

## **Prevention of Stroke in Patients With Atrial Fibrillation**

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Atrial fibrillation (AF) is rightly classified as a cardiovascular epidemic. In the USA, the number of patients with AF at present approaches 2.5 million, a number expected to more than double over the next several decades. AF is responsible for about 15% of all strokes, which can be profound and permanent. Multiple clinical trials have demonstrated the value of chronic warfarin for stroke prevention. Ideal target INR ranges have been identified, where stroke prevention is maximized and bleeding complications limited. Among patients with AF, the risk is variable. Risk factors have been identified and guide which patients require warfarin. Important recommendations also exist for anticoagulation before and after cardioversion and the use of transesophageal echocardiogram. Novel therapies may one day replace warfarin.