

# THE CHALLENGES OF THE ARRHYTHMIA NURSE PRACTITIONER ROLE

Andréa Grieger and Eleanor Cusack  
Arrhythmia Nurse Practitioners  
(Supported by the British Heart Foundation)

# ADVANCED NURSE PRACTITIONER ROLE

- Royal College of Nursing (2008) definition

A registered nurse who has undertaken a specific course of study of at least first degree (Honours) level and who:

- makes professionally autonomous decisions, for which he or she is accountable
- receives patients with undifferentiated and undiagnosed problems and makes an assessment based on highly developed nursing knowledge and skills, including skills such as physical examination
- makes differential diagnosis using decision-making and problem solving skills
- orders necessary investigations, and provides treatment and care both individually, as part of a team, and through referral to other agencies

# ARRHYTHMIA NURSE PRACTITIONER

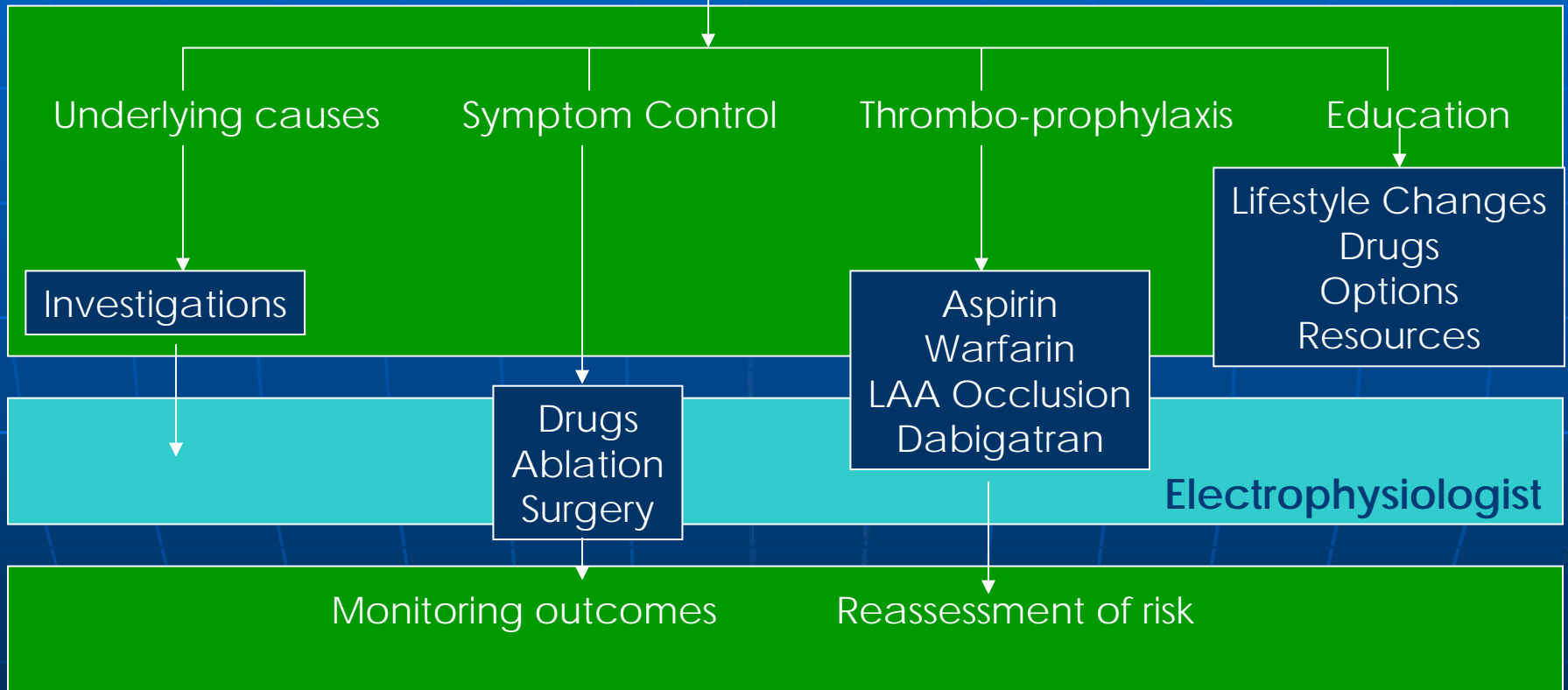
- British Heart Foundation supported
- Degree level essential
- Working towards or has obtained a Masters degree
- Arrhythmia M Level module
- Nurse prescribing?



# AF SERVICE

First Diagnosis of Atrial Fibrillation

Arrhythmia Nurse



Electrophysiologist

Monitoring outcomes

Reassessment of risk

Arrhythmia Nurse

# CHALLENGES – ARRHYTHMIA CLINICS

- Triaging referrals
- Documented evidence on ECG
- Timely access to diagnostics
- Managing patient expectation and anxiety levels
- Time to definitive diagnosis
- Phone call support

# CHALLENGES - TREATING AF

- NICE guidance in the treatment of AF (2006)
- Local protocols and care pathways
- Choice of drug treatment – pharmacological cardioversion
- Increasing awareness of EP interventions - when, how and who to refer
- Initiating treatment through GP

# CHALLENGES – AF FOLLOW UP

- Clinic support
- Patient population
- Coordinating tests locally (ECG, holter monitor)
- Outreach clinics
- Post AF ablation 3 months/ 6 months/ 1 year then annually
- Educating patients on what to expect post procedure

Ref: HRS/EHRA/ECAS Expert Consensus Statement on Catheter and Surgical Ablation of Atrial Fibrillation: Recommendations for Personnel, Policy, Procedures and Follow up (2007)

# CHALLENGES – DC CARDIOVERSION

- DC cardioversion service – nurse led since mid 2009
- Competencies – consent
- Nurse sedation - training
- Location/ access to Cardiology support
- Managing waiting list

# CHALLENGES - ANTICOAGULATION

- Patient compliance with Warfarin
- Educating patients
- Relationship with anticoagulation services (hospital and GP)
- CHADS2 score
- Referral and waiting times

# FUTURE CHALLENGES

- Expansion of the service
- Developing the arrhythmia nurse practitioner's role
- Outreach clinics
- Arrhythmia clinics in primary care
- Specific AF clinics
- Nurse prescribing/ Patient Group Directions