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Nutritional Insights: How Food Choices Affect Atrial Fibrillation

Daniel Gondko

danielwieslaw1998@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9590-2987

Medical University of Silesia, Faculty of Medical Sciences in Katowice, 18 Medyków St., 40-752 Katowice, Poland

Patrycja Dębiec

patrycjad345@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0853-2247

Medical University of Silesia, Faculty of Medical Sciences in Katowice, 18 Medyków St., 40-752 Katowice, Poland

Jakub Roman

kuba_roman1998@o2.pl

https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6032-7579

Medical University of Silesia, Faculty of Medical Sciences in Katowice, 18 Medyków St., 40-752 Katowice, Poland

Nikodem Pietrzak

nikopi1212@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6669-9876
Medical University of Silesia, Faculty of Medical Sciences in Katowice, 18 Medyków St., 40-752 Katowice, Poland

Abstract

Introduction and Purpose: Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a prevalent cardiac rhythm disorder that significantly impacts global health. Emerging evidence suggests that dietary habits play a crucial role in the modulation and management of AF. This review article aims to synthesize current knowledge on the interplay between nutrition and atrial fibrillation, providing insights for healthcare professionals and patients alike in managing this condition through dietary choices.

State of Knowledge: Various studies have examined the effects of specific nutrients, food groups, and dietary patterns on the incidence and progression of AF. This review delves into research linking macro- and micronutrients—such as omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, and antioxidants—to AF risk. It also evaluates the influence of dietary patterns, including Mediterranean and plant-based diets, on the electrical and structural remodeling of the heart that predisposes to AF. Additionally, the impact of excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption on AF is scrutinized, highlighting the importance of moderation.

Summary: The evidence indicates a significant association between diet and atrial fibrillation, suggesting that specific dietary modifications could potentially reduce AF risk or mitigate its severity. Recommendations for clinical practice involve promoting heart-healthy dietary patterns, focusing on the balance and quality of nutrients, while considering individual dietary restrictions and preferences. Further research is needed to clarify causal relationships and to develop comprehensive dietary guidelines specific to AF management.

Key Words: Atrial fibrillation; Dietary Fats; Nutritional Status; Cardiovascular Diseases

I. Introduction and purpose

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common cardiac arrhythmia, characterized by an irregular and often accelerated heartbeat. This phenomenon is due to irregular and chaotic electrical activity in the atria of the heart, which leads to their uncoordinated contraction and, as a result, to inefficient pumping of blood into the heart chambers. AF can be divided into

several types, depending on the duration and nature of its occurrence: transient (paroxysmal), persistent, long-term persistent and persistent [1].

Atrial fibrillation is associated with many serious health complications and has a significant impact on the quality of life of patients and the burden on healthcare systems around the world. The most serious consequences of AF are an increased risk of stroke, heart failure and overall mortality. It is estimated that AF causes about 20-30% of all strokes and significantly increases the risk of premature death. In addition, patients with atrial fibrillation often experience a significant deterioration in quality of life, with symptoms such as tiredness, shortness of breath, chest pain and a feeling of irregular or fast heartbeat [1,2].

The importance of atrial fibrillation as a public health problem stems not only from its prevalence and its serious health consequences, but also from its cost to healthcare systems. With the increasing prevalence of AF in societies around the world—particularly in the context of an aging population—the costs associated with the treatment of AF and its complications are significant. These include both direct costs of treatment such as hospitalisation, antiarrhythmic drugs and medical procedures (e. g. atrial ablation) and indirect costs such as loss of productivity, premature disability and death [1-3].

AF management requires an interdisciplinary approach, including both medical strategies and lifestyle modifications, including dietary changes. Given the growing evidence on the impact of diet on heart rate and AF risk, further investigation of this relationship is important. The development of effective dietary strategies that can prevent or mitigate the occurrence of AF could make a significant contribution to reducing the burden of AF, both for individual patients and for health systems worldwide [1].

In summary, atrial fibrillation is a significant clinical and public health problem that requires complex management strategies, including dietary approaches. Its impact on health and the economy is significant, and the development of more effective forms of prevention and treatment remains a key research and clinical priority [4].

Aim of the review

As part of the review on the impact of nutrients on heart rhythm in the context of atrial fibrillation (AF), the main objective is to examine and synthesize available scientific evidence on the role of diet in the prevention and treatment of this arrhythmia. We focus on understanding how a variety of nutrients and diets affect heart rate and AF risk, allowing us to better understand the current state of knowledge and identify research gaps. In particular, we analyze the impact of macronutrients such as fats, proteins and carbohydrates on heart rhythm

and AF, assessing how omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids affect the electrical stability of the heart, as well as how proteins and amino acids may have proarrhythmic or antiarrhythmic effects [5]. We also study how different sources of carbohydrates affect heart rhythm. In addition, we focus on the role of micronutrients and vitamins such as magnesium, potassium and calcium, as well as vitamin D and B vitamins, in the regulation of electrical conductivity and heart rhythm, as well as their potential mechanisms of action in the context of AF. We also investigate the relationship between alcohol consumption, caffeine and AF, distinguishing between the effects of moderate consumption and alcohol abuse, and the effects of caffeine and caffeine-containing products on the incidence and severity of AF. Additionally, we assess whether adherence to a Mediterranean diet or a diet rich in antioxidants may reduce the risk of AF by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress. Finally, we consider whether dietary supplementation, such as omega-3, magnesium, or antioxidants, may serve as preventive or adjunctive therapies for AF, indicating the complexity of the interaction between diet and atrial fibrillation and the need for further research in this area.

Methodology

As part of the review work titled "The Impact of Nutrients on Heart Rhythm: The Perspective of Atrial Fibrillation", a comprehensive literature selection methodology was applied to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the collected data. For the identification and selection of literature, key scientific databases were used, considered essential sources in medical research and health sciences. These include PubMed, the primary database for medical literature covering biomedical and health sciences studies, Scopus, which allows both abstracts and citations to be searched, the Web of Science, which provides access to high-quality research in a variety of fields, including medicine, and the Cochrane Library, a specialized database focused on evidence from randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews.

The inclusion in the review was based on specific criteria, which included the type of study, the subject of the study, the quality of the study, the date of publication and the language of publication. The review included empirical work, including cohort, case-control, cross-sectional and randomised controlled trials. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses that focused on the relationship between diet and atrial fibrillation or the effect of nutrients on heart rhythm were also adopted. These studies had to demonstrate an appropriate level of methodological quality, including clearly defined methods of data collection and statistical

analysis, have been published within the last 20 years to ensure the timeliness of the data, and have been published in English.

The review excluded papers that did not meet quality criteria, such as studies with insufficient methodological depth, expert opinions, comments, letters to editors and conference abstracts that did not provide complete empirical data. In addition, publications in languages other than English without available translations and duplicate articles are excluded.

The literature selection process began with a search using keywords and phrases such as “dietary nutrients and atrial fibrillation”, “nutrition impact on heart rhythm”, “omega-3 and arrhythmia”, “diet and cardiovascular health” in selected databases. The pre-identified articles were screened for their titles and abstracts to see if they met the inclusion criteria. The full texts of the pre-selection papers were evaluated in detail by the research team. The entire selection process was carefully documented to ensure transparency and repeatability of the review process.

With this rigorous approach, the review provides a credible synthesis of existing evidence on the impact of nutrients on heart rhythm in the context of atrial fibrillation, which is a valuable contribution to the development of knowledge in this field.

II. State of Knowledge

Effect of specific nutrients on atrial fibrillation

A summary of the discussion on nutrients and their effect on atrial fibrillation is presented in Table I.

Nutritients	Conclusions
Omega-3 fatty acids	While the evidence for beneficial effects of fish omega-3 acids on heart rate and AF prevention is promising, further research is still needed. Future studies should focus on determining optimal doses, duration of therapy, and identifying populations that could benefit most from such an intervention. This approach may lead to a better understanding of the mechanisms of action of omega-3 acids and their potential role in strategies for the management and treatment of atrial fibrillation.
Alcohol	Research shows the complexity of the impact of alcohol on the risk of atrial fibrillation, highlighting the need for an individual approach to alcohol consumption recommendations, taking into account both the overall health benefits of moderate consumption and the risks associated with excessive consumption.
Caffeine	Conclusions drawn from the review of available data suggest the need for further research that will consider diverse factors influencing AF risk and varied responses of the body to caffeine consumption. These studies should also focus on the mechanisms of caffeine action at the molecular and clinical levels to better understand its impact on heart rhythm and the potential benefits and risks associated with its consumption in the context of heart health.
Antioxidants	The findings derived from examining research on how antioxidant intake affects the risk of AF following heart surgeries underscore the necessity for additional clinical investigations. These future studies should encompass various kinds of antioxidants, dosages, and treatment durations. Moreover, they should account for the variability among patient groups and other factors influencing AF risk, including age, gender, underlying health conditions, and the specific type of cardiac surgery undergone. Additionally, further exploration into the mechanisms by which antioxidants operate and their potential interactions with other medications is essential for a thorough comprehension of their role in preventing AF after cardiac procedures.
Trace Elements	The conclusions derived from examining studies on the influence of magnesium and other minerals on AF risk and treatment highlight the importance of tailoring diagnosis and therapy for AF to suit each patient's specific requirements and risk factors. Additional research is required to gain a comprehensive understanding of how minerals contribute to AF development and to determine the most effective approach to using supplementation as part of treatment.

Table I. Effect of specific nutrients on atrial fibrillation

A) Omega-3 fatty acids

Omega-3 acids from fish, also known as long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LC-PUFA), such as eicosapentaenoic (EPA) and docosahexaenoic (DHA), have long been studied for their effects on heart health. In particular, studies focused on the effects of these fatty acids on heart rhythm and atrial fibrillation (AF) have been the subject of intensive research aimed at understanding their potential role in the prevention and treatment of cardiac arrhythmias [5].

Atrial fibrillation, the most common form of arrhythmia, is characterized by an irregular and often accelerated heart rhythm resulting from improper conduction of electrical impulses in the heart. This mechanism leads to asynchronous contraction of the atria and

ventricles of the heart, which increases the risk of complications such as stroke, heart failure and increased mortality. In the context of prevention and treatment of AF, omega-3 acids have attracted attention as a potential therapeutic agent due to their electrophysiological properties, modulating cell membrane function and reducing inflammation [6].

Clinical and experimental studies have shown that EPA and DHA supplementation may affect the stabilization of cardiomyocyte cell membranes by affecting ion channel proteins, which is crucial for proper cardiac electrophysiology. EPA and DHA can modulate the activity of sodium and potassium channels, which affects the length of the cardiac functional potential and the refractivity of the heart muscle, thereby reducing susceptibility to proarrhythmic conduction disorders [6,7,8].

In addition, omega-3 acids have anti-inflammatory effects, which may be important in the context of preventing AF, which is often associated with an inflammatory response in cardiac tissue. Inflammation may contribute to structural and functional changes in the atria of the heart, which increases the risk of developing AF. By reducing inflammation, EPA and DHA may reduce the risk of AF initiation and progression [6].

However, the results of studies on the effects of omega-3 acids on heart rate and AF risk are mixed. Some studies have shown that regular consumption of fish rich in omega-3s or supplementation with these fatty acids can significantly reduce the risk of developing AF, particularly among people at high risk of cardiovascular disease. Other studies have shown no statistically significant benefit of omega-3 supplementation in the prevention or treatment of AF. Such discrepancies may be due to differences in dosages, duration of supplementation, characteristics of study populations and different supplement formulations [7-11].

B) Alcohol

Studies on the impact of alcohol consumption on the risk of atrial fibrillation (AF) provide a complex picture of how different levels of alcohol consumption may affect heart health. Atrial fibrillation, the most common form of clinically relevant arrhythmia, increases the risk of serious health complications such as stroke, heart failure and overall mortality. In the context of alcohol, the scientific literature points to a variety of effects associated with different levels of consumption: from moderate to heavy [12-16].

Moderate alcohol consumption is often defined as about one standard drink per day for women and up to two for men. Studies on moderate alcohol consumption and risk of AF give

mixed results. Some epidemiological studies suggest that moderate consumption may have a neutral effect on the risk of AF, and some even suggest a potentially protective effect of alcohol at low doses. The mechanism of potential protective action may be associated with beneficial effects of small amounts of alcohol on the lipid profile, reduction of inflammation and improvement of insulin sensitivity [17].

On the other hand, heavy alcohol consumption, which is often referred to as consumption in excess of the above moderate consumption standards, is consistently associated with a higher risk of developing AF. Studies show that heavy drinking can lead to structural changes in the heart, such as alcoholic cardiomyopathy, which is known to cause arrhythmias. In addition, excessive alcohol consumption can lead to electrolyte disturbances, especially magnesium and potassium deficiencies, which are important for maintaining a normal heart rhythm. Alcohol may also affect the autonomic nervous system, increasing sympathetic activity, which further increases the risk of AF [12-16].

An important aspect of the study of the effect of alcohol on AF is the differentiation between long-term regular consumption and episodes of so-called alcohol. "binge drinking. " Binge drinking is defined as the consumption of four or more drinks in about two hours for women and five or more for men. Studies show that this form of alcohol consumption is particularly harmful and associated with an immediate increase in the risk of AF, known as "holiday heart syndrome", an arrhythmia that often occurs after bouts of heavy drinking, especially during the holidays [18].

Understanding the relationship between alcohol consumption and AF risk is key to formulating health recommendations and intervention strategies. Educating patients, particularly those with pre-existing cardiovascular risk factors, about the potential risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption and promoting moderate or total abstinence may be an important element of AF risk management.

C)Caffeine

Reviewing data regarding the potential association between caffeine consumption and the occurrence of atrial fibrillation (AF) represents a significant area of research in cardiology. Many years of observation, epidemiological, clinical, and experimental studies have led to the accumulation of diverse data on the impact of caffeine on AF risk, yet conclusions remain debatable.

Over the years, numerous epidemiological studies have suggested a beneficial effect of caffeine consumption on the risk of AF occurrence. Observational analyses on large

populations have shown that moderate caffeine intake may be associated with a decreased risk of atrial fibrillation compared to individuals consuming lesser amounts or abstaining entirely. These findings suggest a possible protective action of caffeine concerning heart rhythm [19-23].

However, there are also studies that do not confirm the favorable effect of caffeine on AF risk. Animal studies suggest that prolonged caffeine consumption may lead to cardiac rhythm disturbances, including the development of atrial fibrillation. Additionally, some clinical studies have not shown a significant association between caffeine consumption and the risk of AF occurrence in humans [19].

Differences in results may stem from the use of different research methodologies, variations in the populations studied, or individual responses to caffeine consumption. Moreover, existing studies often do not account for other factors influencing AF risk, such as lifestyle, diet, or current health conditions.

In the context of assessing the risks and benefits associated with caffeine consumption, it is also crucial to consider individual patient characteristics, such as genetics, age, gender, and health status. The value of caffeine as a modulator of AF risk may vary depending on these factors.

D) Antioxidants

Analyzing the impact of antioxidant consumption on the risk of atrial fibrillation (AF) occurrence post-heart surgeries constitutes a significant area of research in cardiology and cardiac surgery. Following cardiothoracic surgeries, including coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) or heart valve surgeries, patients are at risk of developing AF, which can lead to cardiovascular complications, prolonged hospital stays, and increased mortality risk. Therefore, research on potential preventive strategies, such as antioxidant consumption, becomes particularly relevant [23-27].

Clinical and observational studies conducted on patients post-heart surgeries suggest that antioxidant supplementation may have a beneficial effect on the risk of AF occurrence. Antioxidants such as vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and flavonoids exhibit antioxidative properties that may protect cardiac tissues from oxidative stress, inflammation, and reperfusion injuries following surgical procedures [23-27].

Experimental studies on animal models and in vitro studies suggest that antioxidants may have the potential to reduce inflammatory processes, fibrosis, and cardiac cell apoptosis, which are associated with AF development. Furthermore, these studies suggest that

antioxidants may influence various signaling pathways involved in AF pathogenesis, such as the MAPK pathway or the NF-κB pathway [28].

However, there is also controversial literature regarding the effectiveness of antioxidants in AF prevention post-heart surgeries. Some clinical studies do not confirm the beneficial effect of antioxidant supplementation on AF risk, suggesting no significant difference between the antioxidant-receiving group and the placebo group [23-27].

Additionally, there are studies suggesting that an excess of antioxidants may be unfavorable, leading to disruptions in the oxidative-reductive balance and blocking the beneficial effects of oxidative reactions in the body.

E)Trace-Elements

Magnesium, potassium, calcium, and other minerals play a crucial role in regulating the electrical and mechanical functions of the heart, suggesting their potential significance in preventing and treating AF.

Clinical and observational studies conducted on various patient populations suggest that magnesium deficiency may be associated with an increased risk of AF occurrence. Magnesium plays a significant role in stabilizing cell membranes, transmitting electrical signals in the heart, and regulating the autonomic nervous system, which may affect the risk of developing atrial fibrillation [29-32].

Magnesium supplementation may have a beneficial effect on AF risk, both as a prophylaxis and therapy in patients already diagnosed with AF. Studies suggest that magnesium may help control the frequency of AF episodes and improve the effectiveness of pharmacological or electrical therapy [33].

Furthermore, other minerals, such as potassium and calcium, may also be relevant in the context of AF risk and management. Potassium deficiency can lead to heart rhythm disturbances, including the development of AF, while excess calcium may contribute to excessive stimulation of cardiac muscle cells and increased arrhythmia risk [34].

Research suggests that appropriate supplementation of potassium and calcium may be beneficial in treating AF; however, excessive supplementation may be dangerous and lead to serious complications, such as heart rhythm disorders or electrolyte imbalance [29-34].

Understanding the interactions between different minerals and other drugs used in AF treatment, such as antiarrhythmic drugs, antiplatelet agents, or anticoagulants, is also important. Deficiency or excess of specific minerals may affect the effectiveness of pharmacological therapy and increase the risk of drug interactions.

Diets and atrial fibrillation

A) Mediterranean Diet

Discussing research on the impact of adherence to the Mediterranean diet on reducing the risk of atrial fibrillation (AF) is an important topic in the fields of dietetics and cardiology. The Mediterranean diet, rich in vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, healthy plant fats, fish, and moderate consumption of red wine, is known for its potential health benefits, including reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases [35].

Epidemiological and clinical studies conducted on various patient populations suggest that adherence to the Mediterranean diet may be associated with a reduction in the risk of AF occurrence. Components of the Mediterranean diet, such as polyphenols, antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, and fiber, may have a beneficial effect on heart health by regulating inflammatory processes, oxidative stress, endothelial function, and heart rhythm [35].

Observational studies have shown that individuals adhering to the Mediterranean diet had a lower risk of AF compared to those following other types of diets. Additionally, interventional studies have confirmed the beneficial impact of the Mediterranean diet on AF risk parameters, such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels, insulin levels, and markers of inflammation [36].

The mechanisms of action of the Mediterranean diet in reducing the risk of AF are complex and involve a range of biological processes, such as reducing oxidative stress, improving endothelial function, regulating pro-inflammatory cytokines, and modulating signaling pathways involved in AF pathogenesis [36,37].

However, there are also studies that do not unequivocally confirm the beneficial effect of the Mediterranean diet on AF risk. Factors such as differences in study methodology, diet composition, duration of observation, and characteristics of the study population may influence differences in results [38].

Conclusions drawn from the analysis of research on the impact of adherence to the Mediterranean diet on reducing AF risk underscore the potential health benefits of this diet in the context of preventing cardiovascular diseases, including AF. However, further research, especially interventional studies, is needed to fully understand the mechanisms of action of the Mediterranean diet and its role in preventing and treating AF.

B) Fiber-Rich Diet

Fiber, a non-digestible plant component by the human body, is known for its health benefits for the digestive system, but it is increasingly being studied for its potential benefits for the heart [39].

Epidemiological and clinical studies suggest that a fiber-rich diet may be associated with a reduction in the risk of cardiovascular diseases, including the risk of AF. Fiber acts through various mechanisms, such as reducing LDL cholesterol levels, regulating glycemia, reducing inflammation, and improving gut microbiota composition, which may contribute to a decreased risk of AF [40].

Observational studies show that individuals consuming higher amounts of fiber in their diets have a lower risk of AF occurrence. Additionally, interventional studies suggest that fiber supplementation may have a beneficial impact on risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, such as hypertension, obesity, or dyslipidemia, which can also affect the reduction of AF risk [40-42].

The mechanisms of fiber's action on heart health and AF risk are complex and involve various biological processes. Soluble fiber can bind to bile acids and cholesterol, leading to their excretion from the body, thus reducing the risk of atherosclerosis development. Moreover, insoluble fiber improves intestinal peristalsis, regulates glycemia, and affects gut microbiota composition, which may decrease the risk of inflammation and insulin resistance, both risk factors for AF [39].

However, there is some controversy in the scientific literature regarding the impact of fiber on AF risk. Some studies have not shown clear benefits, suggesting no significant relationship between fiber intake and AF risk. Differences in results may arise from variations in study methodology, duration of observation, diet composition, and characteristics of the study population [40].

Conclusions drawn from the literature review suggest that a fiber-rich diet may have a beneficial impact on heart health and associated AF risk by regulating multiple risk factors for cardiovascular diseases. However, further research, especially interventional studies, are needed to fully understand the mechanisms of fiber action and its role in AF prevention.

C) Plant-Based Diet

The influence of a plant-based diet on the risk of atrial fibrillation (AF), in the context of inflammation and metabolism, is also crucial for a better understanding of the subject. A plant-based diet, mainly based on the consumption of vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and plant sources of protein, is associated with various health benefits, including potential reduction in the risk of cardiovascular diseases [43].

Epidemiological studies suggest that a plant-based diet may be associated with a reduction in AF risk. Components of a plant-based diet, such as antioxidants, polyphenols, fiber, and low glycemic index, may have a beneficial effect on heart health by reducing oxidative stress, improving endothelial function, regulating glycemia, and reducing inflammation [44-46].

Observational studies have shown that individuals adhering to a plant-based diet have a lower risk of AF compared to those consuming a diet rich in animal products. Additionally, interventional studies suggest that adhering to a plant-based diet may lead to a reduction in metabolic risk factors, such as hypertension, obesity, insulin resistance, and dyslipidemia, which may also influence the reduction of AF risk [44-46].

The mechanisms of action of a plant-based diet on AF risk in the context of inflammation and metabolism are complex and involve a series of biological processes. Components of a plant-based diet may influence the reduction of inflammation by regulating signaling pathways involved in AF pathogenesis and by reducing oxidative stress and the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines [43].

Conclusions drawn from the analysis of research on the impact of a plant-based diet on AF risk in the context of inflammation and metabolism suggest that a plant-based diet may have potential health benefits in the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, including AF. However, further research, especially interventional studies, are needed to fully understand the mechanisms of action of a plant-based diet and its role in preventing and treating AF.

Effects of dietary recommendations

A) Dietary recommendations for patients with AF

Discussing current dietary guidelines for people with atrial fibrillation (AF), including the role of diet in the management of AF, is crucial for optimal treatment and prevention of complications of this heart disease. According to the latest guidelines from the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the American Heart Association (AHA), diet plays an important role in a comprehensive approach to AF management.

The diet for people with AF should be balanced, rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, healthy fats, seafood and limited in salt, saturated fats, simple sugars and highly processed foods. This diet is intended to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, regulate blood pressure, improve blood lipids, and reduce overweight or obesity, which may help to reduce the frequency of AF episodes and the risk of complications.

In the context of diet for people with AF, factors related to thromboembolism prophylaxis also play an important role. People with AF are at increased risk of stroke, so the diet should include the intake of vegetables and fruits rich in vitamin K, which may help stabilise INR levels in people taking anticoagulants.

In addition, the intake of nutrients that may have beneficial effects on heart function and heart rhythm, such as magnesium, potassium, calcium, omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants, should be considered. Supplementation of these components may be considered in people with deficiencies or at risk of their deficiency.

The role of diet in the management of AF includes not only aspects of prevention, but also symptomatic and supportive treatment. Diet may help to control AF risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and lipid disorders, helping to reduce the frequency of AF episodes and improve the quality of life of patients [47,48].

Conclusions from the discussion of current dietary guidelines for people with AF highlight the importance of a balanced and healthy diet in the comprehensive management of this heart disease. An individual approach to diet, taking into account the needs and preferences of the patient, and regular evaluation of the effectiveness of dietary interventions are key to achieving optimal outcomes in the treatment of AF.

B) Challenges and controversies

Discussion on the challenges associated with implementing dietary recommendations and their effectiveness is an important aspect in the field of public health and clinical medicine. Despite the existence of numerous dietary guidelines, many patients encounter

difficulties in their implementation, which can affect the effectiveness of therapy and the achievement of intended health goals.

One of the main challenges is the limited availability or high costs of healthy food products, which can hinder patients from adhering to dietary recommendations. Additionally, cultural, socioeconomic, and individual dietary preferences may influence the acceptance and adherence to dietary recommendations.

Moreover, lack of education and support from medical staff, including physicians, dietitians, and nurses, may limit the effectiveness of implementing dietary recommendations. Patients need clear and personalized dietary instructions and regular monitoring of progress.

Another challenge is maintaining motivation and discipline in the long term. Many patients may struggle to sustain changes in dietary habits, especially when they do not observe immediate effects or when faced with difficult-to-control food temptations.

The influence of the social environment and the availability of unhealthy food products, such as fast food or processed foods, can also be a barrier to adherence to dietary recommendations. Promoting healthy eating habits in local communities and taking public health actions are crucial for creating an environment conducive to healthy eating.

In the context of comprehensive healthcare, integrating dietary care with other fields of medicine, such as cardiology, endocrinology, or psychology, is crucial for the effective implementation of dietary recommendations and achieving positive health outcomes. Psychological and behavioral support can help patients overcome dietary challenges and motivate them to make long-term changes in dietary habits [49].

The conclusions drawn from the discussion on the challenges associated with implementing dietary recommendations emphasize the need for comprehensive actions at the societal, institutional, and individual levels to support patients in adhering to a healthy diet and achieving health goals. Education, psychological support, and the availability of healthy food products are crucial for effectively promoting healthy eating and reducing the burden of diet-related diseases.

III. Summary

The literature review regarding the relationship between diet and atrial fibrillation (AF) has revealed comprehensive connections between dietary components and the risk and progression of this heart condition. Epidemiological and clinical studies suggest that various dietary elements and eating patterns may significantly influence the development of AF.

Studies indicate a beneficial effect of diets rich in plant-based components, such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, fish, and healthy plant fats, on reducing the risk of AF. Particularly, the Mediterranean diet, characterized by high consumption of these components, appears to be advantageous in the prevention of atrial fibrillation.

Limiting the intake of salt, saturated fats, simple sugars, and highly processed foods may also be beneficial in terms of AF risk. Excessive salt consumption can lead to arterial hypertension, a risk factor for AF, similarly, excess saturated fats and simple sugars can negatively impact lipid profiles and insulin resistance.

Additionally, nutrients such as fiber, antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, and mineral components like magnesium, potassium, and calcium may positively influence heart rhythm and reduce AF risk by reducing oxidative stress, improving endothelial function, regulating blood pressure, and stabilizing electrical conduction in the heart.

The conclusions drawn from the literature review suggest that diet plays a significant role in the pathogenesis and prevention of atrial fibrillation. Further research, including epidemiological, clinical, and experimental studies, is essential for a complete understanding of the mechanisms of action of individual dietary components and for the development of personalized dietary strategies in the prevention and treatment of AF. A cohesive interdisciplinary approach, combining knowledge from cardiology, dietetics, genetics, and other medical sciences, is crucial for effective AF prevention and management through nutrition.

Disclosures

Author's contribution:

Conceptualization- Daniel Gondko

Formal analysis- Patrycja Dębiec, Daniel Gondko, Jakub Roman

Investigation-Patrycja Dębiec, Nikodem Pietrzak, Jakub Roman

Writing-rough preparation-Jakub Roman, Daniel Gondko, Patrycja Dębiec

Writing-review and editing-Daniel Gondko, Patrycja Dębiec, Nikodem Pietrzak

Visualization- Daniel Gondko, Jakub Roman, Patrycja Dębiec, Nikodem Pietrzak

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