



GolinHarris

Publication: MyPaper
Section / Page: News, Page A5
Date: 3 June 2013
Headline: Q&A Cardiologist Reginald Liew



Q&A
Cardiologist
REGINALD
LIEW

The Singapore Heart Foundation marks the start of its first Heart Rhythm Week today as part of a public-education drive to raise awareness of atrial fibrillation (AF).

AF is a heart-rhythm disorder that, if left untreated, increases the risk of a potentially-deadly stroke by up to eight times.

My Paper spoke with cardiologist Reginald Liew to learn more.

What are the main risk factors of AF?

The most important ones are age (the older you are, the higher your risk of AF) and other cardiac conditions (high blood pressure, diabetes, previous heart attack or heart failure put you at higher risk).

Some non-heart-related conditions increase the risk of AF, like high alcohol intake and obstructive sleep apnoea.

What symptoms should people look out for and what kind of medical help should they seek?

Anyone with symptoms suggestive of AF – such as heart palpitations, dizziness or tiredness – and those who have other risk factors – such as older people or those with a history of heart disease – should get checked as

soon as possible by a family doctor.

Those who have severe symptoms – like blacking out, severe palpitations or very fast heartbeats – should probably see a heart specialist.

Disability is far greater after an AF-related stroke than a non-AF stroke. Why?

People with AF may get larger blood clots in the heart. When the blood clot goes to the brain, it affects a greater amount of brain tissue.

The other common type of stroke is ischaemic stroke, which is caused by a small blood clot in the neck that then spreads into the brain. Those blood clots tend to be a bit smaller. That's probably why AF-related strokes are worse.

GILLIAN PINTO

Dr Reginald Liew is a senior consultant cardiologist at The Harley Street Clinic (Singapore), which specialises in cardiac and cancer care.