

When to seek medical attention or intervention

Richard Schilling



Barts Heart Centre

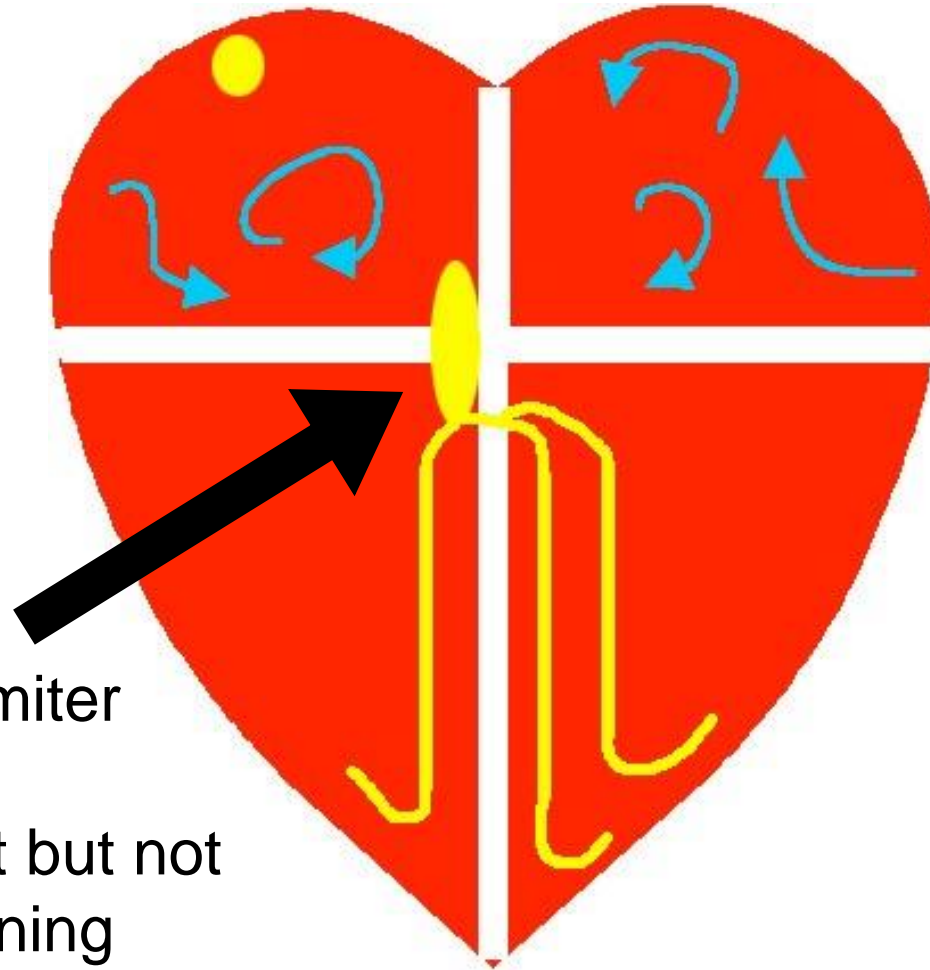
Barts Health **NHS**
NHS Trust

General principles

- Seek medical attention if:
 - life saving
 - likely to make one feel better
 - will reduce risks



What is AF?



The rate limiter
makes AF
unpleasant but not
life threatening

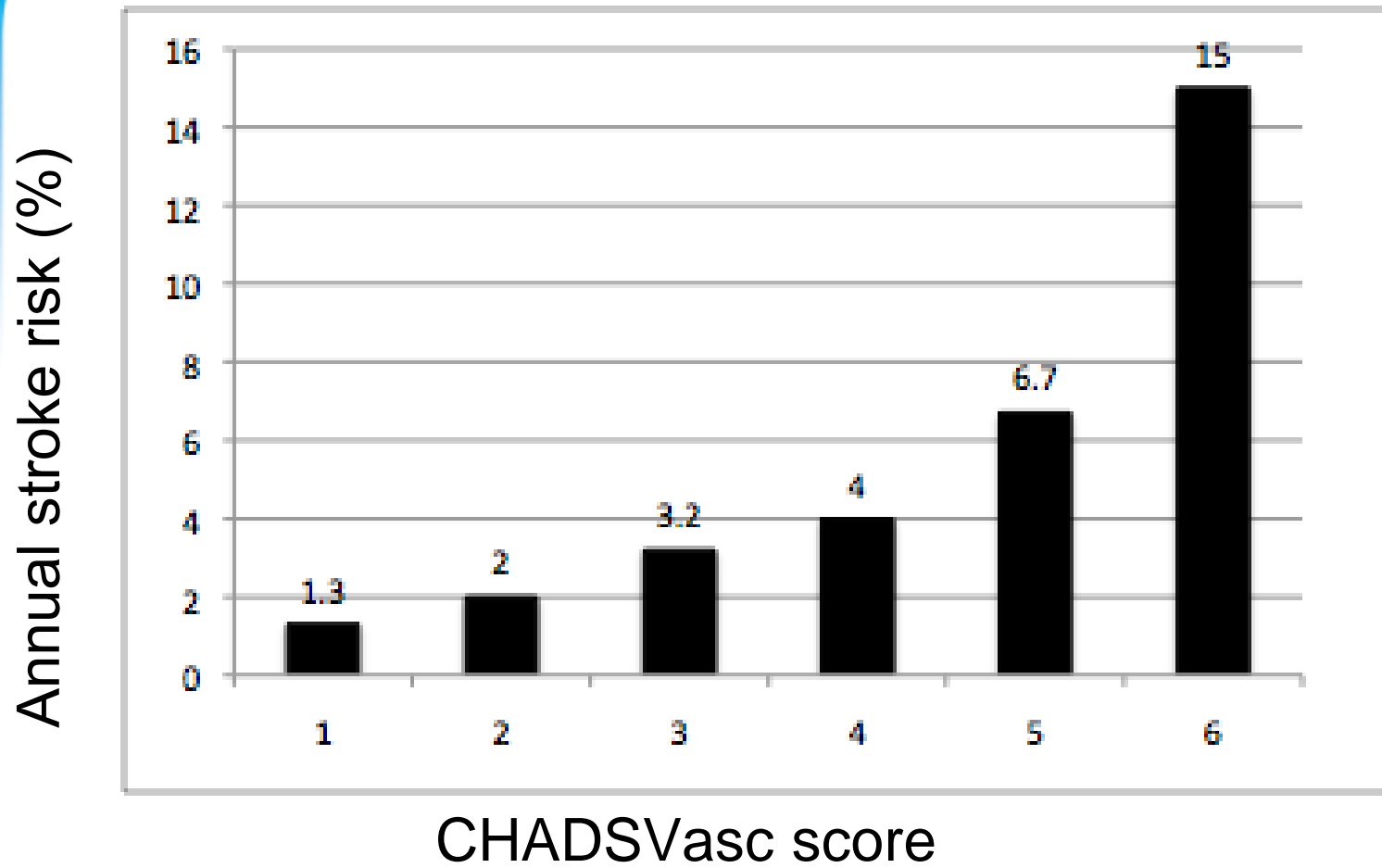


Priorities for AF management

1. Stroke prevention
2. Rate control then if still symptomatic
3. Rhythm control



Annual stroke risk per CHADSVasc score



So therefore seek help if you:

- Congestive heart failure
- Hypertension (even treated)
- Age >65 >75
- Diabetes
- Stroke (in you not family)
- Vascular disease (e.g. angioplasty)
- (Female if >65)

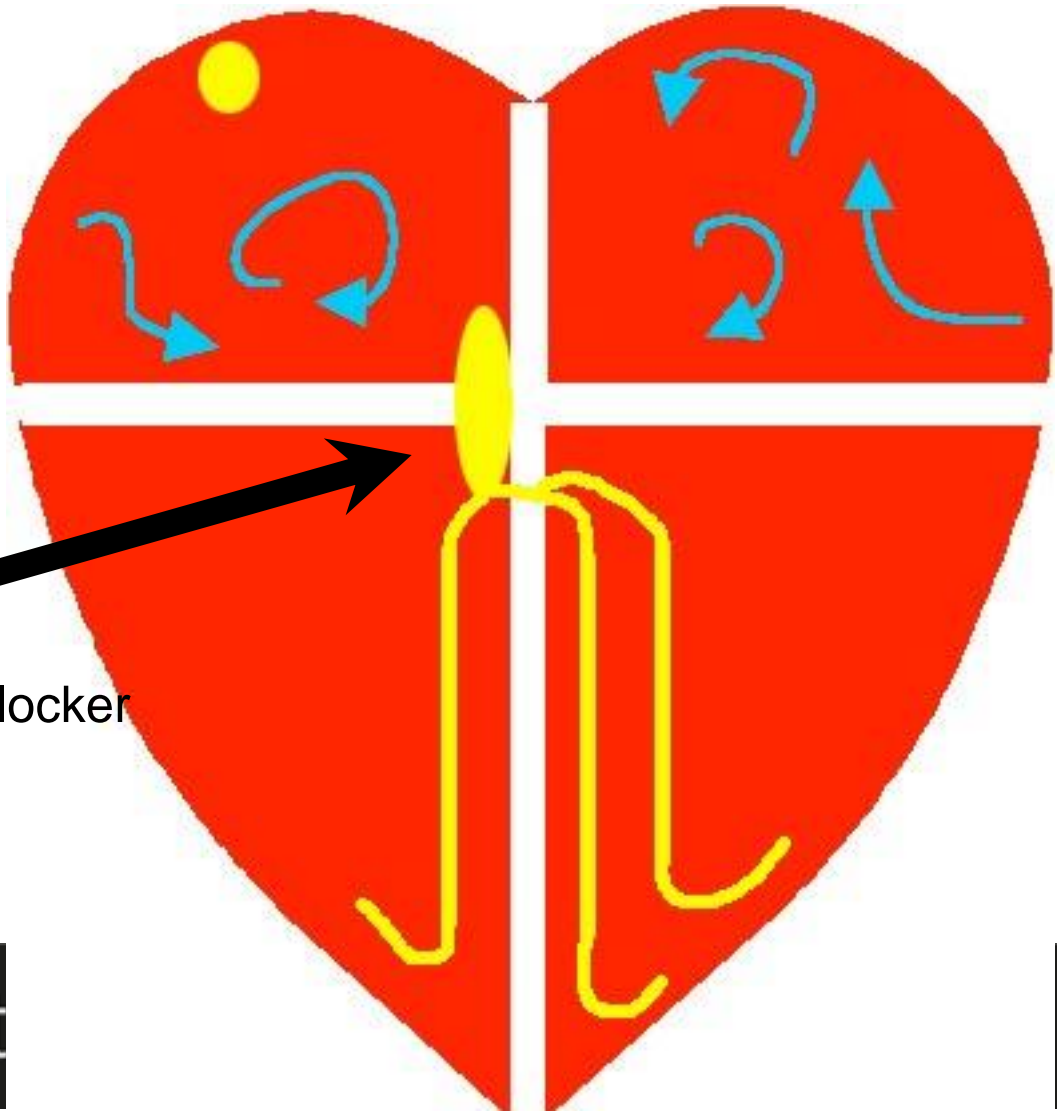


What will they do?

- Start direct oral anticoagulant
- Check your kidney function
 - Apixaban
 - Dabigatran
 - Rivaroxaban



Rate control



1. Beta-blockers
2. Calcium channel blocker
3. Both
4. Digoxin



Common misconceptions

- Common misconceptions
 - heart rate needs to be controlled urgently - how do people run marathons, how is it patients can have undetected AF for years?
 - emergency treatment is needed to deal with stroke risk
 - must call an ambulance if you get AF



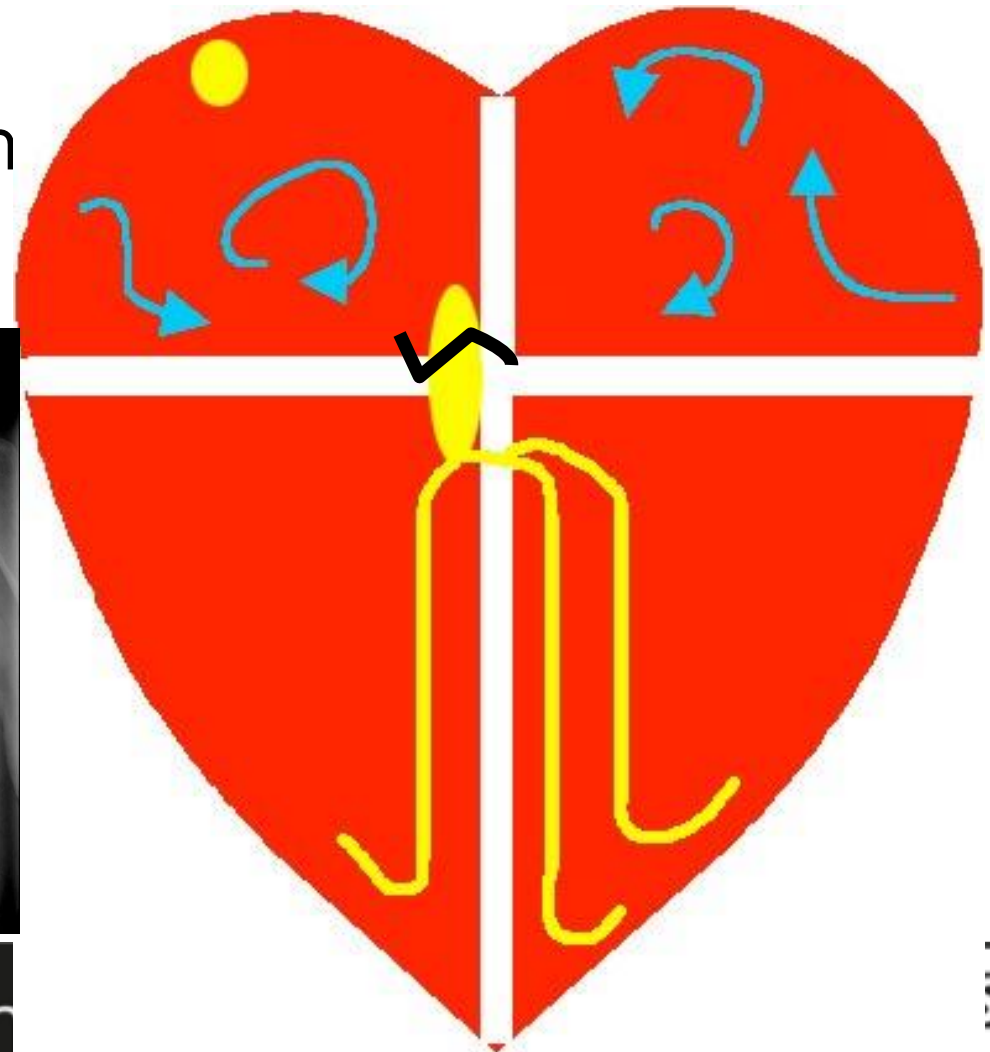
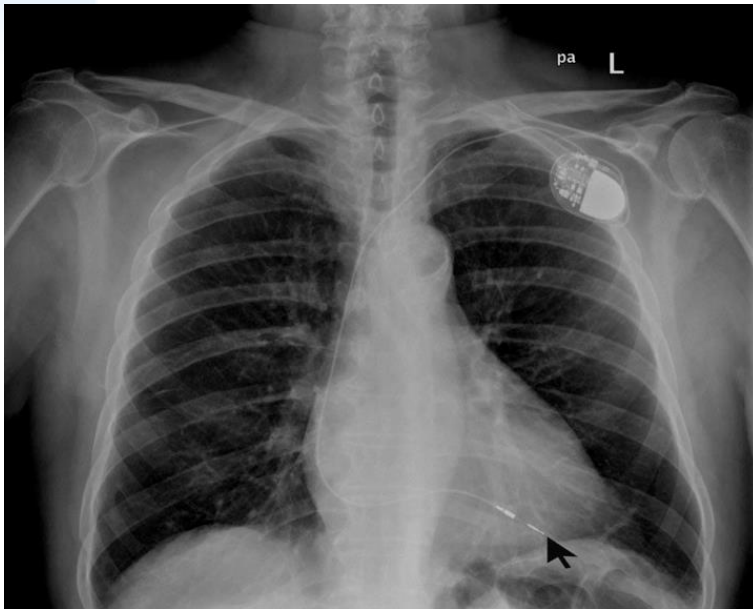
Rate control

- Fails and requires referral to specialist if:
 - Patient doesn't respond
 - Patient has side effects from drugs



Rate control in hospital

- AV node ablation



Rhythm control

- stopping AF
 - more dangerous than stroke or rate control
 - no quality evidence of risk reduction
 - evidence for ablation in progress



Rhythm control

- Why have it?



Rhythm control - drug therapy

- When should patients be referred:
 - If primary care not happy to initiate drugs
 - Other heart disease
 - Heart failure



Common clinical scenarios

- tell me yours



General principles

- Avoid A+E if possible - it is rare for the hospital to do anything that you can't do at home
- Push to have decisions made early but not urgently re rate and rhythm control
- Ensure you make your decision based on information not fear

