



## OUTREACH TOOLKIT



Atrial fibrillation (AFib) is the most common type of irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia. An estimated 6.1 million Americans are currently living with AFib, and that number is expected to skyrocket as our population ages—potentially reaching more than 15 million adults by 2050.

People with AFib have a higher risk of serious complications like stroke, dementia, other heart-related complications, and stroke. The most serious and debilitating complication of AFib is stroke. AFib increases stroke risk five-fold and doubles the risk that a stroke will result in permanent disability.

While oral anticoagulation (OAC) is highly effective at reducing stroke risk, elderly patients are often under-anticoagulated owing in part to under-appreciation of the stroke risk associated with AFib, the tendency of some healthcare professionals to prioritize bleeding risk over stroke prophylaxis, and concern over falls and bleeding risk.

The [Alliance for Aging Research](#) has spent many years educating patients, families, and healthcare professionals about the importance of stroke prevention in AFib. Recognizing that the risk of stroke is real and can quickly change a patient's life, the Alliance launched the *Year Without a Stroke Campaign*.

This campaign shares the real stories of people who have experienced and seen first-hand how serious AFib-related strokes can be. A stroke survivor and her husband, an AFib patient and advocate, and a leading cardiologist all share their stories about the importance of stroke prevention with AFib and what *Celebrating a Year Without a Stroke* means to them. The campaign encourages everyone involved in treatment decisions to ask questions, learn more about stroke risk, and celebrate every year lived without a stroke.

The individuals who have shared their stories and all the campaign partners, share the same mission of educating patients and their loved ones about stroke risk and prevention. **We hope that you will join this effort to make sure ALL AFib patients celebrate as many years as possible without a stroke. You can use this kit and materials at [www.YearWithoutAStroke.org](http://www.YearWithoutAStroke.org) as you plan your outreach, educate your audiences, and encourage others to join this important campaign.**



Susan Peschin, MHS  
President & CEO



## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

If you are not already an official partner of the *Celebrating a Year Without a Stroke* campaign, e-mail Lindsay Clarke, Vice President of Health Programs at the Alliance for Aging Research at [lclarke@agingresearch.org](mailto:lclarke@agingresearch.org) and show your support. See below for a complete list of campaign partners.

You can also:

- **Share the healthcare professional tip sheet with your teams** and help them initiate important conversations with their patients about stroke prevention.
- **Use your networks to help spread the word.** Share information about the campaign on your website, blog, newsletter, Facebook page, Twitter account, and more.
- **Share the campaign videos with patients and members** on-line, on waiting room TVs, and through other digital outreach.





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## RESOURCES

### Healthcare Professional Tip Sheet

**Celebrating A Year Without A Stroke** YearWithoutAStroke.org

**Tip For You To Easily Talk With Your Atrial Fibrillation Patients about Stroke Prevention**

The risk of stroke from atrial fibrillation (AFib) is real, and can quickly change a patient's life. An average AFib patient has a 5 times greater risk of stroke than someone without AFib. In fact, the risk of stroke from AFib is higher than the risk of stroke from hypertension, smoking, or diabetes. Yet, elderly patients are too often under-anticogulated, risking an increase in their risk of stroke. This tip sheet will help you easily explain why anticoagulation is critical and how adherence can help your patients better understand why anticoagulation is critical and how it can help them live longer.

**SIMPLE WAYS TO EXPLAIN WHY AFIB INCREASES STROKE RISK**

- Explain the level blood irregularity during AFib. It affects blood flow and that can lead to clots forming in the heart. These clots can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. The risk of stroke in someone with AFib is 5 times higher than someone without AFib.
- Stroke risk in someone with AFib is 5 times higher than someone without AFib.
- Stroke risk in someone with AFib is 5 times higher than someone with other types of stroke risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, or smoking.
- AFib also doubles the risk that stroke will occur within 1 year of diagnosis. This is true for all stroke risk factors. For example, someone with hypertension, diabetes, and smoking has double the risk of stroke compared to someone with AFib.
- There are a number of anticoagulants available to prevent stroke. However, some of these drugs, like warfarin, are not effective in preventing stroke.

**SIMPLE WAYS TO EXPLAIN HOW ANTICOAGULANTS DECREASE STROKE RISK**

- Explain the level blood irregularity during AFib. It affects blood flow and that can lead to clots forming in the heart. These clots can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. The risk of stroke in someone with AFib is 5 times higher than someone without AFib.
- Explain the signs of stroke so you can act quickly if they occur. Signs include:
  - Face – Sudden drooping or weakness on one side of the face.
  - Arm – Sudden weakness or numbness of one arm.
  - Speech – Difficult, slurred, or garbled speech.
  - Time – Call 911 sooner the treatment, the better the outcome.
- If you have **any** reason to suspect a stroke is occurring, call 911 immediately.

With Americans living longer than ever before, stroke prevention is more important than ever. In fact, an estimated 50% of all strokes occur in people who are 65 years old or older. An estimated 50% of all strokes could very well live 20 years or more after their stroke. This is a lifetime of dependence from the stroke survivor.

**DISCLAIMER:** This information is not intended to substitute for medical advice or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this website.

This [tip sheet](#) offers talking points designed for healthcare professionals to use in helping their patients better understand why anticoagulation is critical, and how adherence will allow them to celebrate more years lived without a stroke. Talking points focus on why AFib increases stroke risk, simple ways to explain how anticoagulants decrease stroke risk, simple ways to explain the risk of bleeding from an anticoagulant, and simple ways to explain how long one needs to take an anticoagulant. **Add your logo to co-brand this helpful resource!**

### Films

These films share the real stories of people who have experienced and seen first-hand how serious AFib-related strokes can be:



Two years ago, [AFib patient Sharon Munson](#) had a stroke. This life-threatening and life-changing event has led to years of occupational and speech therapy. She and her husband Randall know how quickly an AFib-related stroke can change your life, and are sharing their story in the hopes that more people will learn from their experience, take their stroke risk seriously, and celebrate every year they live without a stroke or another AFib-related incident.



[Mellanie True Hills](#) is the Founder & CEO of StopAfib.org, an advocate, and an AFib patient. The Celebrating a Year Without a Stroke campaign aligns with Mellanie's personal mission of creating a stroke-free world by raising awareness of AFib and educating patients and family members on how to best manage their Afib.



[Dr. Gilliam](#) is a cardiac electrophysiologist at UNC Center for Heart and Vascular Care. After decades of treating AFib patients, especially those with diabetes, he knows that AFib patients need to be ever-vigilant about a problem that is silent and sneaky. He knows that prevention is the whole ballgame because once you have a stroke you can't undo it.

These stories are also available as 30-second and 60-second PSAs—easy to share on waiting room TVs, social media, and more.

### Posters



These [posters](#) feature the Year Without a Stroke videos. They're easy to print and post to alert your audiences to the campaign and its many resources on the importance of stroke prevention.