



## Entertainer Lends His Voice To Raise Awareness Of Atrial Fibrillation

(NAPSA)—For award-winning singer, songwriter and performer Barry Manilow, it's always obvious when a song is out of rhythm. But when his heart went out of rhythm 15 years ago, Manilow realized he still had something to learn about rhythm. Manilow is one of the more than 2.5 million Americans living with atrial fibrillation (AFib).

AFib is a serious heart disease that causes your heart to race and beat out of rhythm. While some people with AFib may not feel symptoms, others may feel palpitations, shortness of breath, weakness and anxiety. People are often not aware that AFib can have serious consequences, including permanent heart damage, heart attack, heart failure, stroke and death.

In fact, they might not truly understand AFib. Manilow admits that he had never heard of the disease before he was diagnosed. "The first time I felt AFib, I was at a point in my life when I was busy and pushing myself very hard," he recalls. "So, when I first started feeling a strange sensation in my chest, I tried to ignore it. At first, it just felt like my heart was skipping a series of beats every so often."

However, Manilow's symptoms soon became more intense and prolonged, growing so disruptive over time that he couldn't focus. "It felt like there was a fish flopping around in my chest," he recalls. That was when Manilow decided that it was time to take action. "I went to the hospital, and I started working closely with my doctor. Learning that something was wrong with my heart definitely motivated me to take the disease seriously."



**Getting in rhythm with Barry Manilow—the singer, songwriter and performer is one of the more than 2.5 million Americans living with atrial fibrillation (AFib).**

Manilow spent the next several years in and out of the hospital, struggling to keep his heart in rhythm. He has undergone three surgical procedures and has been cardioverted several times—a procedure where the heart is shocked back into normal rhythm. The constant interruptions eventually became a major obstacle for Manilow's lifestyle and career. He would go into AFib while on tour, during media interviews and even right before a performance.

"Once, I had to be cardioverted on the same day that I was scheduled to do a live concert on national TV for the Fourth of July!" Manilow recalls. "I was literally in the hospital just a few hours before walking on a stage to sing in front of an audience of millions. Talk about bad timing!"

Manilow partnered with Get Back in Rhythm, a national AFib education campaign, to increase awareness of the disease. His participation has been valuable not

only for educating the public, but also for making himself a more informed patient.

"I honestly had no idea that AFib was so common or that so many people have it. Then, I learned that many patients don't feel any symptoms at all," Manilow says. "That blew me away, because when I go into AFib, there's no way to ignore it. My symptoms are sudden and can be very frightening. They definitely impact my quality of life."

In addition to symptoms, there are long-term health risks that accompany AFib when the disease isn't managed appropriately.

"AFib has a lot of health risks," Manilow says. "They can become permanent if you don't get your heart back in rhythm."

Among these risks, being out of rhythm can permanently change the shape of your heart and cause it to work harder and harder over time. The longer your heart's in AFib, the more difficult it is to get it back in rhythm and the worse the disease will become.

Although Manilow's AFib continues to be a challenge, he hopes that his participation in Get Back in Rhythm can improve awareness of the disease, and serve as an example to other patients living with AFib and their caregivers.

"I've never shared my experience before. After all that I've learned about AFib and its risks, I'm excited to be getting the word out," says Manilow. "AFib needs more awareness. Patients need more education. No one should settle for a life out of rhythm."

Visit [www.GetBackInRhythm.com](http://www.GetBackInRhythm.com) to take a survey to learn more about whether you are at risk for AFib.