

Medicine Hx - Cardiovascular System

History of "Palpitation"

A. Overview:

Definition: It is usually taken to mean an unexpected awareness of the heartbeat.

B. Differential diagnosis:

DDx	What support this diagnosis?
Cardiac	
Arrhythmia (These risk factors & symptoms apply to all following types of arrhythmias)	<p>Risk factors: Hypertension - Anxiety -Heart disease including, congenital & valvular heart disease, CAD, heart attack, HF, & cardiomyopathy Advanced age - Male sex - Caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol - Hyperdynamic circulation (anemia, pregnancy, etc.)- Diabetes mellitus - Hyperlipidemia - Obesity - Family history of cardiac disease - Hyperthyroidism -Chest infection - Pulmonary embolism - Chronic lung diseases</p> <p>Symptoms: Chest pain - Dizziness- Shortness of breath- Fatigue - Syncope Ankle swelling - Claudication</p>
Ectopic Beats (Atrial or Ventricular) "Extra-systoles" "Premature beats"	<p>Typical Symptoms:(same arrhythmic symptoms)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed beat followed heavy or strong beat • Palpitation worse at rest <p>Complication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly, no complications, although very frequent atrial ectopic beats may herald the onset of atrial fibrillation.
SVT "Supra-Ventricular Tachycardia"	<p>Typical Symptoms:(same arrhythmic symptoms)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong, fast, regular heart beat, Polyuria <p>Complication: Non-remarkable</p>
AF "Atrial Fibrillation"	<p>Typical Symptoms:(same arrhythmic symptoms)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fast, irregular heartbeat (irregularly irregular pulse) <p>Complication: Stroke 2- Systemic embolism</p>
VT "Ventricular Tachycardia"	<p>Risk factors:(arrhythmic factors)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Electrolyte disturbance (hypokalemia, hypomagnesaemia, hypocalcaemia) <p>Typical Symptoms:(same arrhythmicsymptoms) Fast, regular heartbeat Complication: Sudden death (Rarely)</p>
Atrial Flutter	<p>Risk factors:(arrhythmic factors) Open heart surgery Typical Symptoms:(same arrhythmicsymptoms) Fast, irregular heart beat Complication: Non-remarkable</p>
Other (Sinus Tachycardia)	
Hyperthyroidism	<p>Risk factors: Family history of thyroid condition Typical Symptoms: Palpitations, tremors, Irritability, emotional liability Dyspnea, fatigue Complication: Atrial fibrillation , Thyroid storm (Thyrotoxic crisis)</p>

C. Questions to ask the patient with this presentation

Question	Think about !
“Description of experienced palpitations”	
1-When did the sensation start and stop?	Age of onset if it's not the first time
2-How long did it last? (Duration)	
3-Did it come on suddenly or gradually ? (Onset)	1. Instantaneous onset (SVT, VT) 2. Gradual (Sinus Tachycardia)
4-Was the heartbeat felt as fast, slow, or some other pattern?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast & Regular (SVT, VT) • Fast & Irregular (AF) • Not Fast BUT Forceful & Regular (anxiety) • Slow palpitations are likely to be due to drugs such as beta-blockers • Intermittent (SVT, VT) • Continuous (Anemia, Anxiety, Valve disease)
5-Was it regular or irregular? (Ask the patient to tap out the rhythm)	
6-Is this the feeling of normal heartbeats interrupted by missed or strong beats?	
7-Or is it completely irregular? (AF)	
8- Is the palpitation continuous or intermittent?	
9-What was the patient doing when the palpitations started?	Ask when it occurs: anxious people may be aware of their own heart- beat at night
10-Has this ever happened before? If so, what were the circumstances?	
11-Has an episode ever been recorded on an ECG?	
“Associated symptoms”	
12- Did the patient lose consciousness? If so, for how long?	
13-Are there any associated symptoms? (Chest pain, shortness of breath, syncope, nausea, dizziness, polyuria, ankle swelling,intermittent claudication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe dizziness or syncope (VT) • Associated symptoms suggesting hemodynamic compromise • Polyuria (SVT)
“Aggravating & Relieving Factors”	
14- Is there any relationship to eating or drinking (particularly tea, coffee, wine, chocolate)?	Dropped or missed beats related to rest, recumbency, or eating are likely to be atrial or ventricular ectopics
15- Is it faster than it ever goes at any other time, e.g. with exercise or rest?	
16- Was the patient able to stop the palpitations somehow? (Often, people discover they can terminate their palpitations with a vagal maneuver, such as a Valsalva maneuver “holding breath”, a cough, or swallow)	If it was terminated by holding breath (SVT)
17- Have you had other heart problems such as heart failure or a heart attack in the past?	
18- Is there heart trouble of this sort or of people dying suddenly in the family?	

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