An estimated 3.4 million people in the United States have a form of an arrhythmia known as atrial fibrillation (also known as AF or AFib)—a number expected to double by 2035.¹

Diagnosis and treatment of AFib requires the collaborative effort of dedicated nurses, cardiac surgeons and electrophysiologists (cardiologists specializing in heart rhythm issues). Through advances in research, technology and clinical expertise, these medical professionals are increasingly recommending ablation therapy as an effective, long-term treatment for many AFib patients.

**Understanding Atrial Fibrillation Treatment Options**

AFib is the most common form of an arrhythmia and is a progressive disease that can have a negative impact on the patient’s quality of life. Over time, its chaotic rhythm can weaken the heart and lead to heart failure² or stroke. In fact, AFib is a leading cause of preventable strokes, increasing risk by 5x.³

The options for treating AFib are varied, making the input of cardiologists and others who specialize in heart rhythm issues critical in determining the path that will best lead to success. Treatment options include the following:

- Medical management with antiarrhythmic drugs (AADs)
- Pacemakers
- Biventricular pacing
- Implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICD)
- Catheter ablation
- Surgical ablation
- Convergent (hybrid) ablation

**The Effectiveness of Ablation Therapy**

Although antiarrhythmic drugs are often the first choice in treating AFib patients, questions remain regarding the overall effectiveness of these medications. According to one study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, nearly 50% of AFib patients see a recurrence of symptoms within six to twelve months of being prescribed antiarrhythmic drugs.⁴ In addition, antiarrhythmic medications have been linked to further adverse effects for patients over time.
By contrast, these study results show the substantial increase in effectiveness of catheter ablation as an alternative to AADs, averaging a 50% greater success rate in permanent symptom relief over repeat AAD therapy.5

Ablation Therapy Success vs. Antiarrhythmia Drugs: Comparison of Treatment Failure, Symptomatic Recurrence and Recurrent Arrhythmia in Patients

AAD patients report adverse effects nearly twice as frequently as catheter ablation patients.7 Following a single experience with drug therapy failure, patients undergoing a catheter ablation procedure experienced more effective outcomes, while reporting a better quality of life than from repeat drug therapy.8

However—despite success rates—catheter ablation remains an underutilized solution. While drug therapy has been found to be ineffective in 50% of symptomatic AFib patients, only a very small percentage of the patients who fail drug therapy will ever receive an ablation.

Ablation therapy uses state-of-the-art technology to map electrical signals in the heart and determine the exact regions of the heart where irregular heart rhythms originate. Radiofrequency energy or extreme cold is then used to destroy irregular cells, thus restoring a normal heart rhythm. During catheter ablation, a specialized catheter is inserted into a vein and guided to the problem area of the heart muscle.

As AFib becomes more persistent or chronic in patients, the chance of successful treatment with either AADs or ablation therapy diminishes. Therefore, for the greatest potential for a successful treatment, patients must consult with an electrophysiologist at the onset of an arrhythmia diagnosis.
The Benefits of a Disease-Based Approach to AFib

Who should consider ablation therapy? Any symptomatic patient who:
- has had previous AAD treatment that has failed
- is intolerant of medications\(^9\)
- is still experiencing symptoms
- resists medication therapy
- has had past cardioversions that have failed

The Bon Secours Arrhythmia Center is a resource dedicated to serving AFib patients like yours, through aggressive, focused treatment. Doctors Omar Shams and Harpreet Grewal have a shared commitment to bringing patients safe, effective, minimally invasive treatment options with rapid recovery times, while using state-of-the-art technology to help restore normal heart rhythms. This commitment, coupled with years of expertise in their field, led directly to the creation of the Bon Secours Arrhythmia Center.