

Pathophysiology

There are a wide variety of pathophysiological mechanisms that play a role in the development of atrial fibrillation (AF); however, it is cardiac remodeling that accounts for most of them. Some research has shown evidence of genetic causes of atrial fibrillation involving chromosome 10 (10q22–q24) that consists of a mutation in the gene α -subunit of the *cardiac* *Na^v1.5*, which is responsible for pore formation. Overall, atrial fibrillation tends to a turbulent and abnormal flow of blood through the heart chamber, decreasing the heart's effectiveness in pumping blood while increasing the likelihood of thrombus formation within the atria, most commonly the left atrial appendage. Typically, an initiating trigger excites an ectopic focus in the atria, most commonly around the area of the pulmonary veins, and allows for an asynchronous firing of electrical impulses leading to fibrillations of the atria. There are a wide variety of pathophysiological mechanisms that play a role in the development of atrial fibrillation (AF); however, it is cardiac remodeling that accounts for most of them. Cardiac remodeling, particularly of atria, results in structural and electrical changes that eventually become the cause of deranged rhythm in AF. Structural remodeling is caused by the changes in myocytes and the extracellular matrix, and fibrous tissue deposition also plays a major role in some etiologies. On the other hand, tachycardia and shortening of the refractory period lead to electrical remodeling. Most commonly, hypertension, structural, valvular, and ischemic heart disease elicit the paroxysmal and persistent forms of atrial fibrillation, but the underlying pathophysiology is not well understood. Some research has shown evidence of genetic causes of atrial fibrillation involving chromosome 10 (10q22–q24) that consists of a mutation in the gene α -subunit of the *cardiac* *Na^v1.5*, which is responsible for pore formation. This is a gain of function mutation, allowing for more pores, increasing the activity within the ion channels of the heart, and thus affecting the stability of the membrane and reducing its refractory time. [1] Most cases of atrial fibrillation are non-genetic and relate to underlying cardiovascular disease. Typically, an initiating trigger excites an ectopic focus in the atria, most commonly around the area of the pulmonary veins, and allows for an asynchronous firing of electrical impulses leading to fibrillations of the atria. These impulses are irregular, and pulse rates can vary tremendously. Overall, atrial fibrillation tends to a turbulent and abnormal flow of blood through the heart chamber, decreasing the heart's effectiveness in pumping blood while increasing the likelihood of thrombus formation within the atria, most commonly the left atrial appendage.