

# Guideline for Stroke Prevention in Patients with Atrial Fibrillation (AF)

## Definition

An irregularly irregular pulse, confirmed by an ECG that demonstrates an absence of P waves

## Background

- May be chronic, paroxysmal, or persistent
- For the purposes of thromboembolic prophylaxis, this guideline also applies to the management of atrial flutter
- Prevalence increases steadily with age: 0.5% age 50-59; 8.8% age 80-89
- Commonest arrhythmia requiring hospitalisation
- AF is associated with a fivefold increase in risk of ischaemic stroke
- CT studies have shown that silent cerebral infarction is present in 26% of patients with AF

## Presentation/symptoms

- Palpitations
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Lethargy
- Systemic embolisation
- Opportunistic taking of pulse

## Causes of AF

- Ischaemic heart disease
- Hypertension
- Valvular heart disease
- Thyrotoxicosis
- Infection
- Idiopathic

## Box 1: When to refer for Cardiology Opinion **C**

- AF with broad complexes on ECG
- AF resistant to 'usual' drugs for rate control
- Recent onset
- Heart failure
- Frequent attacks of paroxysmal AF
- Syncope related to paroxysmal AF
- Heart murmur

**UNLESS EXCLUDED BY BOX 1, ASSESS THROMBOEMBOLIC RISK AND DETERMINE MANAGEMENT PLAN USING CHAD2 SCORE (BELOW)**

IDENTIFY

## CHAD2 Score **A**

C	Congestive heart failure	1
H	History of hypertension	1
A	Age > 75 years	1
D	Diabetes	1
2	Prior stroke or TIA	2
Total Score		

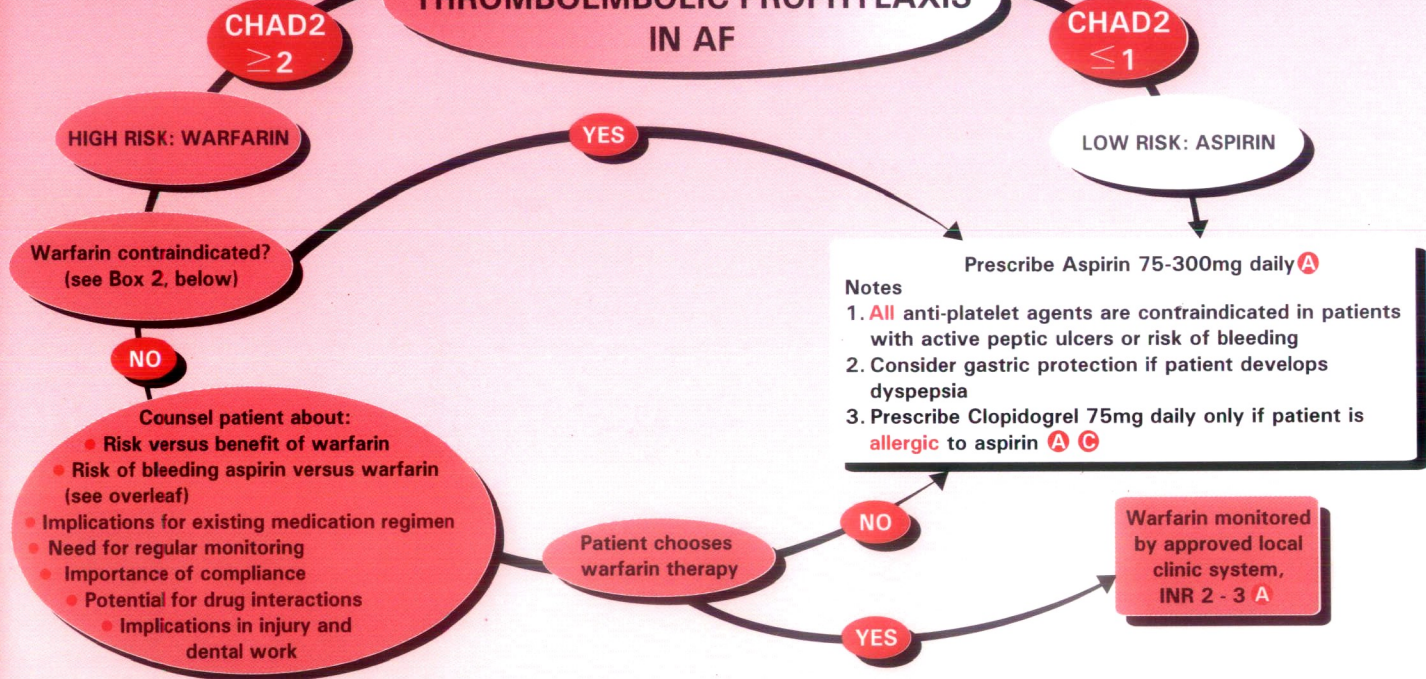
CHAD2 Score	Adjusted Annual Stroke Rate (%)	NNTs	Risk of major bleed (per 100 patient years)	
0	1.9	80	Aspirin 1.5	
1	2.8	55		
2	4.0	38	Warfarin 2.2	
3	5.9	26		
4	8.5	18		
5	12.5	12		
6	18.2	8		

**PLEASE NOTE: BENEFIT OF WARFARIN OUTWEIGHS RISK WHEN CHAD2 SCORE  $\geq$  2**

$\geq$  = 'greater than or equal to'

ASSESS

# THROMBOEMBOLIC PROPHYLAXIS IN AF



## Box 2: Contraindications to warfarin

- Medical eg. bleeding lesions, liver disease, uncontrolled hypertension
- Mental or physical frailty i.e. falls, confusion
- Non-compliance i.e. with drug or clinic
- Patient refusal

Read codes	4 byte	5.byte	Read 3
Atrial fibrillation	G67.	G5730	G5730
Warfarin	Bs1.	Bs1..	x01o4
ECG: general	321.	321..	X77As
Aspirin prophylaxis - IHD	8B63	8B63.	XM1Xx
Aspirin contraindicated		8I24	XaDvH
INR	42QE	42QE.	42QE.

## References

- CHAD2:** JAMA. 2001; 285 (22): 2864-2870
- Risk of bleeding:** NEJM. 2001; 20 (345): 1444-1451
- Clopidogrel:** Lancet. 1996; 348: 1329-1339
- INRs:** BMJ. 1997; 317: 1563
- Inclusion of atrial flutter and paroxysmal AF:** EBM. 2001; 6: 150