Reviewer's report

Title: Arrhythmia-provoking factors and symptoms at the onset of paroxysmal atrial fibrillation. A study based on interviews with 100 patients seeking hospital assistance

Version: 1  Date: 27 May 2004

Reviewer: Andreas Schuchert

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The aim of the study was previously rarely assessed and is well defined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
In general are the methods are appropriate. I miss why the patients although they had recurrent AF attacks now seeked hospital assistance and what was the trigger for the actual recurrent AF episode. How often were previous hospital admissions in this patient group? What kind of treatment received the patients previously because this can alter the clinical presentation (see limitation of the manuscript).

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
The data are well controlled

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
In general yes. I miss a discussion of the relative young age of the patients studied.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

Reviewer's report
- Minor Essential Revisions

1. The relative young age of the patients compared to epidemiological studies and its impact of clinical symptoms should be discussed.
2. What were the clinical symptoms and the actual trigger to look for medical help urgently?
3. How many previous hospital admissions had the patients?
4. A more precise description of the treatment for AF?
5. The term "stress" has to be defined precisely e.g. private affairs, business
6. What is the time delay between the onset of the trigger and the subsequent onset of the AF episode?
7. Did the patients develop avoidance strategies so that the pattern of triggers can have changed over the time? E.g. avoid larger amounts of alcohol.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None