, the information in this book should be useful to cardiologists, cardiac surgeons, researchers, and all those in the medical field. We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed the journey of putting it together.

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Atrial Fibrillation

From Bench to Bedside

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